

A Christian man worked each day transporting tourists across a lake. On occasion he would present the Gospel and its implications for life in a most unusual way. He had painted the word "Faith" on one of the oars for his rowboat and "Works" on the other. When they got quite far from shore, he would stop. Then, beginning to row with only the one oar marked "Faith," he would cause the boat to go in circles to the left. Reversing the process, he would pull on the other oar marked "Works," and the boat would circle in the opposite direction.

By this time, bewildered passengers were waiting for an explanation. This afforded him a wonderful opportunity to give them the truth concerning discipleship and the Christian life. He always concluded by saying, "You see, neither faith nor works can stand alone. They are twins that cannot be separated!"

Without faith in relation to God, whether one eats or drinks or whatever one does, God is offended. Without faith, the use of God-given gifts is an abuse, with sin upon sin being committed. Without faith, no glory to God is given, for there is no reverence in the heart.

And without good works, there is no corroboration that one has faith and is pure in heart. In his letter, James wrote, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

Faith and good works cannot exist apart from each other. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior. The Holy Spirit constantly guides, challenges and instructs us in our Savior's love to do good works. By the power of the Gospel, in demonstration of our love for Christ, we do good works which please God.

In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus raised this question: ". . . If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" Faith, which has received the "true riches," the forgiveness of sin and the hope of life to come, exhibits itself in the conscientious and God-pleasing use of worldly goods.

God has made us rich in every way so that we can be generous on every occasion, giving testimony of our faith by our deeds.