**ABRAHAM (#4)**

***Do The Works Of Abraham***

Do diets work? Many of us (including *moi*) have tried diets to lose weight but are no better off now then the day we started. I’m sure most of you have heard of all the celebrities that promote diets to lose weight. Oprah Winfrey, Marie Osmond, and the late Elvis Presley (who tried to fit into his white jump suit while trying ‘The Sleeping Beauty Diet’). But dieting to lose weight goes all the way back to William the Conqueror, king of England (1028-1087 A.D.). He was so heavy he could not stay on his horse, so decided to lose weight on ‘The Alcohol Diet’ in which he locked himself into his room and only drank alcohol. Did it work? He died at the Battle of Mantes when he fell off his horse. Oh well. Today we have entire shelves at the bookstore or library that promote every kind of diet imaginable. Which one works?

Despite my Arnold Schwarzenegger physique (have you seen him lately?), I’m certainly no dietician or health expert that could advise you on losing weight. But one thing that all doctors will prescribe to shed pounds is to do three things:
1) burn more calories than you consume; 2) exercise regularly; 3) eat healthy foods. In other words, diets only work when you do!

The same goes for saving faith. “*Faith without works is dead*,” (Jam. 2:17). When Jesus said, “*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mk. 16:16), He was making the same point. A man with faith will DO what he is told. In this case, he will be baptized. Faith is a verb. It is an action word. Anyone can say he believes, but actions speak louder than words. “*Someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works*” (Jam. 2:18).

Just look at the works of Abraham in Hebrews 11:
“*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out… he went out*” (v.8)
“*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac*” (v.17)

Jesus told the religious leaders when they said Abraham was their father, “*If you were Abraham’s children you would* ***do******the works of Abraham***” (Jn. 8:39). Abraham’s faith repeatedly is shown to be an action-oriented obedience to God’s commandments. Jesus used him as the prime example of what saving faith looks like. When he was called to leave Haran, “*he went out, not knowing where he was going*” (Heb. 11:8). When he was told in a vision at night to kill his son it says, *“So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him”* (Gen. 22:3).

Yes, Abraham mentally “believed” God, but he followed that up by physically rising early, saddling his donkey, taking his son, splitting the wood, walking to that mountain, securing him on the altar, then raising the knife. Without those action items Abraham’s faith would be dead and forgotten, buried on the ash heap of history.

If Jesus used Abraham as our greatest example of faith, then unless we “***do the works of Abraham***” we cannot go to heaven. Just look at these verses on faith by works:

“*but in every nation whoever fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him*” (Ac. 10:35).

 “*For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*.” (Eph. 2:8-10).

“*Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share*” (I Tim. 6:18).

“*Those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works … Let our people learn to maintain good works, …*” (Tit. 3:8,14).

“*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*” (Heb. 10:24).

“*as you have always obeyed … work out your own salvation in fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12).

“*Do you see that faith was working together with works, and by works faith was made perfect*” (Jam. 2:22).

Especially read Jesus’ letters to the seven churches of Asia:
*I know you works, your labor, your patience*… (2:2);
*I know your works, tribulation and poverty*… (2:9);
*I know your works, love, service, faith, patience, and as for your works the last are more
 than the first*” (2:19);
*I know your works…for you have a little strength, and have kept my word…*” (3:8).

A verse that has motivated me for six decades: “*I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from* ***their labors****, and* ***their works*** *do follow them*” (Rev 14:13).

Just as works defined the faith of Abraham, so they will define each of us at Judgment. “*And the dead were judged according to* ***their works*** *by the things that were written in the books*” (Rev. 20:12). My faith will be judged by my works.

As we read God’s commandments, faith responds in obedience. I’ve never obeyed my parents, my teachers, my employers, or my God without DOING! Just as “I love you” requires works (I Cor. 13:4-8), so “I believe you” requires works too.

Back to diets. In 1826 a French author named Brillat-Savarin coined the phrase, “You are what you eat.” In 1930 American nutritionist Victor Lindlahr developed *The Catabolic Diet*. In the book he said, “Ninety percent of diseases known to man are caused by cheap foodstuffs. You are what you eat.” But Solomon argued differently. He said, “*You are what you think*” (Prov. 23:7 my paraphrase). Quoting him accurately he said: “*As a man thinks in his heart,* ***so is he***!” In other words, you are what you do!

Jesus loves you (defined in John 14:15). So do I. - Rick