

FAITH AND WORKS

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" James 2:26.

What is the connection between faith and works? Is there a conflict between what Paul and James say? In Eph. 2:8-9, Paul tells us that we are saved by faith and not by works, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast"*. But then James 2:26 says that *"faith without deeds is dead"*. It appears that Paul and James contradict each other but, in fact, they don't. Paul is saying that doing good things **before** we are saved will not save us (Eph. 2:8-9) but James is saying that **after** we are saved our faith will lead us to do good works (James 2:14-26). They are stating separate truths which together tell us that

GOOD WORKS will not result in SALVATION

but

SALVATION will result in GOOD WORKS.

James 2:18 says, *"I will show you my faith by what I do"*. James was saying that his deeds were a **result** of his faith. That is, he was **already** saved and his faith led him to do good works. The following three examples show that Paul, like James, also said that salvation will result in good works:

- 1) In Eph. 2:10 Paul said, *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"*. There are two things to note about this verse: Firstly, it is 'in Christ' (when we are saved) that we do good works and Secondly, this verse follows Eph. 2:8-9 which say that works will not save us. So, combined, Eph. 2:8-10 say that good works won't save us but we are saved to do good works.
- 2) In Acts 26:20 Paul said, *"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds"*. So, deeds follow and prove our salvation.
- 3) In Rom. 7:4 Paul said, *"So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God"*. Again, the deeds follow salvation.

From these examples we can see that Paul and James don't contradict each other at all. They both tell us that good deeds are part of a sincere faith. John the Baptist also put deeds after salvation when he said, *"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance"* (Matt. 3:8).

Summing this up, we can do nothing to earn our salvation but, once saved, our deeds will bear witness to our salvation. A couple more verses in James also say this. Regarding Abraham, James 2:22 says, *"his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did"*, and James 1:27 says, *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: "to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world"*. So, we can't work for our salvation but salvation should result in good works and being kept from the sinful pollution of the world.

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