

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? 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"* (Eph. 2:8-9). But then James 2:26 says that *"faith without deeds is dead"*. So, 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 things (Jam. 2:14-26). They are stating separate truths which, combined, tell us that

**GOOD WORKS will not result in SALVATION but
SALVATION will result in GOOD WORKS.**

Jam. 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"*. Note two things about this verse:

- a) it is 'in Christ' that we do good works and
- b) it follows verses 8-9 which say that works will not save us.

In effect, Eph. 2:8-10 say, *"good works won't save you but you 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"*. Once again, the deeds follow 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 fully agree and don't contradict each other in the least. They both tell us that good deeds go hand in hand with 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.

Regarding Abraham, Jam. 2:22 says, *"his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did"*. Jam. 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, there is no conflict between what Paul and James say. They both say that a humble and repentant lifestyle will keep us from the pollution of sin and result in a holy walk with good deeds.

Mick Alexander
leeandmick@gmail.com
www.ChristianIssues.biz