

## **A DEAD FAITH VERSUS A LIVING FAITH**

James is very clear in saying, “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (cf. Ja. 2:14-26). James is forthright in challenging the idea that true faith can be devoid of works. Such a position is foolish.

The word “foolish” refers to that which is empty, or senseless. Such a position is folly because it ultimately results in spiritual disaster. James repeatedly makes the point that “**faith without works is dead**”. This is what the foolish man needs to know. It is not okay to have a faith that has no evidence. Such a faith is not legitimate. It is folly to think that is okay. Three times in this chapter, James says that faith without works is dead, as seen in verses 17, 20, and 26.

So, one claims to have faith! That is good! But James would challenge us a bit and say, “But do you have the right kind of faith?” The right kind of faith is seen in our works. We are not saved by works, but if we have a living faith it will demonstrate itself in works. Only a living faith is a saving faith.

“The child of God works not for life, but from life; he does not work to be saved, but works because he is saved.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

“At the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not be said then, did you believe? But were you doers, or talkers only?” – **John Bunyan** in Pilgrim’s Progress

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul emphasizes that we are saved by GRACE through FAITH, but then goes on to say in verse 10 that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works”.

God saved us so that we might reflect a changed life as seen in our good works. We are not saved by good works but for good works. God didn’t just save us so we could go to heaven. God didn’t just save us so He could showcase us in eternity as a trophy of grace. No, even right now in history, God wants to showcase us as trophies of His grace, as seen in the good works we do as the result of a changed life. God saved us so that we might do good works to glorify Him (cf. Titus 2:14, 3:8).

Here is where **Paul and James** come together. Some people have tried to play Paul off against James, claiming that Paul emphasizes grace and James emphasizes works. In reality, they are in complete harmony. Paul emphasizes that faith is to the end that it produces good works, and James

emphasizes that faith without works is dead (Ja. 2). The common ground is Eph. 2:10, which shows that the evidence of God at work in a person's life is good works. If we are truly God's workmanship – if we are truly His NEW creation (2 Cor. 5:17), then the expectation is that this will be reflected in the life.

### **1 John 3:10 (NKJV)**

**10** In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

The works are the fruit not the root of salvation. Works are the evidence of salvation, not the basis for it. (cf. 1 Jn. 2:3-4, Jn. 15:1-8)

Note that in Ephesians 2 there is a contrast in view.

As those who were “dead in trespasses and sins,” we then “walked according to the course of this world” as we functioned under the influence of Satan as “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-3). But now, as those alive in Christ, we are called and empowered to walk in good works to the glory of God (Eph. 2:4-10). The contrast is between two lifestyles, and behind them are the two contrasting masters of Satan and God. When we are born again and reflect good works, this is evidence that a changed life has been brought about by God supernaturally.

“...we shall show that we are His workmanship by the works which we perform. Those who continue to ‘walk’ in the trespasses and sins which characterize the unregenerate state show that they are not God's workmanship, whatever professions they make.” – **F.F. Bruce**

Note the KEY phrases in Ephesians 2:4: “**But God**” in verse 4, and in verses 5 and 8 “**by grace**”. This is what has made all the difference in our lives as believers.