

## JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

### V. True Faith That Does Good Works

(James 2:14-26)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. A significant quality in a truly righteous Christian life is a true faith that does good works as taught in James 2:14-26. We thus view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### II. True Faith That Does Good Works, James 2:14-26.

- A. The Roman Catholic Church uses James 2:14-26 to support its claim that one must not only believe in Christ, but do the works of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church in order to be saved and have eternal life.
- B. However, the definite article precedes the word "faith" in James 2:14b, 17, 20, 22 (twice) and 26 as an "anaphoric" article to refer to a "previously mentioned" faith in the context. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 783-784; Blass & Debrunner, A Grk. Gram. of the N. T., 1973, p. 131-132), what greatly affects the interpretation of the entire passage, showing James argued that a **true** life of faith in a *saved believer produces good works*:
  - 1. In James 2:14, James rhetorically asked, "What good is it . . . if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 825) James expected the answer, "It is of no value, of course!"
  - 2. James then asked, "Can 'the' [anaphoric article, meaning "that, such a"] faith save him?" James indicated that a **false** faith in Christ will not produce good works, for there is a **false** faith that differs from a **true** faith, and the **true** faith inevitably produces a life of good works! (Ephesians 2:10)
  - 3. To illustrate, James wrote that if a believer lacked clothing and food and another believer verbally urged him to leave in peace, to be warm and filled, but he did not actually give the needy believer the material goods he needed, there was no spiritual profit in what that believer had merely said, James 2:15-16.
  - 4. Even so, "the" [anaphoric article, meaning "that, such a"] faith, if it does not have works, is a dead or a meaningless and false kind of faith, being alone without the works that authenticate it, James 2:17.
  - 5. James expected that a believer might respond, saying, "You have faith and I have works" as if there were different "faith" and "work" *ministries*, but James replied, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works," v. 18 ESV; R. V. G. Tasker, The Gen. Ep. of Jas., 1974, p. 66.
  - 6. To show the futility of a believer's claiming to have faith without the authenticating works that a true faith produces, James added that one does well to believe that there is one God, but that the demons also believe the same thing and even tremble in view of their coming judgment, but they have no good works to validate their possession of a true faith in God that leads to salvation, James 2:19.
  - 7. James then stated that "the" [anaphoric article again, meaning "that, such a"] faith without good works is dead, that a faith that believes truths about God without truly trusting in Him for salvation is futile, v. 20.
  - 8. In James 2:21-25, James defined "justification" as "vindication," a *different definition* from the Apostle **Paul's** definition of "declaring a sinner righteous in the sight of God" via "justification," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to James 2:21. James then illustrated his definition in James 2:22-25:
    - a. Abraham was "justified" or rather "vindicated as righteous" by his work in offering up Isaac on the altar, his "the" [anaphoric article again, meaning "that, such a"] faith, Abraham's **true** faith working with his works, so that by his works was "the" [anaphoric article again, meaning "that, such a"] **true** faith made complete, that is, clarified to be true and valid, James 2:22.
    - b. This sacrifice of Isaac fulfilled the Genesis 15:6 claim that Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God, Jas. 2:23. The deed *showed* he *truly believed!*
    - c. Thus, one is "justified" or **better** "vindicated" as having **truly** believed by works, not by faith only, v. 24.
    - d. James also noted the "justification" or **better** the "vindication" of Rahab the harlot who exhibited the reality of her faith in God by receiving Israel's spies and sending them safely away, James 2:25.
  - 9. In summation, James claimed that just as the body without the spirit is dead, so "the" [anaphoric article again, meaning "that, such a"] faith, the claim of mere faith without works, is also a dead faith, James 2:26.

Lesson: *We are justified by faith without works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but if our faith is a TRUE faith, it will display itself as true in good works in our walk, what Paul noted in Ephesians 2:10 and James taught in James 2:14-26.*

Application: *If we SAY we have believed in Christ, may we SHOW the REALITY of that faith BY good works.*