

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
James: A Sermonic Call Unto Practical Godliness
Part V: Godliness In Relation To A True Faith That Is Verified By Works
(James 2:14-26)

I. Introduction

- A. Ephesians 2:8-9 claims one is justified by grace through faith, not by works, but groups in Christendom have claimed James 2:14, 17 teaches that one must perform various works to be saved.
- B. We view James 2:14-26 in depth in order to comprehend its truth (as follows):

II. Godliness In Relation To A True Faith That Is Verified By Works, James 2:14-26.

- A. James could not have meant that one was saved by faith and works opposite Ephesians 2:8-9 as follows:
 - 1. We discovered in our first lesson that the James who wrote this epistle was the half-brother of Jesus, and Jesus informed Paul that justification was by faith alone, Acts 26:15-18; Galatians 1:8-12!
 - 2. Also James would not have contradicted the belief that salvation was by faith alone since he officiated the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council where Peter and Paul so strongly asserted that view, Acts 15:1-2, 6-11.
- B. Thus, we study the Greek New Testament at James 2:14 and make the following helpful observations:
 - 1. The last part of the verse has a question formatted in a way that makes it a rhetorical question that expects a negative answer, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 825. The question would thus be better rendered: "The (such a) faith cannot save him, can it?"
 - 2. Of significance is the presence of the definite article, *he* translated "the" that modifies the word "faith" in James 2:14: it signals a reference to the faith described in the earlier question of James 2:14a, the faith that has no evidence of itself in the form of works, Ibid.; U. B. S. Greek N. T., 1963, p. 783.
 - 3. In other words, James was arguing that if a man claimed to have "faith", but he had no works in his life that gave evidence that this faith was genuine, *such* a "faith" could not save since it was not real, Ibid.
- C. James' argument in James 2:14-26 is thus that works necessarily **must accompany** faith to **verify** that the **faith** behind such works is a **TRUE** faith, so we interpret James 2:15-26 in line with this view as follows:
 - 1. To illustrate his point about the need for works to verify true faith, James wrote that if a believer said to a needy fellow Christian, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," but did not provide what the believer needed, there was no benefit to his even making that remark, James 2:15-16 KJV. Indeed, faith without accompanying works that evidence that faith is real is a false faith, James 2:17.
 - 2. James 2:18 has been greatly debated as to its meaning simply because the original Greek text did not have quotation marks: (a) either the critic is stating the whole verse, in which case he would argue, "Faith is not the key; what counts is works," Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 826), or (b) he is saying only, "Thou hast faith, and I have works," to which James responds in the latter part of James 2:18, R. V. G. Tasker, The General Epistle of James, 1974, p. 64-66. (c) Either way, James contextually strongly asserts that there is no partition between a true faith and its evidential works, that you can not have one without the other if one's faith is a genuine faith, Ibid., Tasker, p. 66
 - 3. To clarify, James wrote that one may assert the Judaistic belief that God is One (James 2:19a), but the demons believe that, and tremble over it, but this does not mean their faith is reliance on God since there is no evidence in works of such a fact, Jas . 2:19b; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 - 4. To illustrate once again that faith without evidential works is a dead faith, James referred to Abraham's offering up of his son Isaac as evidence that his faith in God was genuine, James 2:20-23.
 - 5. In this sense, just as "Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith . . . James said that Abraham was justified by faith evidenced by what he did," James 2:24 NIV.
 - 6. James then referred to Rahab the harlot's justification seen in her protecting Israel's spies, James 2:25. [Note: James does not approve of Rahab's lying about the spies to protect them (Joshua 2:4-6), only her faith that led her to protect them!] Thus, a genuine faith will evidence itself in works, James 2:26.

Lesson: *If we believers claim to have truly trusted in Christ to be saved, then there should be a change in us that gives evidence of the spiritual new birth, a change that shows up in faith-validating works!*

Application: *May we who truly trust in Christ not be satisfied just to believe that salvation is by faith alone, but work out in our lives the EVIDENCE of that faith in the form of godly works, Phil. 2:12-13.*