

THE GREAT DIVORCE

Counterfeit Faith

James 2:14

December 6, 2009

INTRODUCTION: James asks two questions in **verse 14:**

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”

“Can faith save him?”

These questions lead us to believe that there were some in James’ day who spoke the language of Christianity without reflecting the reality of its truth in their lives.

James’ entire letter consists of the tests of true faith, all of which are the practical fruits of righteousness in the life of the believer.

Don’t forget, James has mentioned **“deception”** three times already in **Chapter 1:16, 22, 26.**

Works or fruit in the life of the believer is *perseverance in trials, 1:1-12; obedience to the word, 1:13-25; pure and undefiled religion, 1:26-27; impartiality, 2:1-13; righteous works, 2:14-26; control of the tongue, 3:1-12; true wisdom, 3:13-18, etc.*

In **James 2:14-26**, faith and works are mentioned together ten times in just 13 verses. James will draw this conclusion: *“Faith that is not evidenced by a life of integrity is not biblical faith at all.”* To James, works are not an added extra to faith, but an essential expression of it.

As one approaches this passage, they must be careful to note that the purpose of this passage is not to teach *what* justifies, but to identify *who* is justified.

This passage has been one debated through the years as one that possibly is a contrast to Paul’s teaching on the subject of faith. However, James is not in conflict with Paul, but both were standing back-to-back fighting two common enemies. Paul opposes works-righteous legalism. James opposes easy believe-ism. Both men make clear that we are going to be judged on the basis of what we have done, for that is a sure indicator of genuine salvation.

John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Paul’s teaching about faith and works focuses on the time before conversion, and James’ focus is after conversion.

Paul denies any salvation to pre-conversion works, but James is pleading for the absolute necessity of post-conversion works.

Paul says works cannot bring us to Christ; James says after we come to Christ they are imperative.

FINAL INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

In **Romans**, the lost man is declared righteous by God's grace apart from works; that man is freely justified by faith and not by works of righteousness. In contrast, James announced that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. He said that there are things which should come to pass in the life of the believer, indicating that he is, indeed, a saved person. When Paul spoke of justification, he spoke of an act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while he is in a sinning state. On the other hand, when James spoke of justification, he referred to the demonstration whereby a man's work validates him as a genuine believer.

I. AN INTERROGATION THAT'S INTENDED TO SHOCK. 14

In **John 5:31-47**, the Apostle speaks of a Fourfold Witness of Jesus Christ. Then, note his statement and challenge:

John 5:38-39, "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Remember, Paul described how one is actually saved. James described how one should live after he is saved.

"What does it profit" – gain, good, increase

Both questions are rhetorical questions which demand negative answers. What good is it , or what effect does it have?

Matthew 16:26, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"if someone says he has faith" – does not say, "*he has faith,*" but "**says he has faith.**"

◆ a say-so faith

◆ a verbal affirmation faith (claims to have faith)

◆ an assent to a creed-type faith

Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

Talk is cheap!

Luke 6:46, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

John Bunyan, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, referred to such a person as, "Mr. Talkative." Words without works.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, "People with dead faith substitute words for deeds. They know the correct vocabulary for prayer and testimony, and can even quote the right verses from the Bible; but their walk does not measure up to their talk."

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?"

James looks upon works as proof of faith, not as means of salvation.

Acts 26:12-18 speaks of Paul's life before Christ

Acts 26:19-23 speaks of Paul's life after conversion

Acts 26:19-20, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance."

Note the religious people's response to Paul

Acts 26:21, "For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me."

James refutes a faith that only says but never shows evidence of reality; has nothing to validate that faith.

"works" – deeds that spring from genuine faith. James is saying that if one has been truly saved his life will be changed.

In other words, a faith that does not demonstrate its genuineness in works is not genuine.

ILLUSTRATE: "Funeral Home Visitation"

James 2:26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Not all faith is saving faith!

CONTRAST: I.C.U.

“Can you hear me? Squeeze my hand.” They respond to your words. However, leave the I.C.U. and go to the funeral home. Ask them a question. It is a body without the spirit, so is faith without works; **DEAD!**

Note the satire from James’ lesson.

I was hungry, and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel in the cellar and prayed for my release.

I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless, and you preached to me the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me.

You seem so holy, so close to God, but I’m still very hungry and lonely, and cold.

III. AN INTERROGATION THAT QUESTIONS SALVATION. 14

“Can faith save him?” – there is an article in the Greek text in front of the word **faith**

“Can that faith save him?”

Are you a *professor* and a *possessor*?

John Bunyan wrote, “*At the day of doom the question will be, were you doers or tellers only?*”

The **faith** of v.14 is

- ◆ Profitless to the person who has it
- ◆ Profitless to the people who need it

Therefore, if the outside manifestations of faith are absent, we have every reason to doubt the existence of faith inside.

A vital faith displays itself in action.