

James

CLA Spring 2014

Jim Hoffman

Question

When James says, “Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works” what kind of ‘works’ do you suppose he had in mind?

Name some examples.

James 2:14-26

- **What we will cover today may make some nervous.**
- **Some may wonder if they have enough works, and if the works they do have are good enough.**
- **Do not forget Ephesians 2:8-9 Ever!!**

James 2:14-26

- **14** What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? **15** Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, **16** and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? **17** So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. **18** Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

James 2:14-26

- **19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. 20 How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? 21 Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. 23 And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. 24 So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.**

James 2:14-26

- **25 Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. 26 Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good work.**

An Important Debate

- **If James were the only scripture we had, we could, and would, easily conclude that we are saved by faith in Christ AND by good works.**
- **But we have others scriptures, like Romans, that clearly teach that we are saved by faith in Christ alone.**
- **So an interesting debate is set up that continues in some circles even today.**

Romans 3:27 – 4:5

- **27 Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. 28 So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law. 29 After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. 30 There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. 31 Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.**

Romans 3:27 – 4:5

- **4 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." 4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.**

Reconciling James and Paul

- **The things James asserts:**
 - **There is ‘dead’ faith (no accompanying activities)**
 - **Works are required of the Christian and one cannot be a Christian without good works.**

Reconciling James and Paul

- **The things Paul asserts:**
 - **Works play no role whatsoever in acquiring salvation.**
 - **We are saved by grace through faith alone; to add anything to the equation is heresy.**

Reconciling James and Paul

- According to James, if we do not have good works in addition to our faith in Christ, we are not saved – in fact, our faith is useless.
- According to Paul, we are saved by grace through faith apart for any works – in fact, our works are useless.
- So is there a contradiction here, or is it merely two sides of the same coin?

Reconciling James and Paul

- The strongest statement James makes in his writings is 2:24 “So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.”
- The book of James was written about 10 years before Romans, but not before the Apostle Paul began his radical teachings.
- So was James writing to refute Paul’s teachings on ‘grace alone’, or he could have been addressing a misuse of Paul’s teachings?

Reconciling James and Paul

- **"Trust only in movement, life happens at the level of action. We are not what we say, but we are what we do." Dr. Alfred Adler**
- **When asked if his 5 win, 5 loss team was better than their record showed, Bill Parcels said, "we are what our record says we are".**
- **"We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." Martin Luther**

Reconciling James and Paul

- **There is even something, I believe, deep in our soul, that cannot be fooled by a mere intellectual ascent to dogma.**
- **1st John indicators of salvation:**
 - **A desire to obey the Word. (1st John 2:3)**
 - **A love for other Christians. (3:14)**
 - **A lifestyle that is characterized by righteousness. (3:9)**
 - **A sense of the indwelling person of Christ. (3:24)**
 - **Answered prayer. (5:14,15)**

Reconciling James and Paul

- Eph 2:8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.
- We need clarity here – no one ever has, or ever will be saved by works. (the best we can come up with apart from Christ is like filthy rags)
- And additional clarity – if good works do not follow our profession, our profession is ineffective because we are saved 'to' good works.

So What are the Works of a Christian?

- **James actually gives us some of them -**
 - **How we respond to trials. (James 1:3-4)**
 - **How we respond to temptation. (James 1:12-14)**
 - **How we respond people. (James 2:2-4)**
 - **How we respond to the poor. (James 2:15-16)**

So What are the Works of a Christian?

- Col 3:17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.
- Col 3:23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.
24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.
- The ‘works’ God requires are often the very ordinary tasks of life done to honor and glorify (reveal) Him.

So What are the Works of a Christian?

- **1st Thes 4:11 Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before.**
- **Heb 12:14 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.**
- **Psalm 34:14 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.**

So What are the Works of a Christian?

- **Rom 12:9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! 17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.**

Questions