**FAITH AND WORKS**

JAMES 2:14-26

James is a passionate pastor who wants his people to live in light of the gospel they profess and not to let their situation determine their attitudes and actions. He is a practical pastor who pulls no punches as he shows the compelling connection between faith and works.

This relationship between faith and works is incredibly current. We face the same temptation to antinomianism—the belief that we can have Jesus as Savior but not as Lord—that Christians have always faced. James warns us against such deception.

*James* says “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:2). *Paul* says we are “justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Rom 3:23). How can both be true?

Actually, these statements are fully compatible. James and Paul even use the same example to prove their point. In Romans 4 Paul refers to Abraham (Gen. 15:6) to explain that justification is God's declaration that a sinner is righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ. James refers to an event thirty years later (Genesis 22) to show that Abraham’s faith was “justified,” or proved, when he was willing to offer his son as a sacrifice in obedience to God’s command. Paul refers to the legal justification of a person *by God.*  James refers to the judicial justification of a person’s faith *before the world.* Both point to same thing—our need for a Savior to redeem us from sin and to empower us do the works He ordained for us to do (Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13).

*Faith and works are distinct but inseparable.* As the Reformers put it 500 years ago, **it is faith alone that justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone.** The biblical message is clear. Justification is *by* grace alone *through* faith alone, but it is not a faith that *is* alone—it inevitably produces obedience. **Faith without works is dead, and works without faith is dead** (Rom 14:23). Saving faith, birthed through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is alive. It grows. It loves. It serves. It trusts and obeys God’s Word. If it doesn't, it’s dead. It's false. It never was saving faith. **Saving faith never dies; false faith never Iives.** The Holy Spirit produces obedience in those the Father justifies on the basis of the work of Christ.

This glorious gospel compels us to prayerfully examine our affections, commitments, words, finances, marriages, friendships, leisure—*everything*—to ask if our lives demonstrate the faith we profess. If so, thank God; if not, “repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with…repentance (Acts 26:20). Then anticipate that He will do in and through us more than we can imagine “according to the power at work within us” (Eph 3:20).

SUSAN HUNT

*Women’s Study Bible*, page 2082