

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

A DEAD FAITH

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART TWENTY NINE OF SIXTY FOUR*

James plainly informs us, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself" (James 2:17). If faith does not work, it is useless. This Scripture indicates clearly that faith may not lead to works. If it does not produce works, it is of no value. In itself it is dead. James is contrasting the faith that is active and the faith that is dead. Faith without works does not accomplish anything. Just as long as it continues by itself, it is without value. When it acts, it is not dead or useless.

James is not the only writer to use this description of profitable faith. Paul speaks of the "work of faith" (I Thess. 1:3), and "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Some have sought to make James contradict Paul's teaching of salvation by faith. There can be no contradiction as both were led by the same Spirit. Man's efforts to change Bible doctrine or his ignorance of the truth on the subject led to the idea of contradiction. Once we understand what God wills, both writers are in perfect harmony.

James uses the word "works" to refer to obedience to the law of Christ. Those things which are done in compliance with the law of liberty bring blessings to man (Jas. 1:25). Paul is just as emphatic in such teaching. He speaks of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The arguments of men for "salvation by faith only" are concerned primarily with avoiding the command of Jesus to be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21). If baptism were an ordinance of human origin, such arguments might be justified, but baptism is a command of Christ. Can any faith save if it denies any command of Christ? No alien can become a child of God while refusing to obey the law of Christ. The whole tenor of the New Testament is one of insistence upon active, working faith. Each person must "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Can that faith save? (James 2:14).

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