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James 2:14-26

I. The Key Concern: There Is a Kind of Faith that Does Not Save

1. **The key word: faith.**
2. **The key concern: there is a kind of faith that is useless, dead, and doesn't save.**
3. **The key contrast: two kinds of faith—this non-saving faith and saving-faith.**

II. What Is Non-Saving Faith?

1. **A mere profession of faith**
“what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” (v14)
2. **A dead faith**
“faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v17)
3. **A faith that does not give evidence with works**
“But someone will say, ‘you have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (v18)
4. **A faith that is merely intellectual assent to Christian truth**
“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe that—and shudder!” (v19)

III. What Is Genuine, Saving Faith?

Non-Saving Faith	Saving Faith
<p>A mere profession of faith</p> <p><i>“what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” (v14)</i></p>	<p>Faith that is not less, but more than a profession</p>
<p>A dead faith</p> <p><i>“faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v17)</i></p>	<p>A faith that is living and active</p>
<p>A faith without evidence in works</p> <p><i>“But someone will say, ‘you have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (v18)</i></p>	<p>A faith that gives evidence in good works</p>
<p>Faith that is merely intellectual assent to Christian truth</p> <p><i>“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe that—and shudder!” (v19)</i></p>	<p>Faith that is not less, but more than intellectual assent to Christian truth</p>
	<p>Faith that is active and brought to completion with good works</p> <p><i>“you see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works” (v22)</i></p>
	<p>Faith that trusts God as is the means of being declared righteous and being called God’s friend</p> <p><i>“And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’—and he was called a friend of God” (v23)</i></p>

IV. The New Testament Consistently Reinforces This View of Saving Faith

1. The Apostle Paul agrees: Saving faith always precedes and leads to a transformed life

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

John Calvin put it this way: “faith alone... justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone”

2. Good works confirm the reality of saving faith; the absence of good works calls into question the presence of saving faith.

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Ephesians 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

2Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

3. Good works are viewed as a necessary condition (but not the basis) of entering eternal life

Matthew 25:31-46

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Romans 8:12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

4. The truths that makes sense of this: The New Covenant promise of a new heart

Jeremiah 31:33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

V. How does James 2:24 reconcile with Romans 3:28?

1. Different contexts

Paul is dealing with legalists; James is dealing with antinomians.

2. **Different use of the word “faith.”**

3. **Different emphasis with the word “justify”**

4. **Summary**

James agrees with Paul that we are initially accepted before God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—apart from any works.

Paul agrees with James that good works are the necessary evidence of true, saving faith.

They agree: We are saved through faith alone, but not through a faith that remains alone.

Implications

1. **Some people should lose their assurance of salvation—and trust Christ truly for true assurance.**

“Here is the genuinely frightening truth that should give you and me pause. It is possible to claim, *and to believe you possess*, genuine saving faith when in fact you do not. It is possible, in other words, to believe you have things sorted with God—that you will not face his judgment, that there is hope for you beyond the grave—and yet remain under the judgment of God. It is possible, in short, unknowingly to possess counterfeit faith” (Sam Allberry, *James for You*, 74).

2. **Others should not unnecessarily doubt their salvation—but trust Christ and thank him for his work in their lives.**

3. **We should all be encouraged: The good works James has in view are radically ordinary expressions of faith and love.**