

Faith Without Works is Dead, a Familiar Phrase

The Great Debate of Paul and James.

Paul taught:

(Ephesians 2:8-10) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast. {10} For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

v10 says that we are HIS workmanship - meaning the 'works' you receive of a Christian are works of God given through that person. If I perform a baptism, or preach a message that is given from inspiration of the Holy Spirit and you marvel at that, don't marvel at me, but of God, because it is He that did the work. A violin alone is not so impressive until the musician plays the tune of Mozart or Beethoven. And even then, the musician is not accredited for the music they play, but the composer. The musician is like the clay pot, the Potter is the composer of the piece, and the music that is produced are the works held in the clay pot at the behest of the Potter. In other words, without the composer, the musician could not play the piece and make music. Therefore, the faith (practice) must come first.

James taught:

(James 2:14-18) "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? {15} If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, {16} And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? {17} Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. {18} Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

v15 gives an example of a musician who has an audience to perform their work for, yet they do not perform it well. While they claim to practice faith, the faith is dead because they are not producing the music for which they claim to have practiced. Therefore, the question begs; do they even have faith? For the works that they would perform would come only from God, according to the passage we read above. And if God does not give unto them the works to perform, logic would deduce that there is no relationship between the composer and the musician.

So, which is it? These passages are often misunderstood and used to show contradictions within the Word of God, but let it not be so! They actually agree with each other, they are not a matter of "the chicken or the egg", but rather that of "which produces which". Some see the passage (incorrectly) from James as being, "Do works and you will have faith," and Paul's point being, "Have faith, works do not save." The complimentary understanding of them lies in knowing first, A.) what true works are, understanding that this passage states that one

produces the other, and B.) whether works save or faith saves. It's a comparison of apples to oranges.

Without the Holy Spirit, you are unable.

(Romans 3:10-18) "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: {11} There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. {12} They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. {13} Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: {14} Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: {15} Their feet are swift to shed blood: {16} Destruction and misery are in their ways: {17} And the way of peace have they not known: {18} There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Why can't we do good (according to God's standard of good) works?

(Romans 3:23) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

(Romans 5:12) "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Because we are in our sin, we will be eternally separated from God:

(Romans 6:23) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But God...

(Romans 5:8) "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Therefore, believe and confess:

(Romans 10:9-10, 13) "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {13} For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

And so, in believing in one's heart, one will profess with their mouth and therefore be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 8:26-39) "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. {27} And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, {28} Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. {29} Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. {30} And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? {31} And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he

desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. {32} The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: {33} In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. {34} And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? {35} Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. {36} And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? {37} And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. {38} And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. {39} And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

(v35, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Rom 10:17)

Sermon Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:8-10

James 2:14-18

Romans 3:10-18

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:12

Romans 6:23

Romans 5:8

Acts 8:26-39

Romans 10:17