

Faith verses Works

Introduction

Does the book of James contradict the teaching of Paul or vice versa? The Bible never contradicts as we will now show.

Here are some examples of what Paul taught, Romans 3:20 "For no one is put right in God's sight by doing what the Law requires; what the Law does is to make us know that we have sinned."

Romans 3:28 "For we conclude that a person is put right with God only through faith, and not by doing what the Law commands."

Romans 5:1 "Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Galatians 3:10-11 "Those who depend on obeying the Law live under a curse. For the scripture says, "Whoever does not always obey everything that is written in the book of the Law is under God's curse!" Now, it is clear that no one is put right with God by means of the Law, because the scripture says, "Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall live."

Romans 4:1-3 "What shall we say, then, of Abraham, the father of our race? What was his experience? If he was put right with God by the things he did, he would have something to boast about--but not in God's sight. The scripture says, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous."

The following are some examples of what James wrote, James 1:21 "So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you."

James 2:10-12 "Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. For the same one who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a lawbreaker if you commit murder. Speak and act as people who will be judged by the law that sets us free."

James 2:14 "My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? Can that faith save you?"

James 2:21-22 "How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions."

James 2:24 "You see, then, that it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and not by our **faith alone**."

Reconciling these statements of Paul and James.

Paul looks at it as before a man is converted with reference to the question how a sinner may be justified before God.

James looks at it as after a man is converted with reference to the question how he may show that he has the genuine faith which justifies.

Paul affirms that the sinner is justified before God only by faith in the Lord Jesus, and not by his own works.

James affirms that it is not dead faith which justifies but only a faith that is productive of good works and that its genuineness is seen only by good works.

Paul affirms that whatever else a man has, if he has not faith in the Lord Jesus, he cannot be justified.

James affirms that no matter what pretended faith a man has, if it is not a faith which is adapted to produce good works, it is of no value in the matter of justification.

It is not justification in the sight of men that Paul and James speak, but of justification in the sight of God. Both use the word "justify" in this sense - Paul as affirming that it is only by faith that it can be done.

James as affirming in addition, not in contradiction, that it is by a faith that produces holiness, and no other.

The following scriptures show that Paul was not saying that we should live by faith alone:

2Corinthians 5:10 "For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life."

2Corinthians 9:6 "Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop."

Romans 2:6 "For God will reward each of us according to what we have done."

James demonstrates clearly in the following scripture that faith alone will not bring salvation:

James 2:19 "Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe---and tremble with fear."

Summary

If we truly love God with all our heart, might and soul and have faith in Him, then we will desire to be obedient to God, and if we are obedient to God and His Word, then the fruit of our faith will be that of good works. As James shows in James 2:19, the demons believe in God, but they are not saved. James 2:26 says, "So then, as the body without the spirit is dead, also faith without actions is dead." James is not contradicting Paul's teaching (or vice versa) but showing that in addition to faith should come the fruit of faith, which is good works. Both go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. So as James 2:24 says, "You see, then, that it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and **not by our faith alone**." Paul was one of the key persons in starting the Church on earth and hence was dealing mostly with new Christians, where many were trying to be saved by works in keeping the Law of Moses (ceremonial law). The Galatians are an example of this as they tried to achieve salvation through works alone in keeping the Mosaic Law, instead of by faith in Christ. James on the other hand, seemed to be aiming his teaching more at the converted where many seemed to have wrongly concluded that faith alone was adequate for salvation, so James showed them where they were in error.