

## James 2:14-20

Chase Green

**Verse 14:** "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" This is the first of a long section of verses that proves that faith without action is not enough to save. By "action," I mean "obedience," or as James states, "works."

This is by no means a contradiction of passages like Eph. 2:8-9, which says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Paul is referring to salvation by "grace ... through faith" as the Gospel system as a whole. That is, we can only be saved through the Gospel of Christ, oftentimes referred to as "THE faith" (i.e. Acts 6:7; Gal. 2:20; Jude 3; etc.) and often described as "grace" (i.e. Acts 11:23; 13:43; Acts 15:11; etc.). Interestingly, the term "the faith" is also connected to "obedience" in Romans 1:5 and other places. I wonder why?

**Verses 15-16:** "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you (Christians, TCG) 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?" Herein lies an example of Christians (those who have already obeyed the gospel) neglecting the daily physical needs of their brethren, thus being disobedient. Their faith is worthless, bringing about no profit. They have LEFT the faith, as proven by their disobedience.

**Verse 17:** "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." The type of faith described here is "dead" and "alone." Those who say that we are saved by faith (belief) alone represent a grave misunderstanding of the meaning of true faith. True faith leads to OBEDIENCE. Examine all of the people described in the "Hall of Fame" of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, and the common denominator is that their faith always propelled them to OBEY God. If a person claims to have saving faith in God, but then goes about his merry way, living as he pleases, perhaps even living a "mostly good" life, but uninvolved in the work of the church, and not demonstrating any real change in his life, his "faith" is dead and alone, and it cannot save him!

**Verse 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." In other words, faith and works are not mutually exclusive. They go hand in hand! You cannot separate true Biblical faith from works!

**Verse 19:** "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." James is really tearing apart the doctrine of "faith only." Surely one can conclude that these demons are not saved. They believe in the one true God. They KNOW He exists, for He has condemned them to everlasting torment! You better believe that they believe in Him! But they TREMBLE! And they are not saved!

**Verse 20:** "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" Again, faith and works go hand in hand. To separate religious works of obedience from faith would make those works dead, and to separate faith from religious works of obedience (both in our initial conversion and in continued obedience, by the way) would render our faith dead! It's that simple, but sadly many people continue to teach the erroneous doctrine of "faith only."