

Skegness Community Church - Weekly Bible Study 2025

52 passages of Scripture that every believer should know

Week 39 - A FAITH THAT WORKS: James 2:26

“As the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without deeds (works) is dead”

There has always been an ongoing controversy over the nature of our salvation. People tend to gravitate towards one of two extreme views. One view overemphasises faith while forgetting deeds (works); the other overemphasises deeds (works) while forgetting faith. The conflict between faith and deeds (works) is as old as the church itself. So this week's passage is not the easiest to understand. However, we should have in mind that all through Scripture, the emphasis is on the fact that salvation is wholly by grace through faith in Christ Jesus alone and “not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9). However, the Bible also teaches that true saving faith is always accompanied by fruit and will result in good works. Many misunderstand the message of James. He was not talking about a faith **with** deeds (works), but a faith **that** works. On the surface it appears to some that the message of Paul in Ephesians and the message of James are in total opposition to one another. However, in reality, the two do not contradict each other; in fact they actually complement each other

FAITH AND WORKS ACCORDING TO JAMES

James and Paul were coming at the same issue from different perspectives. Paul was writing to the Jews who were saying that one had to add works of the law to faith in order to receive salvation. In other words his emphasis was on faith alone as the basis for salvation. James, on the other hand, was writing to people who went to the other extreme. They claimed to have faith but, in reality, had only an intellectual, and not practical, understanding of faith. Therefore his emphasis was on what Jesus called the “fruit” of our faith. James is simply arguing for the evidence of faith.

FAITH AND WORKS ACCORDING TO PAUL

Paul consistently emphasised that no one enters God's kingdom except by faith and by faith alone. James was in agreement with him. He began his letter by saying, “(God) chose to give us birth through the word of truth” (James 1:18). In the second chapter, James was simply reinforcing the point that good works are the natural response of true saving faith. He was not saying that deeds (works) are the requirement **for** salvation, but that they are the result **of** our salvation. It is not faith **with** works at issue here, but faith **that** works. Paul reminds us that “we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is never alone.

As you memorise this verse, meditate on the relationship between faith and works. And remember, it is a faith that works that pleases God.