

The Demons Also Believe

by Hendrik Joubert

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19) What caused James to compare one who considered himself a believer with *the demons*? He seems no less harsh when he continues: ***But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (v20)*** He seems to be at wits end with the individual who claims to be saved merely because he believes, or by faith *only*. Are we not saved by faith *alone*, without *any* works, as some believe Paul is teaching when he writes: ***For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law? Romans 3:28.*** Is James contradicting Paul, or does Paul contradict James?

There is another possibility, that some are honestly misunderstanding what Paul says, or willfully ***distort*** (twist) what he says ***to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15-16)*** James' statements are so simple and to the point that a prominent theologian (who disagrees with the inspired writer) considered James a book of *straw*, putting it last in *his* cannon. The two words *faith* and *alone* (or *only*) are used together *only* once in the Scriptures: ***You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:24)***

Paul writes that one is justified by faith apart from *specific* works, *works of the Law*. In most his letters Paul deals with the prophesied change in law (**Hebrews 8:7-13**) as he worked on convincing his fellow Israelites that they cannot be saved by the law (**Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16**), or by circumcision (**Galatians 5:2**) without keeping it perfectly. (**Galatians 3:12**) One who is able to emulate Jesus in this regard would deserve salvation and could therefore boast in his works of righteousness.

Paul explains that the law was *taken out of the way* and *nailed to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)* In **Romans 3** he discusses the revelation of ***the righteousness of God apart from the law***, which he identified in chapter **1:16-17** as the gospel. In **Romans 3:27** he refers to the gospel as ***a law of faith: Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.***

Whatever does he mean by ***a law of faith***? In his opening statements of the letter to the **Romans** he writes that he received his apostleship ***to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, (1:5)*** and concludes the letter: ***Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;... (Romans 16:25-26)*** To the Thessalonians he writes that God will judge ***those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:8)***

The gospel is a *law* which contains rules based upon the principle of faith, and is therefore often referred to as ***the faith***. (**Jude 3; Philemon 5; Titus 1:13; 2 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 6:10, 21; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 3:9; Colossians 1:23; Philippians 1:27; Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 6:10; Galatians 3:23; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Acts 6:7; Acts 13:8**) Faith in God, and in His righteousness, is demonstrated through obedience to these rules which, unlike the works of the law, are not meritorious. By these acts of obedience faith is brought to life. Notice that a dead faith does not save, and then come to life. Faith must be alive in order to save. (**James 2:20-23**) Who could ever successfully argue that he deserved salvation because he made an appeal for the blood of Christ by being buried in water by another? (**1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16**)

How could one claim to believe in God when you change or ignore what He says? ***Why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? (Luke 6:46)*** Consider carefully the following statement by a proponent of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, without any actions. I underlined sections in his statement and also in direct quotations of what Jesus said: "The Scripture, however, does not teach that one must believe, be baptized, and behave a certain way to be justified. It teaches that a person is saved *at the point of faith*." (Michael Cocoris, http://www.chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/v3n1-Cocoris-revised.pdf. February 15, 2007, 10h10)

Compare the statement – point-by-point – with what Jesus Christ the Son of God said: ***"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16)*** ***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;... (Matthew 28:19-20)*** The elements underlined in the author's statement directly contradicts what the Lord Jesus Himself said, in the order the author mentions them. Now consider again the tone James takes with those who advance this false doctrine.