

Works

Good Works are an expression of faith

"You see a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone".

James 2:24

In the New Testament, **faith** is crucially important for it is the means or instrumental cause of salvation. It is by faith that Christians are justified before God. (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:1-5; Gal 2:16), live their lives (2 Cor. 5:7), and sustain their lives (Heb. 10:35-12:3). We might describe faith as believing trust or trustful belief based on the testimony received from God.

Faith cannot be described in subjective terms as a confident and optimistic mind-set, or in passive terms as compliance to a accepted belief or confidence in God without commitment to God. Faith is an object-oriented response shaped by that which is trusted, namely God. God promises **all** as is set forth in the scriptures. Faith is a whole soul response involving heart, will and affections, (fondness). Older reformed theology analyzed faith as **Knowledge**, (acquaintance with the content of the gospel), plus **agreement**, (recognition that the gospel is true), plus **trust and reliance**, (personal dependence on the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for salvation, with thankful cessation, (termination), of all attempts to save oneself by establishing one's own righteousness: Rom.4:5; 10:3.

Without trust and reliance there can be no faith, but without knowledge and agreement there can be no trust and reliance.

God's gift of faith is a fruit of applicatory (suitable for applying) illumination (enlightenment) by the Holy Spirit, and it ordinarily has in it some measure of conscious assurance through the witnessing of the Spirit, (Rom. 8:15-15. Calvin defined faith as "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Justification by works (things we have done) is the heresy of legalism. Justification, as Luther insisted, is by faith only (faith apart from observing the law) Rom. 3:28, because it is in Christ and by Christ only, and depends on what He is as distinct from what we are. But if "good works" do not follow from our profession of faith, we are as yet believing from the head, not from the heart: in other words, justifying faith is not yet ours. The truth is that though we are justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is never alone. It produces moral fruit, it expresses itself through love (Gal. 5:6); it transforms one's way of living; it begets virtue. This is only because holiness is commanded, but also because of the regenerate heart, of which trust and reliance is the expression.

When James says faith without works is dead (a corpse) , he is using the word in the limited sense of how those addresses were using it. When he says that one is justified by what one does, not by faith alone, he means by justified "proved genuine vindicated from suspicion of being a hypocrite and a fraud." James makes the point that empty belief saves no one. Paul denounces the idea of salvation by dead works; James rejects salvation by dead faith.

Though the believers works do not merit salvation and always have something imperfect about them (Rom. 7:13-20; Gal. 5:17) in their character as expressions of the love and fidelity that faith calls forth they are the basis on which God promises rewards in Heaven (Phil. 3:12-14; 2Tim. 4:7-8).