

LIVING FAITH

The theme of James 2:14-26 is “faith without works is dead” (2:17,20,26). The Greek word for faith is *pistis* (noun / Eph.2:8 / divine system). The verb form is *pisteuo* and is translated believe (John 3:16 / human volition).

The point James is making is very important and greatly misunderstood among Christians today. The issue for James is not faith versus works but living faith versus dead faith.

In this passage, James is refuting an erroneous teaching regarding faith and grace versus faith and legalistic works (2:14, 16, 18 – “says”).

The point James is making about a *living faith* is “*it must have a working object to complete it.*”

This lesson will study FIVE aspects of a LIVING FAITH as discussed by James.

1. The working object of the unbeliever’s saving faith is the gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph.2:5-10).

Faith is trust of the object to complete its work. How do we know if we are saved? (Read for the answer - John 20:31). The working object of grace salvation is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor.15:3-4; Rom.1:16).

2. The working object of the believer’s faith is bible doctrine.

“So faith (*te pistis*) (no verb) from (*ek+ablative of source*) hearing (*he akoe*), and hearing (*akoe*) by (*dia+ablative of intermediate agent*) the word (*rhema / category of the word of God / bible doctrine*) of Christ (*gospel*).” (Rom.10:17)

James asks two questions in 2:14 regarding the principle – “*faith is trust of the object (BD / promise) to complete its work.*”

- “If (3cc) a man says (*lego / p.a.subj*) he has faith, but (*de / adversative / contrast*) he has (*echo / p.a.subj*) no works?”
- “Can that faith save (*deliver*) him?” [The Greek expects a NO answer!]

This is addressed to believers (My brethren/ 2:14). The Greek word for save is *sozo* (a.a.infin) deliverance in the Christian Way of Life (CWL).

Faith is trust of the object to complete its work (James 2:21-23; Heb.11:17-19). This is emphasized by the final stage of the faith cycle of the Christian Way of Life (CWL).

Hearing
(Rom.10:17)

Completion
(James 2:22)

Believing
(Heb.4:2)

Applying
(2 Cor.5:7)

3. James gives the viewpoint of another believer needing the application of the work of a living faith (2:15-17/ hypothetical case).

It is used to answer the two questions of 2:14 and illustrate sozo (grace deliverance in the Christian Way of Life (CWL)).

It is used to refute erroneous teaching on faith and works (one of you say / gave only biblical words (Mark 5:25-34). Note the rhetorical question at the end of 2:16 –“what use (to ophelos / profit) is it?”

4. From the viewpoint of the needy observer, the application of faith and not the statement of faith is what meets his needs at this time and bears the greater witness (2:15-17).

Living faith is what the spiritual advancing believer believes God’s grace is able to do based on the promise of the word of God (Rom.4:16-21).

Faith is non-meritorious thinking (trust). There is no merit in the person with faith but in the object of faith for deliverance (Heb.11:23-28 / four episodes of Moses’ faith / parents; Pharaoh; plight; and Passover).

When the believer’s faith has the word of God as it’s working object, there will be divine production. Divine production will result in deliverance (sozo) for you as well as others.

5. James declares that faith without a working object is dead – “Even (kai) so (houstos / demonstrative adverb) faith (he pistis), if (3cc) it has (echo / p.a.subj) no works, is (eimi / p.a.ind) dead (nekros), being by itself.” (2:18)

It is called (Nekros) or operational death, i.e. non-productive of any divine good.

The living faith of the dead has now become the dead faith of the living.