

BALANCED CHRISTIANITY: A NEXUS BETWEEN FAITH AND WORK IN THE BOOK OF JAMES

Introduction

The question of harmonizing faith and work is seen as almost every day issue. Some subscribed to the school of thought of *sola fidea and uberima fidea* i.e., faith alone and utmost good faith respectively. The likes of Martin Luther Jr.,¹ belong to this school of thought. There are several arguments among scholars on the subject of faith and works especially looking at Paul's argument for faith and James' on works. Also, several questions have been asked by critical minded individuals, on the feasibility of living a balanced Christian life.

According to Tenney, only the dead men see God's face i.e., those who are strictly driven by faith and not necessarily their works.² Can one's argument be based solely on this fact? He seems to be correct somehow but cannot be absolute. To this effect, Roberts opine that during the inception of the gospel, the Pentecost paved the way for the dissension of the Holy Spirit and after the manifestation at Pentecost; they were energized to work (heralding the gospel beyond the confine of Jerusalem).³ Smith was of similar opinion when he said "if one must be the man God uses, then, there is need to work for God to corroborate the faith he professes."⁴ In the same vein, faith during the age of enlightenment was vituperatively kicked at and people began to use their reasoning which Kant called *sapere aude*⁵ meaning have the courage to use your reasoning. Looking at this, one discovers that people from the age of enlightenment (15th – 17 century),⁶ no longer depend on the ideology of *sola fide* (faith alone) as it must be corroborated by works.

From the afore citations, it is evident that each person has different perception on the determinant(s) of godly or balanced Christian living. To some, especially some liberal paulinists, it is faith and faith alone. Martin Luther is one of the followers of Apostle Paul and he subscribed to faith alone. By the way, what is the view point of James on this subject matter? This is what this research focuses on.

¹ Carl F.H. Henry (ed.), *Jesus of Nazareth: Savoir and Lord* (Grand Rapids: W.E.B. Publishing Company, 1966), 211.

² Tommy Tenney, *The God Chasers "my Soul Follows Hard After Thee"* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 1999), 51-66.

³ Roberts Liadon, *God's General: The Revivalists* (Kaduna: Evangel Publishers, 2008), 19.

⁴ Oswald J. Smith, *The Man God Uses* (N.P., N.D., 108-120.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 1.

⁶ E. Cassiree, *The Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 17.

Faith and work are two different things and bringing it to the context of Christian faith; they are like the two sides of a coin which are inseparable. This work discusses the concept of “balance Christianity: faith and work in the book of James.” Effort is made to look at the rationale behind Apostle Paul’s emphasis on faith alone in the concluding part of the work. Thus, the researcher is answerable to prospective question(s) within the context of the book of James.

Laconic Clarification:

Faith is rooted in the belief in God or gods. It in other word is used in connection with a divinity. This is the same way it is used in this work

Work: the conventional understanding of work has to do with effort exerted to execute a task. However, work in the context of this paper has to do with ‘good deeds or charity.’

Different Views about Faith

It is good to make known some scholarly propositions about this concept (faith). The word faith means different things to different people. It is a word that has been much misused. Often time people say “have faith in yourself” and this is a popular saying. That, though popular, is not the biblical teaching on faith. It is however; better to say “have confidence on the yourself through your faith in the Lord.” Hebrews 11:1 gives a biblical definition of faith simply as *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. It is to be sure of that which has no absolute prove.⁷ Faith according to Theodore produces assurance that when God promises something to us, we will definitely receive it.⁸ The nature of Christian faith is not merely believing that certain things ‘are the case’ according to Barclay.⁹ That view of faith was popular for a time but is rightly discredited today. Credence should be given to Geoffrey Paul who stated that “Christian faith required among other things a spiritual life worked out in this world.”¹⁰

As said above, the term 'faith' has numerous connotations and is used in different ways, often depending on context however; there is need to go to the root meaning or the etymology of the word. In a quest for ascertaining the meaning of faith, there are some preliminary points to be considered. With few exceptions, the Greek word translated “faith” is *πίστις*, and also, generally, the Greek word translated “believe” is *πιστεύω*. *πιστεύω* means “to have faith”¹¹ and derives from *πίστις*. Thus, we learn that the words “faith” and “believe” have virtually the same meaning.

⁷ James Dobson, *When God Doesn't Make Sense: Holding your Faith During the Hardest Time* (Illinois: Tyndale Publishers, 1993), 221.

⁸ Theodore H. Epp, *Faith in Action* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 13.

⁹ Oliver R. Barclay, *Reasons for Faith* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1974), 13.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Paul, *A Pattern of Faith: An Exposition of Christian Doctrine* (Wellington: Churchman Publishing Company, 1986), 37.

¹¹ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers, N.D.), 330.

Consequently, it could be viewed that a word being defined should not be used in its definition. Therefore, the word believe should not be used when defining “faith, nor should the word “faith” be used when defining “believe”. So, one definition applies to both words. Faith has an intellectual basis-“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). It also has a volitional basis-“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:11-12). Faith is also an internal matter-“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Romans 10:10). Thus, one could define faith as an inward posture toward God, which is accompanied by the outward demonstration (Dan. 3). To believe from another view point may be general not necessarily on religious ground.¹² This may not be faith-related in some instances.

There are various views in Christianity regarding the nature of faith. Some see faith as being persuaded or convinced that something is true.¹³ In this view, a person believes something when they are presented with adequate evidence that it is true. Theologian Greg Boyd argues to the contrary, that faith includes doubt.¹⁴ Then there are numerous views regarding the results of faith. Some believe that true faith results in good works, while others believe that while faith in Jesus brings eternal life, it does not necessarily result in good works.¹⁵

Regardless of which approach to faith a Christian takes, all agree that the Christian faith is aligned with the ideals and the example of the life of Jesus. The Christian sees the mystery of God and his grace and seeks to know and become obedient to God. To a Christian, faith is not static but causes one to learn more of God and to grow; Christian faith has its origin in God.¹⁶

In Christianity, faith causes change as it seeks a greater understanding of God. Faith is not fideism or simple obedience to a set of rules or statements.¹⁷ Before Christians have faith, they must understand in whom and in what they have faith. Without understanding, there cannot be true faith, and that understanding is built on the foundation of the community of believers, the scriptures and traditions and on the personal experiences of the believer.¹⁸ In English translations of the New Testament, the word "faith" generally corresponds to the Greek noun πίστις (*pistis*)

¹² Helmut Thielicke, *I Believe: Christian Creed* (Philadelphia: Paternoster Press, 1998), 4.

¹³ Robert N. Wilkin, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible. Corinth*, (Texas: GES. 2012), 221.

¹⁴ Gregory A. Boyd, *The Benefit of the Doubt*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2013), 272.

¹⁵ Jeremy Myers, "The Gospel Under Siege: 3 Views on the Relationship Between Faith and Good Works" (PDF).

¹⁶ Donald W. Wuerl, *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults, Edition: 5, revised*. (Huntingdon IN: Our Sunday Visitor Pub. Division. 2004), 238.

¹⁷ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith seeking understanding: an introduction to Christian theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans. 2004), 3-8.

¹⁸ Tyron Inbody, *The faith of the Christian church: an introduction to theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2005) 1-10.

or to the Greek verb πιστεύω (*pisteuo*), meaning "to trust, to have confidence, faithfulness, to be reliable, to assure".¹⁹

From a Christian apologetic perspective, while Plantinga upholds that faith may be the result of evidence testifying to the reliability of the source (of the truth claims), yet he sees having faith as being the result of hearing the truth of the gospel with the internal persuasion by the Holy Spirit moving and enabling him to believe. "Christian belief is produced in the believer by the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, endorsing the teachings of Scripture, which is itself divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. The result of the work of the Holy Spirit is faith."²⁰

John Lennox argues that:

faith conceived as belief that lacks warrant is very different from faith conceived as belief that has warrant". He states that "the use of the adjective 'blind' to describe 'faith' indicates that faith is not necessarily, or always, or indeed normally, blind". "The validity, or warrant, of faith or belief depends on the strength of the evidence on which the belief is based." "We all know how to distinguish between blind faith and evidence-based faith. We are well aware that faith is only justified if there is evidence to back it up. Evidence-based faith is the normal concept on which we base our everyday lives."²¹

From the foregoing views, one will apparently discover that the concept of faith and its practicability runs through even though the scholars address the issue of faith from different context. Faith therefore is to *trust* in what God has done which results in wholehearted commitment, trusting ourselves to him.²² And this affects every area of our life. To have faith is to accept what God has revealed of himself in Jesus. To have faith is to yield ourselves to Jesus in the light of what he has revealed. Being a Christian is faith based says Stott.²³ The crux of the matter is that the New Testament places emphasis on the faith of Christ (*πίστις κριστου*).²⁴ No other case of *πίστις* (*pistis*) with an objective genitive exist save the one related to Jesus. Thus, one will see that true faith is based on the Gospel message.

¹⁹ Thomas, Robert L.; Edtr, *New American standard exhaustive concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: A.J. Holman. 1981) 1674–1675.

²⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Faith Christian Beliefs* (U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2000), 250, 291.

²¹ John Lennox, *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists are missing the Target* (United Kingdom: Loin Publishers, 2011), 55.

²² Donald English et.al., *An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (England: Oxford University Press, 1992), 228.

²³ J. R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1960), 133.

²⁴ Michale Eaton, *No condemnation: A New Theology of Assurance* (downer grove: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 160-161.

Faith versus Work

In contrast to Romans 3:28 where Paul states, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law,” James writes in 2:24, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” As a result, the relationship between faith, works, and justification in the teachings of Paul and James have been much debated. On the one hand, there are those scholars who argue that the teaching and theology of Paul and James are contradictory and incapable of harmonization. No doubt the most famous of these is Martin Luther, who referred to James as a “right strawy epistle”²⁵ and in his Preface to the book states that James is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works (2:24). It says that Abraham was justified by his works when he offered his son Isaac (2:21); though in Romans 4 :2-22) St. Paul teaches to the contrary that Abraham was justified apart from works, by his faith alone, before he had offered his son.²⁶

More recent scholars give a similar assessment. “What we encounter (between Paul and James) is not simply a tension but an antithesis. There are no grounds for blurring the fact that James 2:14ff., visibly appears to have been written intentionally in opposition to Paul’s statement.”²⁷ J. T. Sanders argues that James “misunderstands Paul,” “opposes the writings of Paul,” and “rejects Pauline tradition.”²⁸ Ropes writes that “James shows no comprehension of what Paul actually meant by his formula (saved by faith and not by works) and he heartily dislikes it.” Furthermore he “would have deplored as utterly superficial and inadequate James’s mode of stating the conditions of justification.”²⁹ One needs to also compare Bultmann who states, “Paul’s concept of faith is utterly misunderstood for Paul would certainly have agreed with the proposition that a faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26) but never in the world with the thesis that faith works along with works (James 2:22).”³⁰

On the other hand, there are those who seek to argue that James and Paul are in agreement and that no conflict exists. Marxsen argues that what James attacks is the idea that the Pauline formula should be accepted as valid with *this* interpretation of faith (a faith without works). The author brings out what Paul means by faith by means of an addition. In other words, what Paul signifies by ‘faith’ can now be expressed only by ‘faith *and works*.’ His aim is to bring

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Basic Theological Writings*, edited by Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 117.

²⁶ *Luther’s Works: Word and Sacrament* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 396.

²⁷ J. B. Soucek, “Zu den Problemen des Jacobusbriefes,” *Evangelische Theologie* 18 (1958), 467.

²⁸ Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 121-122.

²⁹ James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916), 35-36.

³⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 163.

back a Paulinism that has been misinterpreted and distorted to the truly Pauline position.³¹ Mitton also argues that “James is entirely at one with Paul.”³²

Still others argue that James and Paul do not contradict each other but are dealing with different issues and fighting different foes. Thus there is “no disagreement between James and Paul, only a slight variation of emphasis.”³³ “The polemic of James was not directed at the thesis of Paul, but at a slogan derived from it.”³⁴ The false views which Paul and James are opposing, in Rom. 4 and here respectively (James 2:14-26), are different. Paul is combating the idea that men can put God under an obligation to themselves. James is opposing the idea that a real faith can exist without producing works of obedience. The difference of aim accounts to a large extent for the differences of language. There is no need to infer any significant disagreement between their fundamental positions.³⁵

Formally, Rom. 3:22 (justification by faith without the deeds of the law) and James 2:24 (justification by works and not by faith only) are sharply opposed theses. In reality the differences are modified if we take account of the different applications of the terms.³⁶

Works

The term “works” also possesses a range of possible meanings, and it is used quite differently in James and Paul. In James it is used fifteen times and always positively.³⁷ This is true both for the twelve times it is used within our passage and the three instances it is used elsewhere (1:4—associated with endurance, 1:25—contrasts with the mere hearing of the law of liberty; 3:13—are the results of good behavior). In the passage it is used in: 2:14—From 2:15-16 it is clear that it refers to such things as clothing the “naked” and feeding the hungry, i.e., works of loving kindness;

2:17—The works mentioned here refer to the actions described in 2:15- 16;

2:18—In these three instances works refer to the works mentioned in 2:17;

2:20—Here works refer to the faithful obedience of Abraham;

2:21—Here works refer to Abraham’s obedience in offering up Isaac as a sacrifice;

³¹ W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 230-231.

³² C. Leslie Mitton, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishers, 1966) 8.

³³ G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 190.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 191.

³⁵ Leonard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 209.

³⁶ C. E. B. Cranfield, “The Message of James,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 18 (1965) 341.

³⁷ C. E. B. Cranfield, 342.

2:22—In these two instances works refers to Abraham’s offering of Isaac in 2:21;

2:24—Here works refer to the kind of actions mentioned in 2:15-16, 21;

2:25—Works here refer to Rahab’s protecting God’s messengers; and

2:26—Here it refers to the works of loving kindness, obedience, and faith mentioned in 2:15-17, 21, 25.

It should be noted that in 2:14-26, and in the rest of James, “works” are always seen positively and, when described, involve acts of loving mercy, kindness, and obedience to God. They are performed from a faith that “works through love.” They have nothing to do with ritualistic or ceremonial actions. McGee opines that the author shows that God tests faith by good works.³⁸

In Paul, however, “works” possess a very different meaning. In Romans and Galatians they are frequently described by the expression “works of law” (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16 [3]; 3:2, 5, 10). Works are antithetical to grace (Rom 11:6). They are an attempt to boast before God, place God under obligation (Rom 4:2), and as a result earn justification (Rom 4:4). Consequently, “works” are a way of seeking righteousness that is inimical (harmful) to faith (Rom 9:30-33), and it is impossible to achieve justification through this method (Rom 3:20). The specific “works” that Paul has in mind are: circumcision (Rom 4:1-12; Gal 5:3, 6; 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19; cf. Acts 15:1, 5); ritualistically keeping certain days (Gal 4:10); abstaining from certain food and drink (Col 2:16); etc. It should be noted that clothing the naked and feeding the hungry do not appear in Paul’s polemic against works. Paul is not arguing against faith needing to be accompanied by loving acts of kindness and mercy. These are not the works that he is opposing. He is not opposed to good deeds done in obedience to God. These kinds of works are spoken of quite positively in Paul. The crux of the matter is that both Paul and James are defending the citadel of faith.

He is opposed, rather, to performing certain ritual acts found in the Old Testament for the purpose of acquiring a standing before God. Such “works” deny the adequacy of “by grace through faith” and ultimately trust in the “works” one does to achieve justification. It is clear that, although Paul and James are using the same terms for “works,” they attribute different meanings to them, just as in the case of “faith.” These meanings lie well within the semantic range of these terms, but they are not identical. In fact they are antithetical. As a result Paul’s words in Romans 3:28 (“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law”) can be interpreted, “For we maintain that a person is justified by a whole-hearted trust in God’s grace and mercy and not by seeking to merit favor with God through such acts as

³⁸ J. Vernon McGee, “James” in *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* Vol. V. (Nashville Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 649.

circumcision and the keeping of the ritual law.” On the other hand, James’s words in 2:24 (“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone”) can be interpreted, “You see that a person is justified by a faith that works through love and not by a sterile assent to religious propositions unaccompanied by works.” If the salvation of man will be holistic and faith is playing prominent role to attain it, then there is need to work for the sake of faith.³⁹

The Context of James 2:14-26

The value of the context of James 2:14- 26 for understanding this passage is debated. Some suggest that the discussion of “faith” in 2:14-26 picks up the theme begun in 2:1-13. “In this section St. James proceeds to enlarge on the meaning and nature of that faith in Jesus Christ which was spoken of in verse 1 as inconsistent with *prosopolempsia* (personal favoritism).”⁴⁰

There are several parallels between these two sections: “faith” (2:1 and 14ff.); clothing (2:2 and 15); person in need (2:2 and 15-16); the expression “you do well” (2:8 and 19); “called” (2:7 and 23); “if a man” (2:2 and 14). Ties between the present passage and chapter one include: “faith” (1:3, 6 and 2:14ff.); “works” (1:4, 25 and 2:14); the contrast between “hearing and doing” and “faith and works” (1:22-25 and 2:14-26); concern for the needy (1:27 and 2:15-16).⁴¹ On the other hand, Dibelius has argued that “A connection between this treatise (2:14-26) and the preceding one cannot be established.”⁴² That there are allusions in 2:14-26 to what has preceded is obvious.

Yet there does not appear to be any intimate or necessary tie between the text (James 2) and what has preceded. Thus James 2:14- 26 can be understood, for the most part, without the help of its context. As so often in works of wisdom, the logical ties between sections are loose and play no major role in understanding the meaning of individual sections. Our present passage can be understood without major dependence upon the material that has preceded or that follows. The general argument against merely hearing and not doing in 1:22-25 and some of the vocabulary ties with 2:1-13 help throw some light on the issue James deals with in 2:14-26.

The Terminology of Paul and James

Individual words in any language usually bear a range of possible meanings. If one looks up any particular word in a dictionary, one will find a number of possible meanings associated with the word because the semantic range of words varies. Some possess many different, possible meanings. Others possess only a few. It is difficult, however, to think of any word in the English language that has only one specific meaning. Within the norms of language almost all always possess a range of meanings.

³⁹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology* (Nairobi: World Alive Publishers, 2012), 105-106.

⁴⁰ Joseph B. Major, *The Epistle of St. James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 95.

⁴¹ Timo Laato, “Justification according to James: A Comparison with Paul,” *Trinity Journal* 18 (1997), 47-61.

⁴² Martin Dibelius, *James* (Hermeneia: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 149.

Within the writings of Paul and James this is also true. In James, for example, the word “trial (*peirasmos*)” is used positively in 1:2 and 12. In 1:13-14 its verbal form “tempted (*peirazo*),” however, is used negatively. It should not therefore surprise us that the same word may be used by James and Paul in different ways and possess different meanings. There are two terms used in James 2:14-26 that possess meanings quite different from the normal way that Paul uses these terms. These terms are: “faith” and “believe (*pistis–pisteuo*)”⁴³ and “works (*erga*).”

“Faith” and “Believe” (James 2)⁴⁴

In James the noun “faith” is found sixteen times. Five are found outside 2:14-26 (1:3, 6; 2:1, 5; 5:15) and the rest are contained in our passage (2:14 [2], 17, 18 [3], 20, 22 [2], 24, and 26). The verbal form “believe” is found only three times and all occur in our passage (2:19 [2] and 23). The five occurrences of “faith” outside the passage indicate that a different faith is being described there than the “faith” James begins to discuss in 2:14-26. In 1:3 the “faith” described is one that successfully encounters trials and as a result produces endurance. In 1:6 it is a “faith” that endures in prayer and as a result receives wisdom from God. In 2:1 it is “faith” in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.⁴⁵

In 2:5 the poor of this world who are heirs of the kingdom are described as rich in “faith.” In all these instances “faith” is portrayed positively. It is never viewed as merely an intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions. In 2:14-26 “faith” is viewed quite differently, and it appears that the faith being discussed is that of a real or hypothetical opponent whom James has engaged in a diatribe. This opponent’s understanding of faith is quite different from that of James himself. This can be seen by observing how this faith is described:

2:14a—It is a faith that possesses no works;

2:14b—It is a faith that cannot save;⁴⁶

2:17—It is a faith without works that is dead;

2:18a—It is a faith that is distinct and separate from works;

2:18b—It is a faith without works;

2:18c—It is contrasted with a faith shown by works;

2:20—It is a faith without works that is useless;

⁴³ Joachim Jeremias, “Paul and James,” *Expository Times* 66 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 72-74.

⁴⁴ Leon Howell, *Acting In Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 19.

⁴⁵ Saint Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions: The Fathers of the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 1982) 196.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 197.

2:22a—It is contrasted with a faith that works along with works;

2:22b—It is contrasted with a faith perfected as a result of works;

2:24—It is a faith that is alone; and

2:26—It is a faith without works that is dead.

The verbal cognate “believe” also helps us to understand the kind of faith possessed by James’s opponent: 2:19a—It is assent to the biblical proposition that God is one; 2:19b—It is a kind of faith that even demons possess; and 2:23—It is contrasted with the kind of faith Abraham possessed.

From the above it is obvious that a distinction must be made between “faith” as it is understood by James and “faith” as it is understood by his real or imaginary opponent. It is doubtful that James would acknowledge that his opponent’s kind of faith is true or real faith. He hints at this in 2:14a when he describes his opponent’s faith as follows, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone *says* he has faith but he has not works.” As numerous commentators point out, James does not say, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone *has* faith but has not works.”⁴⁷

James appears to have intentionally worded his introductory statement in a way that indicates that his opponent does not have true Christian faith. This interpretation finds support in 2:14b where James states, “Can *that* faith save him?” James does not imply that deeds are the actual life principle that gives life of faith, but only that faith and deeds (work) are inseparable.⁴⁸ Frank says “if there are no acts springing from faith, that faith is no more alive than “the body without spirit.”⁴⁹

The use of the article “*the*” indicates that James is asking whether *the* specific kind of faith he has just described can save the man. Still further support for this view comes from 2:18. Here the imaginary opponent⁵⁰ describes his faith as being one totally independent of works. “But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ In Paul “faith” almost always refers to a whole-hearted trust in God that salvation can be received as a gracious gift apart from any meritorious works because of the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. Faith for Paul involves “man’s total response to and involvement with Jesus Christ.”⁵¹ Accompanied with the gift of the Spirit it involves a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) in which the believer has been raised

⁴⁷ Saint Augustine, 197.

⁴⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, and John R. Kohlenberger, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 1029.

⁴⁹ Frank E. Gaebelen, (General. Ed.) *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with International Version of the Holy Bible* Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 185.

⁵⁰ Cranfield, 338,

⁵¹ J. Oliver Buswell, *the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1937), 47.

to newness of life and has become a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:18). It involves an obedience of faith (Rom 1:5).

Thus Paul would never say that “demons believe,” as James does in 2:19, because of the different meaning he gives to the terms “faith” and “believe.” The faith of James’s opponent involves merely intellectual assent to propositions such as “God is one.” It is a belief *that* certain propositions are true. Paul’s use of the words “faith” and “believe” involve faith *in* God and his Son. It is not merely propositional, although that element is present.

It is also relational! Faith for Paul involves a relationship of grace and love toward God that results in a transformed life; for James’ opponent faith involves nothing more than assent to doctrinal truths. Yet even the demons possess a correct understanding of such doctrinal propositions and assent to their truth. In fact their theological understanding of doctrinal propositions is undoubtedly more correct than ours due to their supernatural nature, but such knowledge does not result in their salvation! Thus, to have faith is Christ-inclined and to believe is not only on Christian ground; it could be; believing anything.

The Balance between Faith and Work

James in the text considered, introduced a new faith that is rooted in ‘good works.’ For him, a faith that is not braided in good works is a phantom, a dream, and a delusion. One could lean on the assertion of Robert Jim in this light. He opines that real faith necessarily embodies itself in action; this action in question is good works.⁵² Some people say that they have faith but do not show it by what they do. The question is that how could a person say he has faith without helping his fellow Christian or other people who are in need? (James 2:15-17). This is apparently a dead faith according to James. James is not precisely saying that one needs to do good work to be saved rather his emphasis is on the fact that if one has real faith it must be seen in his good works. What is in will apparently reflect in the kind of life such person lives.

Harlow suggests that it is one thing to have faith and believe; even the demons believe there is one God and they tremble (James 2:19-20) probably because they realized that He judges.⁵³ There is need for us to understand that we need to have faith in the Son of God and have our faith demonstrated through what we do. Any other faith saves (except) this is a void and useless faith. It was through the work of the likes of Abraham, Rahab among others that their faith in God was demonstrated.⁵⁴

The last verse of James 2 sums it up. A person is alive only as his spirit and his body are together. He dies when his spirit leaves his body. In the same way faith and works belong

⁵² Jim Robert, *The General Epistle: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, N.D.), 27.

⁵³ G.I. Harlow, *Prove Your Faith: Studies in James* (Scarborough: Everyday Publications, 1981), 15.

⁵⁴ J.C. Wenger, *The Family of Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 5.

together and faith without work is dead; they cannot be separated. Peter David opines that dead orthodoxy has absolutely no power to save and may in fact even hinder the person from coming to living in faith, a faith enlivened by works of charity.⁵⁵ The concept of faith and work is lucidly discussed from verses 14-26. There are destitute, orphans, widows and widowers around our vicinity especially in our churches. These sect of people need to be helped. Our liturgy as a church is to care for them and that is the practical application of our faith (James 1:27).

To some who observe seeming discrepancies in Pauline and James' thoughts, it should be noted that on the one hand, Paul who posits *sola fidea* was addressing a context that thought salvation could be attained on the ground of keeping the Mosaic laws (works). They thought that faith is second class while works is the major, in the salvific scale of preference. On the other hand, James was addressing another different context that thought there is no need for any iota of works provided one has faith. This is What Olajide puts simply as "Paul was dealing with self-righteousness of the Jewish legal piety and James death with dead orthodoxy."⁵⁶ In James' time the Jewish communities though gave their allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah, they thought that they were no longer under any obligation to many Mosaic laws.⁵⁷ Their view was however encouraged by the unworthy teachers. However, James tries to strike a balance between faith and works. Genuine faith could be accessed by action (works).⁵⁸ The faith that James presented here is a faith that is alive and shows its vitality by the things it does (works).

Conclusion/Recommendations

Having considered the subject of faith and work succinctly, the researcher has this to say: To say we have faith without any iota of work is tantamount to futility. It should be noted that our faith should reflect in our work. Empty profession of faith without works is no-faith. Our works tells how much of faith we have. We are not to only be "professors of faith" rather; we should be possessed by faith rooted in pragmatism (Olajide). Though God had provided so many things for us but without our human responsibility, they cannot be made perfect. Smith as cited by Olajide in *Shepherding the Flock of God* opines that 'God will not do for you what you are to do for yourself and He (God) will not leave for you to do what He is suppose to do for you.'⁵⁹ Faith must go with good works for balance Christianity. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis should be amalgamated.

There is a Yoruba adage that says "*enu ofifo kii dun yamuyamu*" meaning empty mouth seldom move. The one who has faith is not coerced to do good works (charity, love, benevolence

⁵⁵ Peter David, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 134.

⁵⁶ Michale D. Olajide, *Note on General Epistle* (ETSI: 2016), 11

⁵⁷ Homer A. Kent, *Faith that Works: Studies in the Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 99-100.

⁵⁸ Irving L. Jenson, *James: A Self-Study Guide* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 58.

⁵⁹ Fred Smith, "Leading with Integrity" in *Shepherding the Flock of God* (Ibadan: Feyisetan Press, 2014), 178.

etc). In activating faith and work, we could actually have a balance Christianity. Our faith should not be on the platform of complacency but to work. The researcher wishes to round off with the word of Trevor that “theology is an inevitable activity of faith, replicating in our work.⁶⁰ Faith without work is dead (James 2:26). Christian fold (church) should be a functioning community laced with good works (charity, benevolence, care for widows and orphans etc). Being addressed as a Christian without good works is synonymous to mere nomenclature.

⁶⁰ Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (London: SPCK Press, 1995), 11.

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