

James 2:14

INTRODUCTION

The test of Perseverance in suffering: 1:2-12

The test of Blame in temptation: 1:13-18

The test of Response to the word: 1:19-27

The test of Impartial Love: 2:1-13

The test of Righteous works: 2:14-26

Vs. 13 defines the entire principal of this text, a person who shows no mercy and compassion for people in need demonstrates that he has never responded to the great mercy of God. As an unredeemed person, he will receive only strict, unrelieved judgement in eternal hell, Matthew 5:7 “**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**” On the other hand, the person whose life is characterized by mercy is ready for the day of judgement, and will escape all the charges that strict judgement brings. Because of showing mercy to others, he demonstrates genuine evidence of having received mercy.

Transition: James continues his series of tests, by which his readers can evaluate whether their faith is living or dead. Our passage of text today contains what is called the “Composite Test.” It pulls all others together.

The letter was most likely to Jews who had abandoned the works righteousness of Judaism, and embraced a dead faith. James affirmed salvation by faith in Christ is all that is needed in 1:18 “**Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**” Jesus warned the religious pharisees in Matthew 3:7-8 “**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.**”

Many had embraced the fact that if works did not earn salvation, then they weren’t even necessary at all. This is what James is addressing here.

Vs. 14 is the great question to ask. As is in many Christian congregations, some were true believers and some were not. It’s good to adhere to the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:5 “**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.**”

If someone says is the phrase that governs the interpretation of the whole passage. This person only **CLAIMS** to have faith.

- You can know all the theological orthodoxy (accepted theory of practice).
- Knowledge of theology does not translate into saving faith.
- The verb form of the phrase describes someone who continually lacks evidence to support the claim of faith he routinely makes.

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But does not have works. No particular type of work is specified but the obvious meaning is that of righteous behavior confirming to God's revealed word that is pleasing to him. Some of the righteous and godly works we have already seen, endurance, perseverance under trial, purity of life, obedience to Scripture, compassion for the needy and impartiality.

Later on in the book of James works like compassion, control of the tongue, humility, truthfulness and patience are mentioned.

Can faith save him? This question isn't offered to dispute the importance of saving faith. It truly is faith alone in Christ that saves. But a faith that does not produce righteous works is not truly saving faith. The Greek grammatical form of the phrase can be translated "*Can that kind of faith save him?*" A profession of faith that is devoid of righteous works cannot save a person.

It is not that some amount of good works added to true faith can save, but rather that faith that is genuine will inevitably produce good works. Let's look at the fact that salvation is solely by faith alone and not accompanied by works to make salvation complete or earned. Cf. Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:1-10

Dr. John MacArthur quotes "*Where there is true salvation, where sovereign grace reaches down to regenerate and transform a person from sinner to saint, God will create in the soul of that person new longings to forsake sin and self and gladly serve the Lord Jesus Christ and obey his divine standards of righteousness.*"

Look at Zaccheus and his response "*And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold*" (Luke 16:8). In Ephesus when men were converted there were signs of righteous works, Acts 19:18-19 "*Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.*" And the Thessalonians had done the same things when the pagans were converted "*For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*" (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

CONCLUSION

- A newborn believer does not immediately understand the full implications of the gospel and know everything they should.
- These things come with every increasing awareness as one grows in the knowledge of the Lord.
- There's a new immediate spiritual and moral orientation that the Lord gives every child who is born into the kingdom of God.

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- No one is saved without becoming a new creation by the Holy Spirit of God. This new creation will produce works, righteous works such as repentance, submission obedience and a love for God and fellow believers.
- Salvation does not produce immediate perfection, but a new direction.
- This new disposition produces a hate for sin, loves the Lord and seeks to know him and obey him.