

The Demonstration Of Faith

Gary McDade

Three main points may be derived from a study of the second chapter of the book of James.

- I. We must be unbiased in our presentation of faith, vv. 1-9.
- II. We must be uniform in our practice of faith, vv. 10-13.
- III. We must be undaunted in our performance of faith, vv. 14-26.

The Royal Law, vv. 1-9

The royal law appearing in verse 8 provides the centerpiece of this section showing that “we must be unbiased in our presentation of faith.” The setting is that of an assembly of the saints where two men enter, one rich and dressed accordingly and the other poor and typically dressed. The presentation of faith observers will notice is seen in the treatment these two visitors receive. When the two men are treated differently the royal law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lev. 19:18), has been violated and the faith has been misrepresented. The ratification of this law by the Lord in Luke 10:25-28 shows it to be in harmony with his practical application of the preferred treatment of others in Matthew 7:12, known as “the golden rule,” and love for God and man from Matthew 22:37-40.

Jesus Christ is King of Kings and has made his followers, Christians, to be “kings and priests” or as the ASV says, “a kingdom, to be priests” (Rev. 1:5; 11:15). Surely, citizens of his kingdom will respect his “royal law” and by so doing will show others that “we must be unbiased in our presentation of faith.” Those who have “respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors” (v. 9).

The Law of Liberty, vv. 10-13

No point of the law may be disobeyed with impunity. Christians must speak and act in harmony with the law of liberty. “We must be uniform in our practice of faith.” One reason is because judgment is coming. Mercy will be sought and found by those extending mercy to others and denied those lacking in pity extended toward his fellowman.

Justification By Works, vv. 14-26

The three main points within this chapter are unified by its theme of “the demonstration of faith.” Salvation is emptied out of a faith void of demonstration (v. 14). An obvious need of daily sustenance left unsupplied constitutes a “dead faith” (vv. 15-17). James wrote, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (v. 18). The existence of faith is verified in the corresponding actions it generates. “We must be undaunted in our performance of faith.” The word “undaunted” means “courageously resolute especially in the face of danger or difficulty” (*Webster's*, 1285).

Is James anticipating a counter argument based on a conviction that God exists and there is only one true God? He wrote, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (v. 19). Some do reason today that all that is required of them is to believe in God, and nothing else matters. Those seeking to be pardoned based on “faith only” will see the demons released from the infernal regions before that ever happens because unlike some humans the demons have acquired the capacity and good sense not only to believe in God but also to “tremble.” The only time “faith only” appears in the Bible is here in verse 24, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Look carefully at the word of God here, for it says a man is justified by works and “not by faith only.” Millions upon millions of otherwise

religious people reject the teaching of this chapter in general and verse 24 in particular to their own destruction.

Again, "we must be undaunted in our performance of faith." Two familiar examples of people who remained "courageously resolute in the face of death or difficulty" recalled by James on this point are Abraham when he was required to offer his only begotten son Isaac on the altar at Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22) and Rahab at Jericho who received the spies and sent them out another way (Josh. 2). Both were considered believers in God and justified by faith after they had successfully passed the test placed before them (vv. 23, 25). The alternative to the courageous performance of faith is to have a dead faith. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (v. 26).

Conclusion

The royal law and the law of liberty find expression in the subject of justification by works. The law of God establishes the rule of conduct or action and limits behavior and activities to the standard of acceptability as authorized by the revealed will of God, the Bible. Therefore, we must be unbiased in our presentation of faith, vv. 1-9. We must be uniform in our practice of faith, vv. 10-13. And, we must be undaunted in our performance of faith, vv. 14-26. This is the "demonstration of faith" about which James wrote.

QUESTIONS

1. Which section of James 2 deals with people having "respect of persons"?
2. May a Christian violate one point of the law of God and be found "not guilty"?
3. Are "the royal law" and "the law of liberty" in effect today?
4. Does James 2:24 teach justification by works?
5. Does James 2:24 teach justification by "faith only"?

6. Are the words translated "believeth" in John 3:16 and "believe" in James 2:19 from the same Greek word?