

FAITH AND WORKS.

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There are certain texts in the sacred Scriptures, which to a superficial reader, seem to contradict each other. In one place the Bible says, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.— Show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works.— For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad. On the other hand the Bible tells us that we are saved by grace, through faith and that not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God. The Apostle informs us that boasting is excluded and that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.

He that believeth on the Son hath life. In a word, we are *justified by faith*.

Now, do the Scriptures really contradict themselves. By no means! In this celestial volume all is harmony. Faith has its place and so have works. We are justified by the one while we are judged by the other. The Apostle James does not preach a new or contradictory doctrine when he says, faith without works is dead---show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works. He only means to reassert and establish the connection between the two. It is the old idea of the tree and its fruit, the vine and its branches, brought before our minds in yet another form. If a man has faith there is a way to demonstrate it, that way is by works. Hereby we ascertain and are assured of the faith of Abraham. He offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead. Abraham's works illustrated his faith, proved its existence and demonstrated its genuineness. And this corresponds with the words of our Saviour, when He says, by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye *do* whatsoever I command you. Faith is the instrumental condition of justification, it is a saving grace

whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ and Him alone, as He is offered to us in the Gospel. But faith is an act of which none can be cognizant but the soul and its God. So far as respects all other persons, angels or men, the transaction is secret. The universe, therefore, must have some other standard by which to *judge* of the creature than that of faith. A tree is not known by certain *hidden* qualities or substances, though these may give it life, but by its fruit. And the Apostle speaks with true inspiration when he says, show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works. Works are the fruit which faith hangs out to the eye of the beholder. These two go together, they are never divorced, and yet faith is not work, neither is work faith. But as faith and works are inseparable and as the latter can be seen, while the former is invisible, it is but fair to the judge, to the spectators and to the party to be judged that the deeds done in the body should constitute *the rule of judgment*. For God has declared that there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known. And thus while we are justified by faith and faith only, yet we shall be *judged* hereafter by our

works. The books shall be opened and every one receive sentence according to that *he hath done*. Justification by faith is now, as ever, the sign of a standing or falling Church; but if faith and works are never disunited in the true child of God, it surely can breed no confusion in the final day to judge the tree by its fruits.

If what we have now said be true, then these apparently contradictory Scriptures are entirely harmonized. By faith we are *justified*, made at peace with God and admitted into the family of Christ; by *works* this great benefit become palpable, so that men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus! While in the day of judgment, God's eye will look down at the heart and upon that faith which no eye but His can see, yet the judge in vindication of His righteous sentence shall point to those labors of love, those deeds done in the body, which are the works or fruits of belief, and which are manifest to the creature as well as the creator. Thus mercy and truth shall meet together, righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. Let every man, therefore, see to it that he have both faith and works. For without faith it is impossible to please God and yet faith *without works is dead*.