

or darkness. It has been justly remarked that the style of James is more concise, sententious, and abrupt than that of any other of the Apostles and Evangelists, and that his object is very different from that of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. Paul had to do with those who denied, or objected to, the doctrine of grace, James with those who perverted it and turned it into licentiousness; and this circumstance will account for discrepancies of language which at first sight appear startling, but will soon vanish away. That their sentiments are not different, but substantially the same, is evident from the following considerations. While James affirms that Abraham was justified by works, he tells us expressly that so far from disagreeing with Paul or Moses his doctrine was confirmatory of that which they taught, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Again, James with all his supposed partiality for good works, maintains as zealously the necessity of faith in all our approaches to God as Paul does; he tells us that we are to ask spiritual blessings "in faith, nothing wavering," and that the "prayer of faith shall heal the sick," &c.; on the other hand, Paul while he contends for justification by faith without works is otherwise as devoted a champion for holiness or good works as James.* Here then are two great points on which both Paul and James are agreed, the necessity of faith, and the necessity of good works. But while faith and works are equally necessary, they occupy different places in the system of revealed truth, and perform different functions in the economy of grace, and we are not at liberty to reverse the order in which they stand, or put the one in the place of the other. Faith is the cause, holiness or good works the effect—faith is the foundation, holiness the superstructure—faith is the fountain, holiness the stream—faith is the tree, holiness or good works the fruit. In a word, what God has joined together must not be separated, and what he has put asunder must not be joined. By good works or "works of law" shall no man be justified, and yet the man who is justified must be careful to maintain good works, and none will be justified who are destitute of good works.

Let us now proceed to explain the verses in their order:—

Verse 14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" In these words the Apostle seems to refer to the prevailing error of that age, the profession of Christianity by men who were strangers to the Christian character, and who abused the doctrine of grace, so as to encourage themselves in sin. Such men are to be found in every country and age. Though destitute of the faith of the Gospel, they make high pretensions to it, they boast of their attainments, and rest in an empty profession to the neglect of holiness in heart and life. Now, as the Apostle asks, of what avail is such a profession? Can *this* faith—for so may the words be rendered, can such a faith save them? Assuredly it can, if it can justify them; but this is nowhere taught in Scripture. The faith which justifies is a holy faith, a faith fruitful in holy obedience, and not a mere hypocritical pretence, or empty profession; a name only to live while we are dead in sin. It will be observed that the Apostle does not affirm that the man really possesses the faith to which he lays claim; he merely *says* or *pretends* that he has it; but it is unaccompanied by good works, it is a mere floating opinion in his head which has little or no influence on his heart, and being weighed in the balances is found wanting. The interrogation here put by the Apostle is equivalent to a denial. It is as if he had said, "By no means, it cannot save him."

Verses 15, 16, 17, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them depart in peace, be you warmed or filled;

* For instance he affirms, that "without holiness no man shall see God," and "these things I will that thou affirm constantly that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works."