

• Paul going back to Genesis, Isaiah and Jeremiah put it in the clearest and fullest manner

2:4 interpreted ..

(i) To deny that faith in Jesus is the exclusive way of salvation yourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not of works, lest anyone ^{2:9} should boast^{',[1]}. Let me list some of the ways in which James 2:14 has been interpreted.

point. 'Surely faith without works cannot be enough for us to be

accepted by God' it is said. But Paul's teaching (for it is Paul who

puts it in the clearest and fullest manner) goes back to Genesis

15:6, and Isaiah and Jeremiah have the same teaching exactly. 'For

by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of

¹ Ephesians

(i) As I say, some use it to try to overthrow the Bible's teaching that faith in Jesus is the exclusive way of salvation. The biblical

teaching is: we are **initially** 'justified', given a right status with God, exclusively by our faith. Our first acceptance by God has nothing to do with 'anything we have done either good or bad' (using Paul's language in Romans 9:11). Some want to use James 2:14 to overthrow this teaching. However we shall discover that James is using language in a different way and speaking about a different topic.

(ii) To convict the unsaved person

• An 'out-ofcontext' interpretation

• Pretend Christians have to be helped – of course

• What is wrong with the 'pretend-Christian' is not his lack of good works ...but his lack of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ

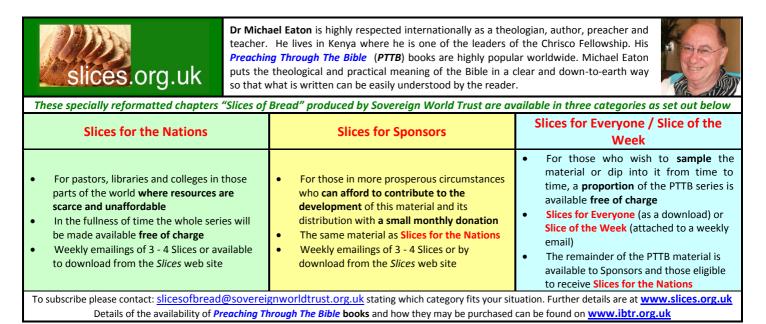
• Not a serious approach just like the Pharisee of Luke 18:10-14

• Continued in part 13

(ii) Some want to use James 2:14 to make us doubt or suspect our salvation. They want to use James 2:14 to convict the unsaved person. The difficulty with this is that it is an 'out of context' interpretation. James has no doubts of the initial-salvation of his people. He has no doubts of the status of his people as the people of God. Even in this very verse he calls them 'my brothers and sisters'. Of course 'pretend-Christians' have to be helped to come to salvation. I do not deny that. But it is not what James is dealing with here. 'Pretend-Christians' and inconsistent Christians are different cases. A 'pretend-Christian' might be quite a good person, and might be full of good works to the poor! A true Christian might be inconsistent (as James' friends were inconsistent). At this point the 'pretend-Christians' might be producing more good works than the true Christian! What is wrong with the 'pretend-Christian' is not his lack of good works towards the poor but his lack of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. James' readers do hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ^{□1}. To think James 2:14 is designed to make us doubt our basic status as God's people is to miss James' point altogether.

In any case, what if a Christian takes up this line of thought seriously? He says to himself: 'I do not think I am producing enough good works. I think that perhaps I am not "saved" at all.' What then does he do? He tries to 'get saved' again. 'Lord, please **truly** save me,' he prays. 'I have been trusting Jesus, I thought, but now I am not sure. Lord Jesus Christ I ask You to be my Saviour. This time (for last time I said this it seems it did not work!) I will try to produce some good works to show that I am **really** saved . . . !' What sort of praying is this? This is like the Pharisee of Luke 18:10–14!

None of this is getting to grips with James 2:14 in its context. We must follow the text more closely.



as 2:1 says