

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JAMES' "WORKS" AND PAUL'S
"FAITH" FOR EVANGELICAL AND NON-EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIANS IN MYANMAR: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF
JAMES 2:14-26 AND ROMANS 3:21-28

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The purpose of this research is to find out how works and faith relate in the writings of James and Paul. Special attention will be given to the original texts, and an exegetical work, in order to better understand the purposes of James and Paul for Christians in the nation of Myanmar today.

Introduction

Roman Catholic missions began in Myanmar (formerly called Burma) in 1554, with Protestant Christianity coming in 1807. According to Myanmar church history, Christians began to divide into two groups following a revival that occurred in the 1970s. Some, mainly from the mainline churches, began to focus on social ministry at the expense of meeting the spiritual needs of the people, based on James 2:26 (NIV): ". . . so faith without works is dead." As a result, non-believers have little opportunity to hear the gospel from those churches. On the other hand, the evangelical Christians emphasized being saved by faith alone, based on Romans 3:28 (NIV): "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law," and are less concerned about "doing" Christian charity. This lack of social concern tends to result in non-believers being uninterested in evangelical Christianity. According to the teaching of the Scripture, these two "schools of thought" need to be addressed. Only then will Myanmar Christians be instrumental in advancing the gospel.

The research presented here attempts to address the issue of how to synthesize these widely divergent views. Thus, the path we have taken is to do an exegetical study of both James 2:14-26 and Romans 3:21-