

A Living Faith: Christ at Work in You¹

(James 2:14–26)

WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Those who believe in Jesus but disregard brothers and sisters whom they have means to help, contradict themselves. True saving faith produces good works.

1.) An illustration of workless faith (v. 14–17):

- **A QUESTION:** Can workless faith save you? (v.14)
- **AN IMPLIED TRUTH:** If you claim to be a Christian, but disregard believers in poverty or distress without concern or care, when you can help them—James says, your faith is useless (v.15–16).
- **A DECLARED ANSWER:** Workless faith cannot save (v.17)

2.) A counterargument refuted: true Christian faith and works are never separated (v. 18–26):

- Some may say otherwise, but without works, there is **no proof** showing the presence of a living faith in Jesus Christ (v. 18, 20)
- Illustration #1 (negative): Even the demons **believe** (v. 19)
- Illustration #2 (positive): Abraham and Rahab **evidenced** their faith through their works (v. 20–25).
- A figure of speech (simile): As the body without the spirit is **dead**, so also faith without works is **dead** (v. 26)

APPLICATION:

- James calls us to **live consistently** according to Christian principles. **Growing in our faith** makes us mature and complete (Jm. 1:4), and commitment is an essential part of faith. Right actions are the natural by-products of true faith.
- Genuine Christians will have **a changed life** (v. 2:18). The gospel is the seed that grows and produces fruit. If a seed never grows, how can someone claim it took root? It is useless and lifeless (v. 14–17).
- Paul emphasized **the purpose of faith**—to bring salvation.
- James emphasized **the results of faith**—a changed life.
- “Jesus never [gave] the impression that following him **was blind faith without actions** (Mt. 7:15–27). His standard was sobering: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:20). Jesus also made it clear, that **“works” were no substitute for faith**. When people were healed, it was by faith (Mk. 5:34). He clearly stated the order of events: ‘I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.’”² (Jn. 14:12).

1 Craig Blomberg, *James*. Vol. 16. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008
2 Bruce B. Barton., *James, Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 59.

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