

James

Part 4

James 2

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds (works)? Can such faith save them?

Here James continues with this theme from:

James 1:22

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

He continues, do this...

1:26 - Bridle your tongue

1:27 - Visit Widows and Orphans in need

2:1-13 - Do not show Favoritism

- This part of James letter on “faith without works is dead and cannot save” has been widely debated. It’s said that even Martin Luther didn’t care for the book of James and even famously called it an “epistle of straw”. Because he felt its emphasis on “faith without works” contradicted Paul’s teaching of justification by faith alone.
- The nutshell of Paul’s writings could be summed up in **Ephesians 2:8,9** “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*”
- Let me reemphasize this, we are not saved by works we are saved by Grace through Faith.
- I would also say that James is not contradicting what Paul says and if the two were sitting down together they would emphatically agree that what James is talking about is not whether we are saved by grace through faith but the kind of faith we ought to have.

Again James is saying in **Vs. 14** “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?”

I heard a preacher once describe it like this:

- If someone came up and said I have a horrible case of the flu but they didn't have a fever... they didn't have cough or sneeze... They had no body aches, no sour throat, no headache, no feeling of fatigue and weren't loosing it out either end... What would you think? Well they might have something but it doesn't sound like the flu? Why, Because these are all the symptoms of the flu...
- Or if someone came up to you and said I just got ran over by a truck but they had no tire marks anywhere. Their clothes were perfectly pressed and clean. They were not bleeding, there were no bruises, and they were walking perfectly normal. What would you think? Well it's hard to believe they've been run over by a truck because there is... no evidence.
- In the same way when someone has an encounter with Jesus, their is evidence in their life... Faith comes alive and they receive His grace and forgiveness and make Him their personal Lord and Savior. There is evidence of this kind of faith?
- James is not debating whether we are saved by Grace through Faith. James is talking about a kind of faith; the kind of faith that saves...
- Someone could say they have faith, but fail to have deeds or good works. James thought it impossible that someone could genuinely have saving faith without deeds.

So, the question is valid: Can that kind of faith, that doesn't show fruit and doesn't appear to be evident, save him?

Vs. 15-17

15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

- Again Scripture gives context by saying “brother or sister”. Jesus spoke clearly about this in

Matthew 12:50 “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

- So the context of what James is saying is not just anyone. But is specific to believers. Which is consistent with Acts 2

Acts 2:44,45 “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”

- This is in keeping with the New Command of Christ.

John 13:34

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

“To fail in the most simple good work towards a brother or sister in need demonstrates that one does not have a living faith, and we can only be saved by a living faith in Jesus.” Guzik

- What James is communicating here is not a strange, far out thing. A brother or sister (in Christ) without food or clothing communicates a real need, not simply a superficial want. It should be natural for us to care for the well being of people, especially our brother or sister, who by the spirit are family. If we send them off with well wishes, when we have the ability to help, something is wrong.

So James says in

Vs. 17

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

KJV

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

My first Christian T-shirt had that verse on it and said in big bold print on the back “Faith without works is dead”. That’s a good thing for a young Christian boy to be reminded of. Early in my Christian walk I knew the Lord required that of me.

Let me Encourage you today:

1. You got this...
2. This is the fun part...
3. Serving the Lord is not some daunting, impossible task... You were perfectly made and engineered by God to do what He has called you to do.
4. God’s will is not complicated. Often times it is simple tasks that come from simple obedience.
5. This is where we get to put on our exercise clothes and do the stuff that Jesus did.

Pic: Workout Clothes

6. So we will say like we said at 1063 back in the day “Do Work Son”

- James begins by describing this kind of faith, that doesn’t have deeds, cannot save and now he says it is dead.
- The kind of faith we want is a living faith. A living faith is simply real faith. It is a faith that lives inside of us and moves us into action. It’s the kind of faith that leads to obedience to Christ.
- Living faith is a faith that comes from and trusts fully in the living God.

- **A Living Faith** receives from God and gives out. Like the Sea of Galilee that takes water in from the North (Jordan River in the Upper Galilee) and lets water out to the South Jordan River. Because it's constantly receiving and releasing water it stays fresh and is full of life.
- **Dead Faith** is like the Dead Sea that takes water in but never lets water out. Because of this the nothing lives in the Dead Sea because it's stagnant. What does that sound like? It sounds like a Christian that receives and receives but hasn't found an outlet yet. If they are not careful they will grow stagnant in their faith. Their faith walk will become boring and unchallenged. But where there is an outlet for faith growth and excitement happens, because faith is alive.

Vs. 18-

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. **19** You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

- James is not minimizing the importance to the claim of having faith. He is simply saying (My faith and my works go together). It's not one or the other, it's both. He sees his deeds as proof of his faith.
- James makes a powerful point here in Vs. 19 “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”
- Obviously it is not enough to believe in God, because demons recognize Jesus and even call him “the Holy One of God”.

Luke 4

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, **34** “Go away! What

do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

- If a person only believes in God, but they don't obey him, they are no different from the demons who believe in Jesus, but do not obey him.
- In America we seem to have adopted the belief that it's enough to just believe in Jesus, meaning acknowledge Jesus. Friend it's not enough to acknowledge Jesus, we have to surrender to His Will.

Matthew 7:21

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

- Now to drive the point of faith and deeds home James uses the example of Abraham and Rahab.

Vs. 20-25

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? **21** Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? **22** You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. **23** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. **24** You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

- Abraham was justified by faith long before he offered Isaac (**Genesis 15:6**). But his obedience in offering Isaac demonstrated that he really did trust God.

- If you look at Genesis 22 in the NKJV it is subtitled - **Abraham's Faith Confirmed.**

Genesis 22:12 NIV

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

- Abraham demonstrated his faith in God when he laid Isaac on the altar.
- Abraham must have known that God was going to somehow provide, because God gave Abraham a promise; and Isaac was a part of that promise.
- Abraham was commended by God here because of his faith in action, He was commended by God because he was obedient.
- The same is true of Rahab. What she did could have cost her life. But she acted in faith and her actions were commended.

Vs 26

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds (works) is dead.

“As much as you can have a body with no life, so you can have a faith with no life – and faith without works is a dead faith, unable to save.”

Guzik

Closing:

Letter to the Seven Churches - Jesus says

Revelation 2:2 - Church in Ephesus

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.

Revelation 2:19 - Church in Thyatira

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Revelation 3 - Church in Sardis

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **2** Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your **deeds unfinished** in the sight of my God.

Revelation 3:8 - Church in Philadelphia

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

Revelation 3:15 - Church in Laodicia

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

- I don't hear Jesus saying I know your heart or I know your intentions. He says to 5 of the 7 churches, I know your deeds.

The same is true for us. Lord help us to exercise our faith and marry faith and actions together.

- When we serve, may it be out of Faith
- When we witness to others, may it be fueled by our Faith.
- When we give, may it be in Faith as unto God.