

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Faith With Breath in Its Lungs”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 2:14-26; Gen. 15:6; Gen. 22:12; Josh. 2:8-14; Eph. 2:8-10

There are few things more frustrating than words that sound right but don't actually do anything. A person can say, “I care,” but if someone is hungry, cold, wounded, or alone, words alone don't warm the body, fill the stomach, or lift the burden. There is a kind of “go in peace” that sounds spiritual, but when it is disconnected from compassion and action, James/Jacob asks a piercing question: *“What good is that?”*

That is the heart of James 2:14-26. Jacob is not setting faith against action, and he is not contradicting Paul. He is pressing us toward whole faith—faith that trusts God and then walks that trust out. The question is not whether we are saved by our own effort. We are not. The question is whether the faith we claim to have is alive, breathing, moving, and becoming visible in the way we love God and love people.

1. BREATHLESS FAITH HAS NO BENEFIT

James opens with the question, *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?”* (Jas. 2:14). In other words, what is the value of a faith that is only spoken but never lived? What is the benefit of faith that has no breath in its lungs, no movement in its body, no action flowing from it? James is not talking about “works of the law” as though we could earn salvation. He is talking about action—the living response that comes from trusting God.

That is why he gives the example of the brother or sister who is lacking clothing and daily food. If someone says, *“Go in shalom, keep warm and well fed,”* but does not give them what the body needs, James asks again, *“What good is that?”* (Jas. 2:16). Words without action do not warm the body. Words without action do not feed the hungry. And faith without action is like a body without breath. It may have the shape of faith, the language of faith, and the appearance of faith, but James says it is dead by itself.

2. LIVING FAITH CAN BE SEEN AND HEARD

James continues, *“Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works”* (Jas. 2:18). Faith that is alive can be demonstrated. It can be seen in the way we love, the way we obey, the way we respond to need, and the way we walk when the Lord says, “Go.” Faith is not merely something we declare with our mouths; it is something that begins to breathe through our lives.

Then James presses into the danger of having right words without a surrendered life. *“You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe—and shudder!”* (Jas. 2:19). Correct doctrine matters, but correct doctrine by itself is not the same as living faith. The demons know who God is, and they tremble, but their knowledge does not

become obedience. Living faith is not merely agreement with truth. Living faith inhales the word of God and exhales obedience, mercy, humility, and love.

3. WHOLE FAITH BREATHES THROUGH OBEDIENCE

James then points us to Abraham. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, but that faith was brought to its fullness when he walked it out in obedience. *"You see that faith worked together with his works, and by the works his faith was made complete"* (Jas. 2:22). His faith and his actions were not in competition with each other. They worked together. His faith had breath in its lungs because it moved when God spoke.

Then James gives Rahab as another example. *"And likewise, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also proved righteous by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out another way?"* (Jas. 2:25). Abraham and Rahab stand on very different sides of the spectrum, but both show the same truth: living faith follows through. Faith that trusts God breathes through obedience. And so James concludes, *"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead"* (Jas. 2:26). Whole faith is not breathless. Whole faith is alive.

CONCLUSION

Jacob is calling us to a faith that is alive. Not a faith divided into neat categories where we say, "I believe," but our lives remain untouched. Not a faith that blesses the hungry while refusing to feed them. Not a faith that affirms the right doctrine but does not submit to the Lord's ways. Whole faith trusts God and walks in obedience. Whole faith receives the grace of God and then becomes the workmanship of God. As Paul writes, *"For we are His workmanship—created in Messiah Yeshua for good deeds, which God prepared beforehand so we might walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10).

So today, the invitation is not to try harder in your own strength or to earn what only grace can give. The invitation is to bring your faith before the Lord and ask Him to breathe life into every place where it has become words without action. If there is someone you have blessed with your mouth but ignored with your hands, bring that to Him. If there is obedience you have affirmed but not walked out, bring that to Him. If there is doctrine you believe but have not allowed to transform you, bring that to Him. Say, "Lord, make my faith whole. Let what I believe become visible in how I love, how I obey, how I give, how I forgive, and how I walk."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think James asks, "*What good is it?*" at the beginning of this passage? What is he trying to expose?
2. In James's example of the brother or sister lacking clothing and daily food, why are words alone not enough?
3. James says even the demons believe that God is one and shudder. What is the difference between believing true things about God and submitting to God?
4. Where is one area of your life right now where your faith needs to become more visible in action?
5. In a modern context, what are some ways believers can say, "Go in peace, keep warm and well fed," without actually meeting the need in front of them?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, we thank You for saving us by grace through faith. We know we could never earn Your mercy, and we could never make ourselves new by our own strength. But we also confess that You did not save us into a dead, motionless faith. You have called us to walk as Yeshua walked, to love as He loved, and to let our trust in You become visible in our obedience.

Breathe life into our faith. Forgive us for the times we have spoken spiritual words without offering faithful action. Open our eyes to the needs in front of us, and give us hearts that respond with mercy, courage, and obedience. Make us Your workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good deeds, and teach us to walk in them.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.