

Functioning Faith

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

A. Slide2,3 Ladies. DC & GC. Neighbors. CG. Murr Men. JM10.

II. Slide4 **Intro:** *Functioning Faith*

A. James has already warned against **empty religion** which is **impure**, Here he warns against an **inactive faith** which is **impotent**. (Stibbs)

B. Some have thought that James & Paul's writings were in opposition to each other.

Important differences:

1. Slide5 **Emphasis** - Paul stresses the **root** of salvation (faith in Christ + nothing) James stresses the **fruit** after salvation.

2. **Perspective** - Paul looks at life from **God's** perspective. James looks at life from a **human** perspective.

a) Paul is sitting in the den staring at the fire in the fireplace.

James is up on the roof eyeing the smoke coming out of the chimney.

[can't see the fireplace only its results]

(1) To James, the world should be able to tell that ***a faith burns in our hearts*** by the works they see coming out of our lives.

C. So, James & Paul do not **contradict** each other, they **compliment** each other.

1. We are justified b4 **God** by **faith**, **but** we are justified b4 **men** by **works**.

a) Because **God** can see our **faith**, **but men** can see only our **works**.

2. Paul was explaining how one gains entrance into **salvation**.

James is examining how one gives evidence of **it**. (Swindoll)

D. James contrasts having only **Head Faith** (14-20) **vs.** Head, Heart, Hand Faith (21-26).

III. Slide6a **FUNCTIONING FAITH (14)**

A. (14) 2 rhetorical questions:

1. Can someone have genuine faith *but* not have works in their life?
 - a) What good is it to have a drivers license if you don't drive? Answer? **None.**
 - b) A **workless** faith is a **worthless** faith.
2. Can that sort of faith save him from condemnation? Answer. **No.**

B. **Slide6b Empty faith** is **words** w/o action; **profession** w/o performance.

1. 1Jn.3:17,18 *nlt* If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion - how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely **say** that we love each other; let us **show** the truth by our actions.
2. **Slide6c** The reformers said it this way, *we are justified by faith alone, but not by the faith which is alone.*

IV. **Slide7a 4 FACTS OF FUNCTIONING FAITH (14-20)**

A. **#1 It's not Indifferent but Involved** (15,16) [Chuck Swindoll outline]

B. We've all received empty platitudes instead of real help. *"Have faith! - Keep a stiff upper lip - even, I'll pray for you bro."* (if they don't mean it)

C. True saving faith is seen in **activity**.

1. Vs. 15,16 tell us it's a faith that goes beyond words & reaches out to the needy.
2. Some have said, *The first reformation was about creeds, the new one will be about deeds.*
 - a) What needs reforming now are Christian **actions**. Learning how to be more *the hands & feet of Christ* in the world, & less a mouth.
 - (1) **eg.** Assist the poor, care for the sick, educate the next generation.
 - (2) **Social gospel?** (wud u want an *unsocial-gospel?*) **This is a Jesus Gospel.**
3. A faith that fails to produce good deeds *it is dead & useless.*
4. **If you don't live it, you don't believe it.**

- D. **Slide7b** Listen to vs.16 from the Msg Bible, *For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, “Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!” and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup - where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that **God-talk** without **God-acts** is **outrageous nonsense**?*
- E. **Slide7c #2** It's not *Independent* but **In Partnership** (17)
- F. Like the song *Love & Marriage*, Love and marriage, love and marriage, Go together like the horse and carriage (ends with) You can't have one without the other.
1. Faith & works go together, they are in partnership.
 - a) Like the Boatman that had painted **Faith** on one oar, & **Works** on the other. Then when people would ask why, he would **pull one in & paddle in a circle**. If you do not have the use of **both oars**, you make no progress as a Christian.
- G. **Slide7d #3** It's not *Invisible* but **On Display** (18) [or *on exhibit*]
- H. Do your best to show me your faith w/o using works, & I'll show you by my works. We'll see which one is **the real deal**.
- I. Some might argue however, *Look, there are **all kinds** of Christians. Some have the gift of works, others are quiet, never displaying their faith.*
1. **But** that's like saying, some people have the gift of breathing & others don't. **James whole point...*If it doesn't show...you don't have it.***
- J. **Slide7e #4** It's not *Intellectual* but **From The Heart** (19)
- K. This person's defense against not having any works is *to hide behind an **impressive knowledge** of God's Word.*
1. (ie.) *“My theology is impeccable. I believe God is One, just like it says in **Deuteronomy 6:4.**” “Wonderful, James says, you have **demonic faith.**”*
- L. **Demons** have their *religious facts straight* but they're still **demons** [always knew who JC was]

1. There is 1 **distinction** though...the demonic tribes **tremble** at the thought of God (**tremble**: used for *physical signs of terror, especially w/the hair standing on end*)

a) The dead faith of the **religious intellectual** doesn't produce even that much of a reaction. [mere intellectual assent]

M. How profitable is **my faith** by the test of James' illustration? (let's lay out our works on the table). How does **my faith** differ from that of the demons?

V. Slide8a **HEAD, HEART, HAND FAITH (21-26)**

A. James now illustrates his argument by reference to 2 very different/opposite people & their **Head, Heart, Hand Faith**. And that their works proved their faith.

1. Slide8b **Abraham** was the Father of the Jews. **Rahab** was pagan prostitute

2. **Abraham** was moral, admired, a Jewish patriarch. **Rahab** was a harlot, looked on w/disdain, considered insignificant.

a) Yet both evidenced the same kind of faith.

B. (21-24) **Abraham** was saved by faith (Gen.15:6), but he proved that faith by obeying God & offering his son (Gen.22).

C. (25) **Rahab** was saved by faith (Heb.11:31), but she showed the reality of her faith by protecting the spies or lending aid to the Israelite army (Josh.2; 6:17-27).

D. (26) **Closing principle is simple**: when there's separation there is death.

1. It's true **physically** when the soul separates from the body, and it's true **spiritually** when faith is separated from works.

2. Without works, **faith** is nothing but a corpse, void of vitality & useless to everybody **but the undertaker**.

E. **Faith is like calories**, they cannot be seen, but you can always see its results.

1. Slide9 **What results do you see in your life?**

a) Genuine faith is **Involved** (active), is yours? Genuine faith is **Partnership** (w/ works), is yours? Genuine faith is **Displayed** (exhibited to others), is yours? Genuine faith is **from the Heart** (but activates the rest of the body), is yours?

2. I called it **Functioning Faith**...*what would you call it?* Active Faith. Intentional. Authentic. Real. Genuine. Expressive. Demonstrative. Gushing. Friendly. Living. Affectionate Faith? [go real practical]

- F. **Slide10 Psalm 146:7-9** *nlt praises the Lord* for His wonderful deeds, offering a catalog of the kinds of things God does. *7 He gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The Lord frees the prisoners. 8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down. The Lord loves the godly. 9 The Lord protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows*
1. But the Bible shows that these are **not absolutes**. He has **not** vindicated **all** who are oppressed, **or** fed **all** who are hungry, **or** given sight to **all** who are blind. **But it is** His **intent** to **do** all these things, **and He will**.
 - a) The Bible affirms that **all** the promises of God **will** be fulfilled (Everything will be put right), if not in **this** life, surely in the life **to come**.
- G. **So, Jesus** takes up these **themes** making them *the program of His whole ministry*. Lk.4
1. Thus once again the Scripture combines the **saving** gospel **with** the **hands/feet** gospel. **Or**, the **saving** gospel **w/the** **social/communal** gospel. **Or**, the **saving** gospel **w/the** **humanitarian** gospel.
 - a) **Important sub-point: NOT** *the old social gospel* that accepts the **2nd** great command, *love your neighbor as yourself*, **but** ignores the **1st** *love the Lord God w/all your heart, mind, soul*.
 - b) Remember, Jesus was asked...**what is the 1st commandment?** (the foremost, 1st in rank, most imp) **Jesus' answer** was that He couldn't separate them out. Mrk.12:28-34
 2. **Christ invested His life in people**. He **fed** them, **healed** them, **raised** them from the dead. **And** He did this for **both** those who would **follow Him** **&** those He knew **never would**.
- H. We constantly make it **the saving gospel** **OR** **the humanitarian gospel**, when maybe it should be envisioned **as conjoined twins**. **Or**, 2 sides of the same coin. **Or**, 2 pees in the same pod.

1. Jesus was a humanitarian, **but** of a unique kind. He **healed** to *reveal* true healing. He **fed** to *reveal* true food. He **quenched thirst** to *reveal* everlasting water. Christ's actions were temporal, but His intended impact was for His every word and deed to be eternally transforming.¹
2. **Slide11** Bono said in 2006 at the National Prayer Breakfast Washington DC, *Christ's religion lives in the streets where boots get dirty.*
 - a) He went on to say, *God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity & lives, & God is with us if we are with them.*

I. Keywords: James, Faith, Paul, works, genuine faith.

¹ Humanitarian Jesus, Christian Buckley & Ryan Dobson, pg.26.