



James 2:14-26 Dead Faith!

July 19, 2015

Text: James 2:14-26

From last week:

- Christians have not been called to withdraw from culture but to engage; not to run away afraid but to fight; not to blend in but be a light on a hill! Faith without works is dead! But, biblical “work” takes biblical faith, which is why it is SO important that faith is understood.
- Biblical Faith **asks, believes, and trusts!**
 - a. Here is the process, and you’ll find this totally true if you are honest:
 1. *We ask God for what we desire of Him...*
 2. *We believe that God can do anything...*
 3. *And we trust in His complete and total sovereignty over any situation!*
 - b. Unbiblical faith stops at the first two points: asking and believing. Amazingly, it negates the “trusting” of God, and many times unknowingly says, “Lord, I don’t trust you to do what is best for me. Therefore, Lord, do what I want!”
 - c. **Therefore, biblical faith is not a trust in anything worldly or man-centered; biblical faith ultimately finds its root in a firm trust in a loving, sovereign God.**
- If we truly believe that God hears us when we ask, and that His answers are perfect (because He is sovereign), then what is stopping us from working? Our Lord petitioned the Father, believed the Father, and trusted the Father. Therefore he worked: *Joh 4:34 ESV Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."*
- **Therefore, friends, we can trust Him! We can go to work! We can preach and live out the Gospel! We can reform our families and church! We can be light in a world of darkness, fearing NO evil and no persecution! Truly, let us, “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.” (Psa 37:3 ESV)**

Dead Faith! Exegesis of James 2:14-26

(James 2:14 ESV) What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

- Based on the construction of this question, James’ wants his readers to answer, “No. This sort of faith CANNOT save him.”
- Lesson: the kind of “faith” that declares “I have faith!” but has no “life” to back it up is not true faith at all. This tough standard is in keeping with James’ overall message.
- We said in James 1:1 that James is often called “the Proverbs of the New Testament.” “The book of James practically and faithfully reminds Christians how to **live**. From perseverance to true faith to controlling one’s tongue, submitting to God’s will, and having patience, this book aids readers in living authentically and wisely for Christ.” –ESV Bible
- We also said that we are a church that has LEARNED a lot. We must transition to a church that **LIVES** a lot...where we take what we have learned and actually apply it. Our particular call demands it. The truth is, if we kinda sorta wander out on the battlefield, mumbling something about a black gate ☺, and are uncommitted to Christ’s Word, we are going to take lots of damage.

(James 2:15-16 ESV) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

- Giving an example with which all would be familiar, James exhorts action! Don’t just stretch your hand and hum a prayer. Feed and clothe the brother or sister! ☺

(James 2:17 ESV) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

- That sort of “verbal but no action” faith is dead!
- “Dead” here is from the Greek “nekros” whose root word means “a corpse; a dead body.”
- The implication is that alive people (i.e. truly saved people) cannot act like this!
- **True** faith always produces **true** works. They cannot be separated.

(James 2:18 ESV) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

- James now answers a likely argument his teaching would illicit from a critic...someone who believes faith and works can be separate.
- His correction to his hypothetical critic is simple: Faith is **invisible**. It cannot be “shown” apart from works. Saying, “I have faith” means nothing. You cannot show me true faith without true works.

(James 2:19 ESV) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!

- Again, a strong correction to a possible critic. Demons know that God is one! (Deut 6:4) Yet, they **fight** against His will despite their knowledge.
- Believing alone is not enough. Even demons believe! Demons believe in Christ, yet they rebel. Demons know the Scripture, yet they pervert it.
- **The obvious lesson here is that good works (among other things) separate us from the demons! If they know and we know and they rebel and we rebel, can we be any more saved than them?**
- **Oh dear saints, intellectual assent (agreement) alone is not true faith. True faith ALWAYS manifests work!**

(James 2:20-22 ESV) Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

- James is NOT contradicting Paul, who argued that Abraham was justified by faith (Rom 4:1-3). Paul is referencing Genesis 15:6, where Isaac is promised.
- James moves forward some in the narrative and references Gen 22:1-12, where despite God’s promise of a nation through Isaac, Abraham was willing to kill him at God’s command in the land of Moriah.
- Both things are true: Abraham faith was accounted to him as righteousness; Abraham **proved** his faith by being willing to sacrifice his son.
- Faith is always “active along with works, and faith is “completed” or is made perfect or **mature** by works!” ☺

(James 2:23 ESV) and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"--and he was called a friend of God.

- Amen!
- John 15:14 ESV You are my friends if you **DO** what I command you. –Jesus ☺ (emphasis mine)

(James 2:24 ESV) You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- Don’t get hung up here. In context, *justified* refers to Abraham being tested and passing the test...his true faith **demonstrated**...his actual validated faith proven by works.
- James is not saying in any way that one can work his way into the Kingdom of God.
- *Galatians 3:11 ESV Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."*
- Abraham’s act didn’t “save” or justify him; it showed or attested to his “salvation.”

(James 2:25 ESV) And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

- A reference to Joshua 2 where Rahab the prostitute believed God and risked her life for Joshua’s spies.

Rahab heard of the works of God and the success of His army, and believed that they would be victorious. (Jos 2:9-11)

- She saved the spies from capture and death (Jos 2:15), demonstrating the faith she had in God, despite her sins and failures.
- In fact, despite her sins, Rahab finds herself honored among the heroes of faith! (Heb 11:31)
- Anybody else glad God, by His grace, uses sinners? 😊

(James 2:26 ESV) For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

- A wonderfully simple way to sum up the teaching.
- Like the body and spirit CANNOT be separated, neither can faith be separated from works. A body without is spirit is....

Contextual Applications

1. Last week, we said that, “James exhorts the believer to count all things joy, ask in faith without doubt, remain steadfast under trial, endure temptation, hear and do the Word, serve widows and orphans and keep oneself unspotted from the world, show no partiality, and walk in the Law of Liberty!” This kind of life requires **faith!** 😊
2. Application questions:
 - a. Has your faith produced the “works” of joy, even during “various trials”?
 - b. Has your faith pushed out doubt, that you might not be “double-minded” and “unstable in your ways”?
 - c. Has your faith increased your steadfastness under trial?
 - d. Has your faith helped you “work” against temptation?
 - e. Has your faith prompted you to continually “hear” AND “do” the Word, as to not be deceived?
 - f. Has your faith moved you to thirst for righteousness and “unspotted” living?
 - g. Has your faith worked to cause love for rich and poor, black and white and brown?

Personal Applications and Exhortations

The widespread acceptance of the LGBT movement. The Charleston shooting. The SCOTUS decision. The racial unrest. The continued violence. The Islamic extremism and unspeakable acts thereof. The Planned Parenthood video. The murder of those four Marines.

What a Summer.

Precious, precious friends, IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME FOR CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES TO DEMONSTRATE ALIVE, TRUE, POWERFUL, REAL, LOVING, FOCUSED, ANOINTED FAITH, IT IS NOW.

How?

1. **Preach the Gospel.**
2. **Walk in Holiness.**
3. **Build Christ-centered Families that serve the community.**
4. **Be good stewards because of what lies ahead. (This includes protecting your families.)**
5. **Be, pray for, and uphold good Leaders.**
6. **Build a biblical Worldview.**

Sound familiar? God has given some answers. The question is, “Do we have the faith obey Him?” May our faith not mimic that which is dead. May it be alive. Christ increase our faith.

Amen.