

James - Living Out Your Faith
“A Working Faith ...Can't Have One Without the Other”
James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

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

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

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

²⁵In 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? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (James 2: 14-26 NIV)

I. What does James tell us about the nature of faith that bites, a faith that matters?

Q: Do Paul and James have a differing understanding of “saving faith”?

Compare James 2:24 with Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship,*

created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

II. As we dig into the issues of faith and deeds (works), James guides us through three kinds of faith we embrace in our everyday living:

1. I can live my life with a dead faith.
2. I can live my life with the faith of demons.
3. I can live my life with a vibrant, working faith.
 - Abraham (see Genesis 15: 1-6; 22:1-19)
 - Rahab (see Joshua 2:1-21; 6:25 Hebrews 11:31, & Matthew 1:5)
 - Human body

Questions for Reflection:

1. 2:19 says ... Even the demons believe that – and shudder. “Shudder” means to tremble (only used here in the NT) or bristle. It suggests “a horror that makes the hair stand on end”. Why does James mention and affirm this existence of the spiritual realm ... and what happens when our Almighty God is acknowledged by demons?
2. In 2:18 James proposes to use the measuring stick of demonstration. Can a person “see” another person’s faith without work or deeds being present? Can you see another person’s faith by observing his deeds?
3. Do you have a faith that saves? If your genuine faith in the Gospel of Jesus and His cross is the root of your life tree, what kinds of fruit are you able to see hanging from your branches? What are you doing with your faith?
4. Why do you think James gives us three very different examples for faith and deeds: “Father” Abraham, Rahab “the prostitute”, and the human body? What is James trying to tell his readers about saving faith by using varying pictures? What evidence is there that Rahab’s deliverance was more than a physical one? What does the human body picture teach about the relation between faith and works?