

FAITH IN ACTION RESULTS IN GOOD WORKS

Greetings: Jesus declares in the Sermon on the Mount: *You are the light of the world. Therefore, let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16.* James, the faithful follower of Jesus, rhetorically suggests that without good works, one is really without genuine faith. Today's lesson will be examining genuine (dynamic) faith and a "faith" which is not real at all but spoken of in this lesson as "dead faith."

JAMES 2:14-26 ¹⁴ What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. ¹⁸ But someone may *well* say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The lesson *Faith in Action Results in Good Works* calls attention to the necessity to put one's proclaimed faith into seen action. The word faith {pistes} in these verses is mentioned 10 times out of a total of 15 usages in the book of James, and works {ergon} is mentioned 12 times (out of 15) in the same text. Such concentrated focus on faith connected to works has been for some in the last 500 years a difficult postulation to accept. We must, however, remove preconceived biases and allow God's word to stand where God, using the voice of James, clearly reveals that *faith without works is dead*.

DEAD FAITH DISAPPOINTS... 2:14-20, 26

- What is dead faith?
 - Dead faith is the noun "faith" absent of action. **14**
 - Dead faith is "speaking" to one in need but not willing to give to that need. **15-16**
 - Dead faith lies dormant in her coffin, all by itself. **17**
 - Dead faith has nothing to show for itself. **18**
 - Dead faith is belief only, which even the demons possess. **19**
 - Dead faith is useless; that's why it disappoints! **20**
- What is absent from non-genuine faith are works of charity and mercy.

- Love for God and love for man is the impetus and living principle which gives life to all true faith.
- Demons are disobedient, rebellious entities that unexpectedly have a correct theology of who God is. Their belief in the one God is sound, yet would one say they have faith? **Mark 1:24, 3:11, 5:7**
- Faith without obedience is as vain as the expression of empty wishes for the needy with no effort expended to relieve their distressed situation.

- Dead Faith Examples:

Foolish Fellows

Pew sitters that substitute words for deeds

Guilty of the law of Christ by neglect **2:10, 4:17**

Useless in taking care of the physical needs of brothers and sisters

Deceiving Demons

Evil beings that have correct theology but evil actions

Guilty of rebellion to their Divine Creator by choice

Effective in bringing disorder to those who do not submit and resist **4:7**

DYNAMIC FAITH DELIGHTS...

- What is dynamic faith?
 - Dynamic faith is the complete working definition of faith: Belief+ Trust+Allegiance producing Obedience.
 - Dynamic faith is grounded in love. **8, Galatians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 13:2-3**
 - Dynamic faith endures and produces perfection and completeness. **1:3-4**
 - Dynamic faith is living and active and is united with the word of God. **Hebrews 4:2, 12**
 - Dynamic faith is not having faith *in faith* but in the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom our trust is held. **2:1**
 - Dynamic faith believes in praying. **5:15, 1:5-6**
 - Dynamic faith results in good works; that's why it delights! **22, 24, 26**
- The obedience of faith is powerful and is the completion/fulfilling of faith.
 - The doctrine of salvation by grace through faith includes obedience.
 - By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed. **Hebrews 11:8**
 - The obedience of faith is exemplified in the offering of Isaac **21-22** and is bookmarked in the beginning and end sentences of Romans. **Romans 1:5, 16:26**
- Dynamic Faith Examples: **2:21-25**



Abraham

Father of Jewish nation and friend of God

Respected, very rich, patriarch

Nomad, living as alien in land of promise

Rahab

Harlot of pagan (Gentile) nation who feared God

Scandalous, impoverished, female

Stationary 'innkeeper' living in city devoted to destruction

- Yet God is not partial to any. He rewards all that demonstrate faith in Him. Brother and sister, rich and poor. **Hebrews 11:6**
- Both Abraham and Rahab obeyed. God's word commanded Abraham to offer Isaac, and God's will was to help the spies (even though Rahab faced a great risk if caught).
- Both performed works which in themselves could be sinful, unless undertaken in direct response to God.
- Both initially worshipped with dead faith to the moon god, which preceded their dynamic faith of worshiping the true and living Almighty Jehovah.
- Both are found in the genealogy of Christ, **Matthew 5:1-5**, and in the Faith Hall of Fame. **Hebrews 11:8, 31**
- Both were instrumental in the saving of their families and eventually to all who come into genuine faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Their justification resulted from their works. Therefore, no works—no justification.

RECONCILING FAITH AND WORKS...

- Faith alone and works (of the law).
 - Christendom has 500 years of needless confusion with the dialogue of coming to God with **faith alone**; and before that, with 1000 years from the "mother church" of **meritorious works** in which one can earn good standing with God. Both positions have added to perplexity, much debate, and even wars.
 - By standing on the word alone, however, one can reconcile the roadblocks of the faith-and-works dialogue.
 - As a Restorationist (not Reformationist), one can resolve any perceived differences between Paul and James.
- *And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.* **Genesis 15:6** (See perspectives on this verse from Paul and James on next page.)



Paul

Romans 4:3 - writes to correct legalism

Uses works in a legal sense, mostly works of the law

Quotes **15:6** as the beginning point of Christian life

Speaks toward Abraham's belief (the 1st component of faith) concerning God's promises

James

James 2:24 - writes to those who claim "faith" without action

Uses works as a part of completing faith in an active tense

Quotes **15:6** in correcting a professing Christian

Speaks toward a different verdict of Abraham's obedience in the offering of his son where faith was perfected

These two great men of faith stood on the same side of the matter of the grace of Christ as compared with the works of the law but addressed them from different perspectives.

- Men are neither justified by faith alone or works alone but by both! (Sorry Luther, the only time "faith alone" is mentioned is **James 2:24**) *{sarcasm}*
- The alleged contradiction between James and Paul derives not from what either said, but from the distorted allegations concerning what they meant. (I'm glad we got the last 500 years sorted out in such a short amount of time!) *{more sarcasm}*
- Bottom line is— FAITH WORKS!

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What is your reaction when people need help? How does this relate to your faith?
- ❖ How can the phrase, "I'll pray for you," be a cop out? And how can you make sure that you do pray for people that you say you will pray for?
- ❖ Is it possible to believe in God and yet not be saved?
- ❖ What would you say is the biblical definition of faith? And why is getting that definition right so important?
- ❖ In your faith journey, do you more closely associate with the journey of Abraham or Rahab? Why?
- ❖ In what areas can we better put our faith into practice?
- ❖ What effect does genuine faith in Christ have on our lives?

Prayer

