

FAITH WORKS

James 2:14-26

When people become familiar with James, they question *apparent* contradiction between James & Paul.

Martin Luther calls James "epistle of straw".

Conflict appears when we compare James 2 with Rom.

James: "*Faith apart from works is dead*"

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works... ?"

"A person is justified by works & not by faith alone."

Paul: "*To the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."*

Solution to "conflict" comes by observing Jas. 2 in context

Message isn't that we're saved by works.

James calls us to *living faith, when pressure rises*.

He points out how genuine *living* faith affects our lives.

BASIC QUESTION: "What good is it?"

Asks same question in introductory statement (14),

& conclusion of problem they're facing (16):

14 "*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but doesn't have works?...¹⁶ What good's that?*

When a person SAYS he has faith

But never DOES anything about it?

What good is that?

Will that kind of faith get us out of the mess we're in?

We usually focus on **kind of FAITH:**

"Can that kind of faith save us?"

Key question: kind of "SALVATION"

In our "safe" environment, we assume issue's doctrinal. What must I do to be saved? => salvation from sin

James isn't talking about *doctrinal* issue!

–talking about how we face pressure in persecution.

We're urged to **trust God in midst of persecution**

"*Save*" often, in Scripture & conversation, describes deliverance from problems of life

=> Mt 14:30– Peter in water: "Lord, save me!"

To understand, we ask what issue they're facing: =>

Contemporary situation: 15-16 "If brother or sister is poorly clothed, lacking in daily food, ¹⁶& 1 of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed & filled," without giving them things needed for the body, **what good is that?**"

When person needs food or clothes.

He has physical need or going through hard times, ...

Common in persecution; many lost jobs due to faith

Times are hard, they have families to care for!

If we wish them well; do nothing about it.

What good does THAT do?

Why don't we take a risk to help people in need?

We say we have faith, but food's in short supply, so we hoard it for ourselves!

Practical truth explained 17-26

4 facts about *faith without action* 17-20

Faith without action is dead It's lifeless! 17

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

If faith doesn't change the way we live, **it's dead.**

As long as it stands alone, it will *never* produce fruit!

Faith without action isn't verifiable. It's invisible

You can't see it! So you can't prove it's there!

It can't be authenticated. **18** *“Someone will say, ‘You have faith & I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works; I will show you my faith by my works.”*

SHOW me your faith, without works

How can anyone see faith, unless it does something?

I'll show you by my works that I have faith!

What I **do** demonstrates reality of my faith

Faith without action is like demons' faith.

19 *“You believe God is one [Shema [Dt 6:4]: “The LORD our God, the LORD is one”]; you do well. Even the demons believe—& shudder!”*

Demons believe that too... even tremble before Him.

They believe in God, but faith hasn't changed their lives!

They don't submit to Him => *their faith is useless!* =>

Faith without action is useless. **20** *“Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”*

Like lazy person who accomplishes nothing!

Basic premise starts & concludes this section:

17 Faith that doesn't make a difference is dead!

20 Faith that doesn't make a difference is useless!

Our faith ought to be a *living faith*.

Living things produce fruit.

Illustration 21-25

2 O.T. saints show that faith leads to action

They stand out because of their *faith*.

They trust God & are willing to suffer—due to their faith.

Their faith made difference in their lives!

Abraham 2:21-24

Question: Wasn't Abraham declared righteous because of what he *did*? 21 “Was

not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

He was “declared [shown] to be just” by what he did.

His actions **show** the reality of his faith.

Deduction: Faith & works go together 22 “*You see that faith was active along with his works, & faith was completed by his works*”

Faith goes with works; works makes faith complete

Scriptural support 23 “*The Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, & it was counted to him as righteousness” —& he was called a friend of God.*”

Abraham's declared righteous because of *faith*

He's key example—James agrees with Paul!

If *anyone's* declared “*saved by faith*,” it's Abraham

Even so, **Abraham's faith makes a difference!**

He's willing to give up what means more to him than anything:

His SON! => True form of ***child dedication***

Conclusion 24 “You see that a person is justified by works & not by faith alone.”

He’s declared/shown to be just, by what he does!

Living faith ALWAYS makes a difference in our lives!

Rahab 25 “In same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified [declared/shown just] by works when she received messengers & sent them out by another way?”

Rahab’s declared righteous due to what she did

Her actions made a statement/demonstrated her faith.

It affected what she *said*! It affected what she *did*!

Conclusion [for Rahab’s story & entire passage]

Faith that doesn’t make a difference is dead.

26 “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead,
so also faith apart from works is dead.”

Faith that doesn’t make difference is useless!

Living faith produces Christian living.

Genuine faith is seen by how we respond under pressure.

If we trust God, we obey—even if we can’t see how it’ll end

We trust God in dark—when we can’t see where He’s taking us!

What difference does faith make in people who trust God? Under pressure:

Contemporary example 15-16

Times are hard, all suffer lack of food.

Christian comes to my house at lunch time.

We only have 2 days’ food.

He’s out; has no food to give family. What do I do?

I say I trust God. Can I share what I have today, if I don't know where food will come from tomorrow?

Abraham's example 21

Abraham SAYS he trusts God; will he cling to son?

Rahab's example 25 SAYS she believes in Israel's God

Will she risk everything to protect God's agents?

Modern example:

Guatemala widow—wife of assassinated political victim.

We SAY we trust God to protect His people

Will we risk caring for her?

Relevancy today: US? What's God asking US to do?

Young people asked to serve God in **Uganda**

Some have struggle. It costs a lot of money!

We SAY we trust God. Can we trust Him to provide that much when we can't see where it's coming from?

Parents. —not easy to trust God to protect kids on trip [=> child dedication!] Something might happen to them!

Americans/Christians aren't very popular these days!

We SAY we trust God. Can we trust Him with our kids?

What are we facing this week?

Is God asking us to *trust* Him; *DO* something for Him?

Will He ask us to follow to new place to serve Him?

We SAY we trust Him. Do we believe Him enough to do what He tells us?

Salvation: What's true of daily life *IS* true of salvation —though that's not James' point in this passage.

Abraham was declared righteous because He believed God— He

trusted Him.

People who believe God DO what He says.

They stop trying to earn way to heaven—trust His Son

Starting point is faith in Christ

Have you trusted Him?

Having begun *by faith*, we don't *walk* by rules!

Trusting Christ *DOES* make difference in how we live!

Has Christ made a difference in our life?

If He hasn't made difference, we better take closer look

Faith that doesn't make difference is useless!

Living faith will make a difference in our life!

Are *YOU* trusting Him this morning?

Or, are you still trusting yourself?

Will we trust Him to accomplish His plan for our life

when we don't know what tomorrow holds?

Will we trust Him & obey His revealed will for our life?