

Faith & Works

James 2:14-26

Opening Question:

- “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? (v. 14)
- Answer: 4 Illustrations
 - unkempt & hungry brother or sister
 - Demons
 - Abraham
 - Rahab

Illustration 1: unkempt/hungry brother or sister

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (v. 15-17)

Illustration 1

- Merely wishing someone well in the face of their need and our ability to help is an indication that our well wishes are not sincere.
- Too often perhaps we are content offering mere words when God is calling us to action.

Illustration 2: Demons

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?” (v. 18-20)

Illustration 2

- “Some have faith, others have deeds”
 - Claims that faith and deeds falls under the category of “gifts” possessed only by some
 - James, instead, presents them as inseparable
- James portrays the poverty of faith without works by comparing it to the faith of demons.
- This kind of faith leads to nothing more than abject fear before God.

Illustration 3: Abraham

“Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.” (v. 21-24)

Illustration 3

- “You see”—how can you tell a person is justified? By the evidence of their works.
- Genesis 15:6 found its ultimate significance in his life of obedience.
- On the one hand, the demons believe and shudder—on the other and, Abraham believes and he was called a friend of God.

Illustration 4: Rahab

“In 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? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (v. 25-26)

Illustration 4

- A fully comprehensive statement is being made—all the way from Abraham to Rahab—faith is seen in action.
- Rahab stands in contrast to the first illustration. She saw a need and acted to meet that need of God's people.

	Negative Illustrations		Positive Illustrations	
Direction:	Manward	Godward		Manward
Illustration:	Hungry & Unkempt	Demons	Abraham	Rahab
Action:	Well wishes	Belief & fear	Obedience	Spies Hidden
Summary:	Faith without evidential works is dead	Faith, separated from works, which validate it, is barren	Works of obedience provide evidence that faith is true	The activity of "works" reveals faith as living

Definition of Faith

- Faith is not:
 - Simply well wishing without action
 - Mere belief or confession of belief without peace with God
- Faith is:
 - Acts of obedience, trusting God's promises
 - Caring actions taken demonstrating our living faith

Paul & James

- Necessity of love flowing from our faith

(1 Corinthians 13)

- “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 6:1-2)
- United with Christ, therefore obedience comes from faith (Romans 1:5)

Definition of Faith

- Has or possesses works as part of its reality
- Just as the unity of the body & the spirit is required for life, so unity of faith and works is required
- “The life of faith is more than a private (long past) transaction of the heart with God. It is the life of active consecration seen in the obedience which holds nothing back from God, and the concern which holds nothing back from human need.” (Motyer)

Conclusion & Application

- Is our faith demonstrated in the way we treat others? Are we too often “well wishers” and not taking action to care for the needs of others?
- Is our faith in God producing within us a spirit of fear or is it drawing us near in friendship to the God we serve?
- Are there ways God has been nudging you to act out your faith that you have pushed aside or forgotten?
- How does your daily life present evidence of the faith in which you live?

Pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where in your life and experience your faith needs to translate into action.

Sit quietly and listen to what He says.

Now talk to God about the steps you want to take to live a full, Jesus shaped life.

(NT Wright)

Sources

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