

Agape House of Worship  
Mid-Week Bible Study  
Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Topic: Wisdom for Living  
Text: James 2:14–26

Part 6: Faith Without Works Is Dead  
Speaker: Pastor Genevieve Kumapley

**Message Introduction:**

Wisdom for living- The book of James, as written by Apostle James; (the brother of Jesus and leader in the Jerusalem Church) draws out the importance of the life of the Christian to be reflective of the teachings of Christ. Elements of his teachings have been compared to the sermon on the Mount. The letter can be best described as a “how to” book on the life of a Christian. Part 6 of the lesson draws on the important interrelatedness and components of genuine faith and works. The centrality of the letter is described by the inevitability of good works produced out of genuine faith.

This letter was written around AD 49 to the first-century Jewish Christians residing in the gentile communities outside of Judea because of persecution. It exposes the hypocrisies and teaches how to effectively live in a community.

**Objectives**

- Compare and contrast the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and James as they relate to faith and works.
- Discuss how today’s Christians can exemplify faith and works as kingdom Ambassadors.
- James encourages believers to put their beliefs into action. He contrasts empty faith with faith that is shown through good works. The evidence of true faith is the commitment to love and serve others. Let’s examine his main points ***“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? James 2:14 NLT***  
*“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” 2:19*  
*“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” 2:26*
- Jesus reminded his hearers ***“21 “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ 23 But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’ Matthew 7:21-23***
- Several scriptures by Apostle Paul are clear that salvation is entirely by grace through faith, and not earned by good deeds ***8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10***
  - ([Titus 3:5](#); [Galatians 2:16](#); [Romans 11:6](#); [John 6:28–29](#))

James poses the following arguments about the dead faith and how it is useless- vs 17

1. **Does faith that leads to action save anyone?** vs 14
  - Essentially, a faith that grants us salvation is the same faith that produces good works, it is not just a mental agreement. it is the evidence of salvation and not what leads to salvation.
  - Two critical verses for understanding this point are James 2:19 and James 2:26; There James clearly describes how mere mental "belief" is not the same as saving faith, and that a faith without works is as dead as a body without breath.
2. **What good does it do if you say to someone goodbye and stay warm and don’t do anything about it if you know they have a need (no food or drink)** vs 15-16

- Apostle James begins to paint a picture to illustrate his point: a fellow believer in Christ who lacks enough clothing or food. This would have been an easy thing for James' readers to imagine. They saw people like that on a regular basis. Bitter poverty was rampant among the poorest of the poor in that era. It's not a hard thing for us to picture, either, even if we have not met anyone in such dire circumstances in person.
- He highlights how our lack of action in meeting the needs of others can be insensitive.

Question: What are some examples of how we don't demonstrate our faith in Christ to the world through our actions today?

**1. How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? (verse 18)**

- At first glance, these verses seem to contradict what Paul says in Romans 3:28: "We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." A closer look, however, shows that the teachings of James and Paul are not contradictory. While it is true that our good deeds can never earn our salvation, true faith always results in changed lives and good deeds. *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 NIV*
- Genuine saving faith in Christ results in doing good works.
  - This includes loving other believers and obeying our Father. It is not enough to simply agree to certain facts about God. It is not enough to claim to be a believer. Saving, living faith is a trust in God which naturally results in certain actions.

**An illustration of how faith and works is required.**

**1. Life of Abraham:**

- God considered him a friend and called him righteous because of his faith demonstrated through his heart and behavior (James 2:21-24)
- *James is pointing to Abraham's faith as the motivating power behind his works. And shows that it was Abraham's belief that allowed him to be counted as righteous. His works were evidence of that faith, and therefore evidence of his salvation. It describes willingness to go all the way to exercise his faith (expressed as complete obedience)*
- Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22)
- "You see his faith and his actions worked together and his action made his faith complete.
- "And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith. (Genesis 15:6).
- "But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from Abraham my friend." Isaiah 41:8

**2. Life of Rahab the prostitute (Joshua 2:1-24; 6:23; Hebrews 11:31)**

1. Rahab was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid the messengers and sent them away safely.
2. *"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies." Hebrews 11:31*

**What are your takeaways from this lesson? What is your call to action?**

**How can you influence the world around you with your "good works"?**

**Concluding point:**

- The point James makes is clear: what we do is a clear indication of what we actually believe. The person who says they want to see a poor man helped, but who does not help them, doesn't *really* want to help. In the same way, a person who claims to have saving faith in Christ, but who does not act accordingly, does not *actually* have saving faith. Faith and works cannot be separated.