

**BOOK OF JAMES
IS YOUR FAITH WORKING?
JAMES 2:14-26; ROMANS 4:1-5**

INTRODUCTION

English is a strange language: Think about it...There is no butter in buttermilk ...no egg in eggplant...no ham in a hamburger...and no pine or apple in a pineapple. Quicksand works very slowly and boxing rings are square. We drive on parkways and we park on driveways.

Inconsistencies of language may be challenging sometimes, but are not significant. However, **inconsistencies in life are significant!**

For example if someone passes themselves off as being a boxer we expect them to possess the characteristics of a boxer. Who ever heard of a boxer who never fights any matches!

If someone passes themselves off as being a doctor, we certainly hope that their credentials are for real and not faked!

If someone passes themselves off as being a police officer, we expect them to be able to present the valid credentials that say that they are who they say they are!

What about the realm of our Christian faith? **Should those around us expect us as Christians to exhibit certain characteristics that show that we are for real? Is it realistic to expect that those professing Christianity must BEHAVE like Christians or is that asking too much?**

It is clear that **OUR WORDS** and **OUR DEEDS** should be consistent with **what we profess!**

That which is alive shows signs of life--

Plant world—green, growing, fruitful, not plastic!

Animal world—movement, vital signs—pulse, respiration, blood pressure, brain waves.

2 Corinthians 13:5—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

(i.e. Check your faith for vital signs to see if it is a faith that is alive!)

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One of the greatest tragedies of Churches today is people who PROFESS CHRIST and yet DO NOT LIVE FOR CHRIST!

Many people make a profession of faith in Christ—They are baptized and made members of a local Church—but then, they **DO NOT FOLLOW NOR LIVE FOR CHRIST!** They *“never hit a lick”* for the Lord!

They do not seek to live pure and righteous lives!

They do not have a real desire to see others saved!

Is a person such as this truly saved? Do they have a genuine faith? That is the discussion of this passage!

I. THE BIBLE IS CLEAR THAT SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY—PLUS NOTHING AND MINUS NOTHING—PERIOD!

Ephesians 2:8-9—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Salvation **HAS ALWAYS BEEN** by grace through faith!

Salvation **WILL ALWAYS BE** by grace through faith!

II. THE BIBLE IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE FAITH THAT BRINGS SALVATION IS ALSO A FAITH THAT MOVES A PERSON TO ACTION!

That is, A **FAITH THAT SAVES**, is A **FAITH THAT WORKS**—it **DOES SOMETHING!**

It is an **ACTIVE FAITH**, not a **PASSIVE FAITH!**

Ephesians 2:10—“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

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Romans 8:29—“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The title of “*Christian*” came in *Acts 11:26* to the disciples in Antioch and meant *a follower of Christ!*

Matthew 5:14-16

III. THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES THIS—WHAT KIND OF FAITH DO YOU HAVE?—A DEAD FAITH OR A DYNAMIC FAITH? A PROFITABLE FAITH OR AN UNPROFITABLE FAITH? IS YOUR FAITH WORKING FOR YOU? (VS 14)

There are two questions that every person who professes Christ should ask themselves:

1. What Profit Is There To Saying We Have Faith When We Don’t Have The Works To Back It Up?—That Is Dead Faith!

“Profit”—means “*to heap up, that is, accumulate or benefit; gain.*”

a. It is unprofitable for those who HAVE this passive sort of faith!

- 1) **It accomplishes nothing! (Vs 15-16)**
- 2) **It is a dead faith! (Vs 17)**
- 3) **It has no redeeming qualities! (Vs 18-20)**
- 4) **There is no basis to claim genuine faith!**

b. It is unprofitable for those who SEE this faith! (Vs 15-16)

- 1) The needy go away **unfulfilled** and many times **disillusioned** with God. (Vain words)
- 2) Others follow this shallow, lifeless form of faith thinking that they have life, when in fact they have nothing.

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Matthew 15:14— “... if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

c. It is unprofitable for God!
It brings reproach unto His name!

Have you ever heard someone say about one whose life is not consistent with his profession, “*Well, if that is what a Christian is, then count me out!*”

2. Can A Faith That Doesn’t Motivate To Good Works Save A Person?

Every thinking person who is honest knows that the answer to this question is an emphatic, “*No!*”

A person who really believes something does something!
He acts upon that belief!
(e.g. A hurricane warning or a tornado warning.)

See *Hebrews 11:4-5; 7; 17; 24;* (Noah received a Flood warning 120 years ahead of time! Yet his faith in the warning and in God moved him to action!)

Yet this is the curse of Christianity and of Churches. Millions who profess faith in Christ and belong to a local Church do not live for Christ! They live for the world and self!

They may have made a public profession of faith, they may have been baptized, they may have joined a local Church and they may even attend worship services at times, but they do what they want when they want without regard to following Christ! Jesus said in *Luke 6:46—“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”*

They just go on and live like everyone else in the world.

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The only difference between their lives and unbelievers is that they may sometimes attend Church to ease their conscience.

There is little difference, if any, between their behavior and speech during the week than those who do not claim any belief in Christ at all.

James asks a piercing question in verse 14: “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?*” **Note two significant facts:**

1. **We Have What A Man Says—He Has Faith.**
2. **We What A Man Shows—No Evidence Of Faith.**

Which of these speaks the loudest? Which of these speaks the truth?

Have you ever heard someone say: “*Your life is speaking so loud that I can’t hear what you are saying*”? **Our lives speak volumes more than our lips!**

The problem this person has is either that of hypocrisy—fooling others— or of duplicity—fooling one’s self or of both!

IV. OUR LIVES PROVE WHETHER OUR FAITH IS DEAD FAITH OR DYNAMIC FAITH.

A. The Example Of Abraham. (Vs 21-24; Romans 4:1-5)

This is a verse that causes great problems for some people, for it seems to say that when Abraham offered up Isaac in obedience to God’s instruction, he was justified. That is, Abraham was justified by works.

Is a man justified by works? Is that what is meant? No! What James is saying is that **Abraham proved that he was justified; he proved that he was justified by what he did—by his works!**

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Abraham’s faith was proven to be a true and living faith by his works. How do we know that this is what James really meant? Because James says so. Note what James says:

1. Abraham’s *faith wrought with* (worked with, cooperated with) *his works!* (James 2:22)
That is, his faith was acted out and proven by his works.
2. *By works Abraham’s faith was made perfect*, that is, *finished, completed, carried to the end!* (James 2:22)
Abraham’s faith was **proven**, shown to be a complete faith.
3. Abraham’s faith fulfilled Scripture. What Scripture? The Scripture that says “*Abraham believed God; and it was imputed unto him for righteousness*”(Genesis 15:6)

These words were declared some **thirty years before Abraham ever offered up Isaac. God pronounced that Abraham was justified and saved thirty years before this event referred to by James.** James plainly declares that when Abraham offered up Isaac **he was proving his faith!**

In fact, there is not a chance that Abraham would have ever offered up Isaac **unless he already believed in God!** The reason Abraham offered up Isaac was **because he did believe God! He believed; therefore, he did what God said!**

This is true with any person! If a person believes Christ, he does what Christ says; he follows Christ. If a person does not believe Christ, he does not do what Christ says. He goes about doing his own thing; he does not follow Christ.

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B. THE EXAMPLE OF RAHAB THE HARLOT. (VS 25-26)

When the spies for Israel were being hunted down by the Jericho soldiers, Rahab hid them. Why would she betray her country and protect the Israelite spies?

Because she believed in God and His promises. She said to the spies: *“I know that the Lord hath given you the land [of promise]...for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Joshua 2:9, 11).*

She believed in God, therefore, she acted. She put her faith to work. The conclusion is descriptive:

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).

CONCLUSION

A body without the spirit or breath is dead. It does not move, act, live, or work. It is empty, totally useless and worthless. It is a dead body.

So it is with faith: *faith without works is dead*. It does not move, act, live, or work.

Faith without works is empty, totally useless and worthless.

It does not live for Christ, it does not seek to follow Him in righteousness or purity nor work for Him in reaching people and meeting the needs of a sin cursed world!

So, what kind of faith do you have? What would men say? Can they see your faith by your works? Or do your works show that the faith you SAY you have is dead faith!

But more importantly, what would God say?

2 Corinthians 13:5—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”