



CAPITOL COMMISSION

TO: *LEGISLATORS / SPOUSES*
FROM: *DAN FILE*
DATE: *FEBRUARY 16, 2010*

COLORADO

James 2:18-20 A Dead Faith, Part 3

P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO, 81235-1088 / www.capitolcom.org / dan.file@capitolcom.org / Cell 303.345.8830 / Off 970.944.1088

James makes it clear that a true, living faith must be accompanied with action. If there is no action, it is a dead faith. The absence of good works indicates the absence of saving faith as evidenced by a changed life. A genuine faith will not just demonstrate an acknowledgement of a need, but rather sees the opportunity to meet a need. True faith will demonstrate an abandonment of sin and an abandonment of self by giving and serving our brother and sister in need. A faith without works as illustrated by these verses is dead, lifeless, useless, worthless. A saving faith will always be accompanied by visible acts. When there is no demonstration of good works, when there is no response to a need, when there is no love or compassion, then this faith is a dead faith which is hypocritical and false, powerless to save, vain and useless. James does not want anyone to be deceived for that kind of faith reveals a life in need of examination, a life in need of salvation.

I. TRUE FAITH WORKS - 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 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.” James 2:14-26

II. A DEAD FAITH - JAMES 2:18-20, PART 3

Keep in mind that James was instructing his Jewish brethren about a true, living and saving faith contrasted with a dead and lifeless faith. Dead faith and dead works characterized many Jewish believers. The ceremonies, rituals and laws of Judaism were no longer of any value since their purpose was to point to Christ...and Christ had come! They were now under the New Covenant and yet they were encumbered by these dead works, partly because many Jews held on to the old way of life and taught that everyone else must as well. Some thought that if you weren't circumcised, you weren't saved. If you didn't keep the law, you weren't saved. But Paul joined James as he

taught in Galatians 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” And the obvious answer to Paul’s question was; no way. Later in Galatians Paul writes 4:9-11, “But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.”

What does that mean for us? Dead works don't reveal a true salvation. Don't be fooled. Just because you go to church, just because you have a Bible and maybe even read it, just because you call yourself a Christian and maybe even know Scripture and all the right answers does not mean your faith is living, true and genuine. Those works are dead works and of no value for salvation if they are not accompanied by a living faith. James does not want anyone to think they are saved if their faith is not living and genuine accompanied by good works. This message is so important in our world today for many would say they are Christians but theirs is a dead faith, powerless to save, vain and useless. James will continue to challenge the genuineness of our confession. That's why we need to examine our life.

A. “SHOW ME” - JAMES 2:18

“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.” James 2:18

Clearly James writes in a sarcastic tone as he makes his point evident. The issue is not that some have faith and others have works. Rather the issue is if someone can prove the existence of a saving faith without works. James challenges any to show or demonstrate that they have faith without works. By that challenge alone, James makes his point unmistakably clear.

“show” Greek word “*deiknuo*,” means to put on display, to demonstrate, of inward things, to view, to exhibit, to prove, to make known.

Since the word show means to put on display, to demonstrate, to view, to prove, can you view a faith without works? No, you cannot! There is no demonstration, no proof to view, and no visible display that can be given of that faith. You cannot “*show*” what is not there. Therefore, that faith is a dead faith because it has no works or demonstration of that living faith. You cannot demonstrate your kind of faith because you have nothing to

demonstrate it with.¹

One of the greatest demonstrations of a true and genuine faith that I know of is an analogy from mountaineering. Sometimes you have to descend from the peak of a mountain or cliff by rappelling. Rappelling uses a rope, harness and a breaking device so you can control your speed as you descend. You know the rope will hold 2000 lbs. and you know the anchor at the top is secure. But you don't really have faith that it all will work until you actually lean back on the rope and give evidence of your knowledge and conviction. This is what James is saying. We may say we have faith, but until we give evidence to what we say we know, then that faith is dead, lifeless and has no visible demonstration of proof to its' reality.

B. THE ILLUSTRATION OF DEAD FAITH - JAMES 2:19

"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.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." James 2:18-19

1. "YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD IS ONE"- JAMES 2:19A

James begins at first with what might seem like a strange illustration to make his point. But if we were Jewish, it would be clear. Every good Jew knew Deuteronomy 6:4. It was called the Shema. *"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"* It was **the** Jewish confession of faith recited twice a day by all devout Jews. It was their fundamental belief and doctrine. And so every Jew reading James' letter at this point would be nodding their head in agreement with him. But then James goes on.

2. "THE DEMONS ALSO BELIEVE"-JAMES 2:19B

While every good Jew knew what to believe, having the right doctrine and knowing the right thing is never proof of salvation. For right doctrine does not demonstrate or show a genuine faith by itself. Then James says, for example, *"the demons also believe"*. Even the demons believe in the doctrine of God, but that doesn't save them does it? So the demons believe correctly, but that faith is no proof of saving faith. The demons know the truth about God and they hate God.

3. "AND THEY SHUDDER"-JAMES 2:19C

James hits home one more point by saying that even the demons have a faith. While they know with certainty the truth about God, their faith does not save them. Yet, James makes the point that even the demons who know God is real, have enough sense to shudder or tremble. Sarcastically James

poses the possibility that the demons faith is greater than theirs for the demons have enough sense to shudder.

James would say, "You have no works, you have no visible demonstration of your faith...but at least the demons do. They have enough sense to shudder whereas your belief appears to have no fear of God." Correct doctrine is never enough. Saying you believe is never enough. There must be a life of works that shows, that demonstrates, that gives visible proof of the reality of your faith! The question you **must** ask yourself is; does your life show the reality of what you profess?

C. FOOLISH OR FAITHFUL - JAMES 2:20

"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.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" James 2:18-20

Is it possible to go through the motions of faith, the externals, but internally (where true change begins) is dead? James says absolutely yes and make sure that is not true about you. Luke writes about just this sort of person in the church in Acts 8:6-23 where he tells about Simon who said he believed but his profession proved false.

"foolish" Greek word **"kenos,"** means empty, hollow, false, deceitful, meaning false words, empty and foolish, of that in which there is nothing of truth or reality.

The question James asks is; are you willing to recognize that your faith is false and dead? The absence of good works indicates the absence of true, saving faith. True faith is evidenced by righteous deeds not empty claims. And this ones' claim of faith is fraudulent because there is no visible demonstration of good works, no response to a need, no love or compassion given. This faith is a dead faith which is hypocritical and false, powerless to save, vain and useless.

"useless" Greek word **"argos,"** means yielding no return, barren because of inactivity, fruitlessness, no product.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:19, *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit, is cut down and thrown into the fire."* There can be no doubt about the gravity of this warning. Faith without works is powerless to save, vain and useless. Are you willing to recognize and evaluate your standing before God? It's a matter of eternal life or eternal death.

¹ MacArthur, John, MacArthur Commentary on James. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg. 129.