



CAPITOL COMMISSION

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COLORADO

James 2:26 A Living Faith, Part 4

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*James insists that faith has not reached its' end until it demonstrates itself in a righteous life. If there is no righteous life, there is no living faith. A true and living faith that is powerful to save is perfected and brought to its complete and intended goal of bearing good fruit. But a faith that does not mature to its end of bearing good fruit demonstrates a dead and lifeless faith, powerless to save, vain and useless. God does not want us to be deceived into thinking that mere intellectual knowledge is enough for eternal salvation. Our faith must give testimony, visible evidence to a submissive and obedient life surrendered to God alone so He gives us two illustrations of how a faith that works is a saving faith from James 2:21-24. Abraham was distinguished by God and man alike while Rahab was a woman, a foreigner and a prostitute. God's grace is evident in the lives of both by their salvation which came by grace alone through faith in God alone. The result of their true and genuine faith was evidenced by a life of obedience and good works. Both lives demonstrate a striking contrast, yet both illustrate examples of a true and genuine faith that works and a faith that works is a saving faith. And remember, James takes the discussion about **their faith**; Abraham's faith and Rahab's faith, to **your faith**. The exhortation and applications of these studies must knock on the door of your heart as well.*

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 as 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 LIVING FAITH: ONE FINAL EXAMPLE – JAMES 2:26

Yes, it is important to have correct doctrine and know what we believe, but James insists that faith must be lived out in practical holiness and active obedience to God's Word. In chapter two of James, a living faith has been contrasted with a dead faith, a saving faith contrasted with a vain and useless

faith, a faith that works contrasted with a workless faith. A professed faith without obedient works is dead, lifeless and useless. James will now drive home his discussion of a living faith with one final analogy.

A. THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT—JAMES 2:26

*"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."
James 2:26*

1. "FOR JUST AS"- JAMES 2:26A

The examples of Abraham and Rahab stand for all time as illustrations of a living faith that works. "For" in the Greek is a word that binds the example that *will be given to what has preceded*. It also makes the previous examples *equally dependent* on the truth found in this next example. Therefore, if the truth that faith without works is dead is confirmed by this final statement, then there can be no doubt...*a workless faith is a worthless faith*. Faith without works is dead.

James then says "just as" making it clear in the Greek that both of the statements that will follow must be true. One statement cannot be true and the other false. Both statements that follow after this phrase are true. With this in mind, let's look at the next two assertions.

2. "THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT IS DEAD"- JAMES 2:26B

This is not complicated. If you take the human body without the spirit, the body is dead. What does James mean by "spirit"?

"spirit" Greek word "**pneuma**," refers to the principle of life residing in man, that form or substance that animates the body, that part that can live independently of the body.

Every funeral validates this point. The body has no life apart from the spirit. The spirit animates the body. If there is no spirit, the body is just a lifeless corpse that returns to dust. This is a true statement, and therefore James contends that the next phrase based on this truth must also be factual.

3. "SO ALSO FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD"- JAMES 2:26C

It is imperative that the order in this phrase is kept as it pertains to the order in the previous phrase of this verse. In other words, "faith" corresponds

solely to the “body” and “works” correspond only to the “spirit”. This comparison **does not mean** that a living faith obtains its life from works just as a body receives its life from the spirit. No, that is not what James is teaching. James shows by this unmistakable argument that faith and works are inseparable. The union of a true and living faith *with* works is as close as the union of a living body *with* the spirit.

James makes it unmistakably clear that if good works are absent from a faith that is professed, then you can know that faith is not a living faith just as a body without the spirit is not living. For, just as the spirit animates the body, so good works animate faith. They do not bring life to that faith but visibly demonstrate a living faith. Works will never justify the believer in God’s sight, but they do demonstrate authentic faith to others within and outside of the church. Genuine believers will demonstrate their faith by doing what God requires.

If one’s faith is not a living faith, then it is not a saving faith; vain and useless. Saying you believe is not enough, your belief must be accompanied by visible actions of obedience to God. Faith that does not result in good works is comparable to a corpse which is dead and lifeless. Faith that is merely a shell of profession is dead...a corpse. James gives absolutely no possibility that faith and works can be separated. True faith will be expressed in obedient works.

B. WHAT’S THE POINT?

Why does James go to great lengths to show how Abraham’s obedience in Genesis 22 gave evidence of the sincere faith that he already possessed? It is because these obedient actions which followed Abraham’s salvation revealed the true nature of his faith; living and genuine. A living faith **must** express itself in good works and they demonstrate the reality of a true and living faith. ***You can never separate good works from true faith.***

Why does James use Rahab as another example to demonstrate that true faith results in obedient works? Salvation comes by grace through faith in God alone no matter what my past may have been. If that faith is true and genuine, it will be demonstrated by active obedience whereby I submit my heart, my will and my life fully to Him. James is so concerned that we are not deceived about the genuineness of our faith and that we possess the right kind of faith. He makes obvious, what that living faith looks like...***it is a faith that is verified by works.***

Why does James use the illustration of a body to show that faith without works is dead? In case there is any misunderstanding, God wants us to be assured beyond a shadow of a doubt that just as the body has no life apart from the indwelling spirit and is a useless, dead corpse, so also ***a faith without works is a useless and dead faith.*** And if that’s the kind of faith you have, don’t be deceived, you are not a true believer in Jesus Christ. Yours is a dead and

lifeless faith, powerless to save, vain and useless. And ***a dead faith is of no more value than a corpse.***

Abraham showed the reality of what he believed by how he responded to God. Rahab’s obedience gave evidence of a sincere faith that she already possessed. What about you?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German believer who ultimately died for his faith under Hitler’s Nazi regime. He understood the cost of obedience to God as he confronted all believers with cheap grace in his challenging book, *“The Cost of Discipleship”*. We would do well to consider his words...words he lived and died by. And if you have never read his book, maybe it’s time. Hear the words of one martyred for his faith;

“We must never forget the indissoluble unity of the two (faith, obedience); we must place the one proposition that only he who believes is obedient alongside the other, that only he who is obedient believes. In the one case faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other obedience is the condition of faith.

“Only those who believe obey” is what we say to that part of a believer’s soul which obeys, and “only those who obey believe” is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace; which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is another word for damnation.”

The truths found in the second chapter of James can make us uncomfortable personally or it can make us wonder if others we love are really true believers. God does not want us to be deceived about the genuineness of our faith. If you find yourself uncomfortable by what you hear, examine your life. *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you faith the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

Do you wonder about others you love? Pray for them and remember what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.”*

May we count the cost and live a life of courage and commitment as we fulfill our commission of bearing fruit that pleases Jesus Christ. And in that great privilege of service, may we find the abiding joy of intimacy with our Lord whereby He calls us fiends! There can be no deeper relationship and no greater fulfillment than this. *For this is a true and genuine life of faith that works!*