

## The Faith That Saves

James 2:14-26

November has 3 holidays; can you name them? Thanksgiving of course, Veterans Day, so what is the 3<sup>rd</sup>? It's on November 1<sup>st</sup> if that helps, does anyone know? All Saints Day.

It was on All Saints Day that Martin Luther nailed the 95 Thesis to the Wittenberg Church Doors. In this document Luther claimed that salvation came through Christ alone, by faith alone, through grace alone.

I think we would all agree with that. But then you open up to James.

Let's take a look at James 2:14-26 as we encounter James's 5<sup>th</sup> test of our faith: **Do we have righteous works?**

James has 4 points for us to examine in James 2:14-26. The first point is:

- I. Faith, without deeds, is dead v.14-17

James 2:14-17, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 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? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

The answer to the question James poses in verse 14 is an implied "no." James tells us that faith without deeds can't save. So, how does this measure up to what Martin Luther declared in his thesis? Are James and Luther in conflict? Again, the answer is no.

In Jesus' sermon on the mount when He is describing His followers as light to the world, He says this:

Matthew 5:16, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

So, it is our deeds that tell of our faith in Jesus.

Jesus also told His followers the parable of the Sower. You remember this one, there is a man who goes out sowing seed and some of the seed falls on rocky soil,

other falls on soil full of weeds while other falls on good fertile soil. Notice what Jesus says about that seed:

Matthew 13:23, “But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Notice, that seed just didn’t grow well, it produced a crop with great yield. That is the kind of soil and seed we should be.

The principle that James is laying out here for us is simple. “What we do reveals who we are.”

If you are a hunter and you talk all the time about hunting. You spend money on decoys and guns and hunting stands and blinds, but you never go hunting are you a hunter?

Don’t get that one, try this. If you love receipts and you buy piles of cookbooks and multiple spatulas and pans and every imaginable utensil, but you never cook, are you a chef?

Point 2:

## II. The Relationship of Faith & Deeds v. 18-19

James 2:18-19, “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. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

I believe the attitude James is addressing here is indifference. The one without clothing or food wasn’t someone running around naked with their rib cage showing. It wasn’t that drastic, but when we encounter those clearly in need how do we react?

The balance between faith and deeds isn’t new with James. Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:8-9, “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.”

You see, Paul declares it is by grace, not works, that you are saved. But wait, read just one verse further.

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Not only do our works provide testimony of the faith within us, but we were actually designed to do that work specifically by God. It is our royal assignment from our Father in Heaven.

Jesus illustrates this concept in the story of the builders in:

Luke 6:46-49, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47 As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 **But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice** is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

You can’t just listen to the word and do nothing. You can’t just believe and do nothing. Remember verse 19? “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

If it were belief only the demons would have an in. Belief isn’t enough for them; it isn’t enough for us. True faith will change us, mold us into the image of Jesus.

There is an old saying, “The proof is in the pudding.” Actually, that is a shortened version of “The proof in the pudding is in the eating.” Again, we see that proof of faith is in its demonstration.

The third point is:

III. The Examples of Faith & Deeds v. 20-25  
A. Abraham v. 20-24

James 2:20-24, “You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 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. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

Is there any greater example of faith in all of Scripture than this?

Abraham waited decades for Isaac to be born. He was 100 years old. He waited and lived long enough to see God fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham.

Now he is walking up the mountain with Isaac, gathering wood for the sacrifice preparing to do what he was asked to do, kill his own son because God asked him to do it.

This is crazy. Isn't that how we would justify avoiding obedience to this task? How many of us would cling to any excuse to ignore this command?

Abraham lifted the knife; HE LIFTED THE KNIFE. He wasn't going to hold back; he was going to follow through with that impossible command to follow. And that is why he is the example of the greatest act of faith in all of Scripture. That is why he gained the favor of God to receive the promise that he received from God.

God is still fulfilling His promise to Abraham today and He will fulfill every detail until the end of human history on this earth.

## B. Rahab v. 25

James 2:25, "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?"

Rahab the prostitute, how would you like that title in Scripture? Who is this Rahab? Let's take a look.

Of the faithful listed in Hebrews 11 Rahab made the list:

Hebrews 11:31, "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."

We first see Rahab in Joshua 2 where the 2 spies that Joshua sent into Jericho arrived at her inn to be their base as they spied on the city. The King of Jericho figures out what's going on and asks Rahab for the spies. She lies to protect them and then we read this:

Joshua 2:8-12, "Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10

We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign"

Rahab believed in God and then acted to protect the spies out of a demonstration of that faith. Not only a great example of faith because she could have been killed as a traitor, but remember those tasks that God has created for us? God had a task for Rahab beyond protecting the spies.

Look at the lineage of Jesus in:

Matthew 1:5-6, "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David."

Rahab the prostitute is the great grandmother of King David! She is in the lineage of Jesus! How is that for having a famous relative?

Who is your most famous relative? Mine is Anne Boleyn, but that is a whole different story.

The fourth point:

#### IV. Faith Without Deeds is Dead v.26

James 2:26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

So, James has taken us back to where we started. Faith and deeds are just as inseparable as the body is with the spirit.

Remember that James is giving us a series of tests for us to use to test our faith. Today it is "Do we have righteous works?"

Paul encourages us to test our faith as well when he writes in:

2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

It is vital that we make sure our faith isn't a dead faith, but rather a living life-giving faith. A real faith, one that saves. One beyond the belief of the demons.

Why is this important?

Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

I mention this passage often. I can't think of anything worse than living this life with a belief that my faith is real only to be turned away once I am face to face with Jesus. This is why we take James' test; this is why we examine our faith to see if it is real. Is your faith real?