

22S28 James 2:14-26 (Part 5) Faith & Works

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today we are beginning our study of James with James 2:14-26. Faith & Works

Before we start, we need to understand a little about this amazing short letter from James. Who was James? Historians are not sure. Many believe this is James the half-brother of Jesus or even another early Church leader. Most believe this is the same James that appears in the book of Acts and was the leader of the Jerusalem Council in Acts Chapter 15. We don't know the exact date it was written but there are indications that this was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, but we really don't know. The best guess is 50-60AD. Which would make this one of the earliest New Testament letters. James was writing to Hebrew believers scattered among the nations who are facing many trials and persecution. The main theme in this letter is patient perseverance in the midst of the trouble of life. James is encouraging his readers to actively live what they have learned in Christ. He has strong messages about various sins but includes pride, hypocrisy, favoritism, and slander.

I'm reading from the New American Standard version (NAS) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let's read James 2:14-26 (NAS) *¹⁴What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸But 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." ¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless? ²¹Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works also when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

Let's pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from James, help us see what James wants his readers to understand and why. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Let's take a closer look at these verses, James 2:14 (NAS) *¹⁴What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?* James is asking a very simple question. If you just say you have faith but don't do anything. Can that kind of faith save you? James is not saying we need works to be saved. He is saying that those who have genuine faith should have evidence of that faith in what they do. Real faith in Jesus will be evident in our actions.

Let's read on, James 2:15-16 (NAS) *¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?* This is such a great example. If you see someone in need and do nothing about it, what use is that. We can't always help everyone we meet, and I don't think this is what James is saying. Brother and sister usually refers to other followers of Jesus. So, I think James is not talking about just anyone but other Christians. If we see a fellow Christian in need and we have something that can help them, then yes, we better help them. If we just say we will pray about it, what good is that.

Then James says in James 2:17-18 (NAS). *¹⁷In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸But 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."* Okay, this is a very key few words here from James. Faith with no works is dead. James is making the statement that a living faith, a living faith in Jesus has to have righteous deeds. Works are the signs of life. No signs of life, means something is likely dead. Faith with no evidence is probably dead. Then James gets specific. You say you have faith but have no works. But I'll show you my faith with my works. Which one of us has faith? The one with proof or the one with no proof You be the judge.

Then James says in James 2:19-20 (NAS) *¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless?* James is stating a fact here. You say believing in Jesus is enough, you need nothing further. But demons believe and shudder. James is saying the evil one knows who Jesus is. The evil one believes in Jesus, but he is not saved from judgement. If we only acknowledge who God is, we are foolish because faith without works is useless.

But hear what James says next in James 2:21-23 (NAS) *²¹Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called a friend of God.* Anytime a Jew references Abraham is important. James makes the case that Abraham was made righteous by his actions, not just his faith in God. Abraham showed his faith, his obedience to God by his actions. Offering Isaac is a perfect example. So Abraham was called a friend of God because of his obedience and actions, not just because of his faith and trust in God. Abraham's faith would not have been evident if he had not been willing to offer Isaac to God. He demonstrated his faith through his actions.

James continues with James 2:24-26 (NAS) *²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works also when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

James then used Rahab as another example of faith in actions. Rahab hid the Israeli spies when they went to Jericho to investigate the city. We probably all know the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho. Rahab shows amazing faith in this story and God honors that faith by sparing her and her family's lives. Rahab becomes the Great Grandmother of King David. And she is listed in the ancestry of Jesus. That is an amazing reward for her faith.

Let's review.

- 1) Saying? James is clear. Just saying you have faith is useless. Genuine faith is evident in our actions.
- 2) Needs? Christians are called by God to help those in need. James uses this example because it is so obvious. If you see a need, God has urged you to help and given you what you need to help, then we don't help. What good is that. Just talking about it has no value.
- 3) Faith without Works is Dead? If our faith does not inspire us to do good works, then what evidence is there of our faith. If our faith has no signs of life, then it just might be dead. You can talk all you want but I'm going to show you my faith by the things I do. Amen

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from James. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to ask you for wisdom when we don't understand. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

Let me leave you with this, James is making a very important point. It is easy to say we have faith in Jesus, it is much more difficult to show we have faith in Jesus. If there is no evidence we have faith, then what is the use of that faith. James uses the phrases, dead, useless, good for nothing. If we are a follower of Jesus, then what we do must be evidence of our faith in Jesus. If not, then what. I'll leave that up to you.

Thank you for joining me for our study of James. Please email me comments or feedback. And if you liked the message, please share the link with your friends. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.