

Faith That Works
“Genuine Faith”
James 2:14-19

Introduction- On a billboard a church advertised its ministry by saying, “*The Lite Church.*”

Everything you want in a church and less!

- 45 minute worship services
- 15 minute sermons
- 7.5% tithing
- Only 8 commandments
- 24% fewer commitments!

Why are so many looking for the *light church*? Because many have a light faith. But like a *light church*, a *light faith* is not a real or genuine faith. As in our day, so it was in James’ day, there were those who claimed to have faith, yet their lives showed no evidence of that faith. So James discusses the very important topic of the relationship between faith and works.

Faith is a key doctrine in the Christian life!

1. Can faith alone save a person?
2. If so, what kind of faith is it that saves?
3. Must a person perform good works to be saved?
4. How can a person tell if they have a genuine saving faith?

James answers these questions by explaining to us the marks of a genuine faith.

1. Faith is purified by trials.
2. Faith is victorious in temptation.
3. Faith is obedient to God’s Word.
4. Faith does not show partiality.

We learn that Genuine Faith produces good works!

This text on Faith That Works is the heart of the epistle of James.

- It covers verses 14-26.
- It's very important passage to understand.
- Yet, it is perhaps the most misunderstood passages in James and one of the most misunderstood in the New Testament.

Why? Because it seems to be a contradiction of Paul's teaching that we are saved by faith alone. Could it be that James and Paul contradict each other? No, I believe the two compliment one another.

Three important things to remember:

First, the *situations* faced by the two writers were entirely different. Paul had in mind those who denied the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith; he was refuting their insistence that one must observe the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law in order to be saved. James, on the other hand, had in mind those who, by the barrenness of their lives, distorted the doctrine of salvation by faith; he was insisting that any faith worthy of the name must express itself in deeds. Paul was faith worthy of the name must express itself in deeds. Paul was expounding the *way of justification*. James was describing *life of the justified*, Paul was combating legalism; James was combating antinomianism.

Second, while James and Paul use many of the same words, they put *different meanings* into them. By "works" Paul means works of the Jewish law (circumcision, etc.), works thought of as a means to salvation. For James, however, "works" are works of love, works as a proof that faith is alive and real, works as the fruit of salvation.

By "By justified" Paul means acquitted, declared to be righteous, treated as righteous. As used by James the word means having a just claim to one's profession, shown to be righteous, vindicated. Paul means the initial justification (acquittal) before God that brings one into a saving relationship with God. James means justification (vindication) of one's profession at any after-moment in the Christian life, and finally before the throne of judgement.

Third, the intention of James was not to contrast two opposing methods of salvation: one by works and one by faith. James, Paul, and all the other writers of the New Testament were in complete agreement that salvation is by grace through faith. What James really contrasts are two kinds of faith- one genuine, the other spurious; one alive, the other dead; one that saves, another that does not save. - By Curtis Vaughan

There are three main points James makes in these verses:

- I. Genuine faith is not an empty claim (vv. 14-17).**
- II. Genuine faith is not mere acceptance of a creed (vv. 18-19).**
- III. Genuine faith produces good works (vv. 20-26).**

I. Genuine Faith is Not an Empty Claim (vv. 14-17)

Three facts about an empty profession:

1. It cannot save (vs. 4).

- James begins with an argument; asking two rhetorical questions; which demand negative answers.
- James did not write “*if a man has faith,*” but he wrote, “*if a man says he has faith.*”
- Literally, that kind of faith cannot save him, can it?

Illus.: John Bunyan in his spiritual allegory, “Pilgrims Progress” - “Talkative”

“As Bunyan said of “Talkitive,” so may it be said of this man: “Religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation [conduct]; all he hath lieth in his tongue, and his religion is to make a noise therewith.” McClaren has said that “the people who least live their creeds are not seldom the people who shout loudest about them. The paralysis which affects the arms does not, in these cases, interfere with the tongue.”

Jesus said, Matt. 7:21, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord...but he that does the will of my father...*”

Does your walk measure up to your talk?

2. It doesn't serve (vv. 15-16).

James now gives an illustration of false faith.

John 3:17-18, “*But whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*”

3. It is Dead (vs. 17).

James comes to a conclusion.

- Faith unaccompanied by obedience is dead.
- John Calvin, “Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.”

Can others see your faith?

Don’t be deceived by an empty claim.

1. Can’t save.
2. Doesn’t serve.
3. It’s dead.

II. Genuine Faith is Not Mere Acceptance of a Creed (vv18-19).

Real faith is more than a mental assent.

A. “An imaginary objector!” (vs. 18)

Note: I will show you my faith by my works.

Illus.: The lame man Jesus “saw their faith.”

B. “It’s a demonic faith.” (vs. 19)

“Believe”- it’s the intellect, mind.

“Tremble”- emotion, but no will.

A person can be so close and yet still not be saved.

Illus.- Acts 8, Simon the Sorcerer.

Real faith is more than mental assent to truth. It’s a belief that involves the will or the heart.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,” Rom. 10:9-10.

Have you put your faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ?

F- Forsaking

A- All

I- I

T- Take

H-H

II Cor. 13:5, “Examine yourselves.....”

A dead faith can't save.

A demonic faith believes the right things

Do you have Dynamic Faith?