



Faith That Comes Alive

James 2:14-26

True Religion: 3 Litmus Tests

1] Commitment to Self-Control [1:26]

Controlling the Tongue

2] Active Compassion [1:27a]

Caring for the Poor

3] Pursuit of Holiness [1:27b]

Commitment to Purity

A. Exposing Workless Faith [2:14-18]

[1] Two Questions [14]

[2] Illustration - Inactive Compassion [15-16]

[3] Conclusion - Faith w/out works is dead [17-18]

B. Defining Saving Faith [2:19-25]

[1] Demons - devastating irony [19]

[2] Abraham - biblical authority [20-23]

[3] Rahab - biblical authority [24-25]

C. Conclusion [2:26]

Faith apart from works is dead

What does James mean by faith? A life of faith [*pistis*] is the unifying theme of the letter of James. He strongly emphasizes that faith is a stance of belief and trust toward God — for example, trusting God even in the face of trials. But with equal strength James emphasizes that genuine faith is a “working faith.” It is the stance of belief toward God by which we endure trials, ask for wisdom, resist temptation, control our tongues, look after orphans and widow’s, keep ourselves unpolluted from the world, avoid favoritism, love our neighbor as oneself, give physical necessities to the poor, and in short, living out our lives as a doers of the word.

What does James mean by works? Moral actions flowing naturally from genuine faith, so that the faith and works are not a dichotomy, but a unity. Paul agrees in Ephesians 2:9-10: we are not saved “by works”, but we are saved “for works.” [George M. Stulac, *James*, IVP NT Commentary Series.]

James 2:14-26 What good [*profit*] is it, my brothers, if *someone says* he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good [*profit*] is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But *someone will say*, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

[1] **Demons** ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; [*Shema-Deut. 6:4*] you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! [*tremble*]

[2] **Abraham** ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

[3] **Rahab** ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Study Questions

[1] Read James 2:14-19. What is the main point being made in these verses? Explain.

[2] What is the devastating irony we see in James 2:19?

[3] Read James 2:20-26. How did Abraham [21-23] and Rahab [24-25] demonstrate both faith and works?

[4] Read Paul’s thoughts on faith and works in Romans 3:27–4:5. How can we reconcile Paul’s words with James’s? [LCSB]

[5] Pray asking God for guidance and strength to live out your faith through actions that honor Him.