

April 21, 2024 PM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
James 2:19-26 – “Faith Without Works is Dead”

- A. When alive, a healthy human body has certain vital measures that can be observed without expensive equipment.
- B. Earlier in **chapter 2**, James explained that works are the evidence of a true and lively faith. → **Ja 2:18**

You must believe that faith without works is dead.	I. <u>BELIEF IS NOT ENOUGH</u> II. <u>EXAMPLES OF JUSTIFYING, WORKING FAITH</u>
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I. BELIEF IS NOT ENOUGH

- A. To help understand this argument from James, it helps to look at the classic description of saving faith as having 3 major components: knowledge, assent, and trust.
 - 1. An unbelieving college professor or Muslim apologist are good examples of those having knowledge alone.
 - a. They can relate an accurate account about what Jesus did on the cross.
 - b. Such a person may be able to cite and read the relevant Scripture verses concerning salvation in Christ.
 - c. If asked if they believe the claims of Jesus to be true, they would say, “No.”
 - 2. Demons have both this accurate knowledge yet also an intellectual assent that Jesus is the eternal Son of God.
 - a. In **Mark 5:6-7**, When Legion met Jesus, he shouted with a loud voice, **“What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!”**¹
 - b. After the cross, demons now know that Jesus died for sinners. They know that to be absolutely true, yet they don’t trust in that for themselves because they hate the gospel because they hate God. That is why they do everything in their power to keep people from the ordinary means of grace.
 - 3. Only the true believer has knowledge, assent, and trust.
 - With this third, essential component of saving faith, they own Jesus as their own Lord and Savior.
 - a. James argues that a person with such a saving faith does something with that faith.
 - b. It becomes evident just like the vital signs of a living person rather than a dead one.
- B. James was right. We should be able to recognize that it is useless to only have belief made up of knowledge and intellectual agreement with the claims of Scripture.
 - 1. That sort of faith is both dead and useless.
 - 2. It produces nothing because it is void of a trusting in these truths.

¹ Mark 5:6-7

II. EXAMPLES OF JUSTIFYING, WORKING FAITH

A. Father Abraham had a working faith rather than a dead, fruitless faith. →**vv21-22**

1. Instead of **“perfected,”** we could translate the Greek word here as **“completed.”**
2. Concerning this passage, Dr. Simon Kistemaker wrote, “...we learn from Scripture that this test of faith is the last for Abraham. When he sustained this last test, he heard the voice from heaven saying, ‘It is enough.’ Abraham’s faith was made complete.”²
 - a. The Holy Spirit, through the writer of **Hebrews**, taught of Abraham’s great faith saying, **“He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead (Heb 11:19).”**
 - b. He was assured that God would raise Isaac from the dead because God promised that in Isaac his descendants would be called (**Gen 21:12**).
3. Through this working faith of Abraham, we read that he obtained imputed or accounted righteous standing before God. →**v23**
4. Some are tripped-up with the conclusion James gave concerning Abraham in **v24** when he wrote, **“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.”**
 - a. The answer is that we are saved by faith alone (**Rom 3:28**) yet the sort of faith that saves is never alone. It always produces good works.
 - b. Such a faith endures testing to produce endurance (**Ja 1:2**). This proves the faith to be true and not a counterfeit.
5. See **WCF 14, section 3** (Trinity Psalter Hymnal pp. 927-928). This section says saving faith may be **“weak or strong.”** Faith that is “perfected” or “completed” may be best understood as tested or proven as genuine in the case of Abraham.

B. Rahab the harlot also had a justifying, working faith. →**v25**

1. The story of Rahab wasn’t one of her just trying to save her own life and that of her family.
2. After her receiving and hiding the Hebrew messengers, she followed their instructions so that her extended household was not destroyed.
3. After the fall of Jericho, she joined herself to the Jewish community and adopted their faith in Yahweh.
4. God was pleased to use Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah!

C. In this matter of faith and works, James concluded by writing in **v26**, **“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”**

Review, further application, and conclusion:

² Kistemaker, Simon. New Testament Commentary: James, p. 96