

Show Me Your Faith!
James 2:14-26
November 4

James provides an analysis of the type of faith that saves.

First, James observed that a believer demonstrates real faith by deeds (2:14). James asked two probing questions to underscore the vital, dynamic relationship between faith and works. What good is faith without works? Can such a faith save? A man ‘claims" to have faith, but outward demonstrations in actions towards others do not support his claim. James negatively chides the claim of the man with the phrase ‘such faith." A verbal profession that does not produce fruit in actions is not saving faith.

Faith is a commitment of one's life without reservation to Christ. The New Testament affirms saving faith includes an intellectual component. This mental assent consists of the understanding and acceptance of certain doctrinal truths, namely the identity of Christ, an affirmation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and a realization of personal sin. Saving faith also includes a volitional element. A vital union with the risen Christ occurs in a person's life through trust in Christ's ability to deal with our sin problem. Through commitment and surrender to the Lordship of Christ, an individual becomes a new creature through the transforming power of God's Spirit. The transformed person exercises faith through actions.

Second, James contended that some individuals practice worthless faith (2:15-17). Through a faith response to the living Lord, a person becomes part of the family of God. A person of faith shares the Lord's compassion for the other members of the family.

A dramatic need pervades the life of a fellow Christian; this family member is without food or clothes. The one who “claims” faith wishes the needful Christian well, but the claimant does nothing to assist the needy Christian. Indeed, the claimer of faith commands the needy

person to be warm and well fed. In other words, this faith-claimer tells the needy individual that he "must pull himself up." The term well-feed means gorged to the point of saturation. The needy Christian craved a morsel, and the faith-claimer commands him to gorge himself.

Third, James recognized the necessity of regular examination about faith and works (2:16-18). James dialogued with an imaginary opponent to clarify his position. By means of this dialogue, James established two points. First, works are necessary to prove or give evidence of faith. Believers cannot choose emphases, opting for either faith or works. Second, acceptance of a creed is not the same as faith. The foundation of biblical revelation is monotheism, the recognition of one God only (Deut. 6:4). The demons of Satan accept the truth of monotheism. They shudder; they respond emotionally to the reality of biblical revelation; yet, demons lack a saving relationship with God.

Fourth, James provided Scriptural examples of faith and works (2:20-25). James called his imaginary opponent foolish. The term "foolish" literally means, "empty." James utilized the word as a reproach of the moral motivation of his opponent as well as noting the intellectual deficiency of his opponent's argument.

James appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures to clinch and prove his contention that a believer demonstrates faith by action. He chose Abraham and Rahab, two examples from opposite ends of the human spectrum. The Bible records that God counted Abraham righteous because of his faith (Gen. 15:6). Abraham demonstrated the reality of his faith thirty years later when he willingly offered his son. Rahab showed her faith by meeting the security needs of the Hebrew spies.

Finally, James proclaimed the uselessness of dead faith (2:26). James compared a faith that does not result in actions to a deceased, corpse. A dead faith benefits no one. This statement

completes James' negative characterization of a verbal profession. A verbal profession is dead (vv. 17,26), useless (v. 20), and incomplete (v. 22).