

Show Me Your Faith
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August 9, 2009

Turn in your Bibles to James Chapter 2 beginning in verse 14.

- ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?
- ¹⁷... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Ever hear of the “Cotton Patch Version” of the Gospel?

Description: A very interesting modern version is a translation by Clarence Jordan published as the Cotton Patch Version in 1968-1973. The Cotton Patch Version is a local dialect version for the southern United States, particularly the area around Atlanta, Georgia.

Example:

This guy John was dressed in blue jeans and a leather jacket, and he was living on corn bread and collard greens. Folks were coming to him from Atlanta and all over north Georgia and the backwater of the Chattahoochee. And as they owned up to their crooked ways, he dipped them in the Chattahoochee. -- Matthew 3:4-6

What if you and I did a little translating of part of today’s text into “everyday” or “street language”? The language of the common man and woman?

Look again at those statements from this text:

- ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?
- ¹⁷... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Let’s try a little Cherokee/Cobb County translation...let’s put it in today’s vernacular:

- “Actions speak louder _____!”
- “Put your money _____!”
- “Put up or _____!”
- “All talk and no _____!”

I think we’re getting the picture of what James is saying to us in this text.

- This section of James is some of the most PRACTICAL and CONVICTING scripture you will encounter.
- This section of James contains some of the most CONTROVERSIAL scripture in the on-going argument of SALVATION BY FAITH or SALVATION BY WORKS.
 - Were Paul and James contradicting each other?
- As we will see, there is no contradiction. Paul’s letters taught “FAITH ALONE” and James teaches “FAITH SHOWN”.

- The same FAITH but EVIDENT in our actions.

James 2:14-17 (New International Version)

Faith and Deeds

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

- In verses 15 and 16 James uses another illustration to show us how RIDICULOUS this situation could be.
 - Cherokee County Translation: "Sorry you have no food and clothes and no where to sleep tonight but, God Bless...hope it works out for you." "Have a BLESSED day!"
- Just like last week...again, the words of James mirror the words of his half-brother and Savior Jesus.
 - Turn to Matthew 25:31-40
 - Remember the Christ's story of separating the "sheep and the goats"? Begin reading in verse 34 through 40.

Matthew 25:31-40 (New International Version)

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

- Take note of verse 37, the righteous people didn't even know the magnitude of what they had done...they were just doing what comes naturally to someone who is TRULY RIGHTEOUS.
 - They didn't just have FAITH without FRUIT
 - They didn't just have RELIGION without RELATIONSHIP
 - Their FAITH WAS ALIVE not DEAD ON ARRIVAL
- In verse 14 was James saying we're only saved if we have works? Why?
- Two things to note:
 - The word FAITH here means "intellectual assent"...believing something mentally. As opposed to SAVING FAITH that Paul writes about.
 - It might help if you substitute the word RELIGIOUS: "What good is it if you say you are RELIGIOUS but you never do anything to help people?"
 - But how do we KNOW that is how James is using that word FAITH?
Verses 18 and 19:

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

- What does verse 19 mean to you in your own words?
 - Many people when asked if they are a Christian answer: "I believe in God."

Billy Graham has had close relationships with Presidents. However his first meeting with one (President Truman) didn't go so well. In his book "Just As I Am" he described how the meeting ending abruptly:

"Our allotted time was quickly running out, and what I really wanted to talk to him about was faith. I did not know how to begin. "Mr. President," I blurted out, "tell me about your religious background and leanings."

"Well," he replied in his Missouri accent, "I try to live by the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule."

"It takes more than that, Mr. President. It's faith in Christ and His death on the Cross that you need."

The President stood up. Apparently, our twenty minutes were up."

- It's not about intellectually believing; even the demons know who God is.
- James makes it clear that if you have FAITH without any FRUIT it makes us wonder if you just have RELIGION and not a RELATIONSHIP.

- In verse 18 when James says: “Someone will say...” it indicates that he has been in some heated debate with people over this topic of FAITH and WORKS.
- So now James the great debater gives some Old Testament evidence of his point.
- Let’s read verses 20 - 26

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless^[a]? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"^[b] and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

- James sites one of the most dramatic examples of obedience to God ever recorded.
- Remember the story of God commanding Abraham to offer his son Issac on the altar? I never read that story without shaking my head and saying “There’s no way I could have done it!”
- Verse 21: “Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar”
 - Was James saying Abraham was saved because of his ACTION? NO.
- Verses 22 and 23 flesh this out: “²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"^[b] and he was called God's friend.”
 - This act didn’t make him RIGHTEOUS it was EVIDENCE of Abraham’s righteousness.
 - Look at the chronology of Abraham’s story. Turn to Genesis 15
 - This story – taking Issac to the altar – happens in Genesis 22
 - But look at Genesis 15:6. What does it say?

Genesis 15:6 (New International Version)

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

- Before the miracle of Issac’s birth
- Before he was circumcised
- Before his name was changed from Abram to Abraham
- He believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness
- Anybody remember who else quoted that verse in scripture?
 - Paul – Galatians 3:6-7

- Abraham had FAITH before he had FRUITS
- He didn't just have RELIGION he had a RELATIONSHIP
- His obedience was EVIDENCE of that RELATIONSHIP
- Now, verse 24 has caused a lot of controversy down through the centuries:
 - "24You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone."
- Now wait a minute! Look at Romans 3:28:

Romans 3:28 (New International Version)

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

- Is James contradicting Paul?
- Let's talk about that word JUSTIFIED.
 - There's the theological idea of JUSTIFICATION by FAITH IN CHRIST
 - "Just As If I Had Never Sinned"
 - Look at the dictionary definition:

jus · ti · fy

–verb (used with object)

1. to show (an act, claim, statement, etc.) to be just or right: *The end does not always justify the means.*
2. to defend or uphold as warranted or well-grounded: *Don't try to justify his rudeness.*
3. Theology. to declare innocent or guiltless; absolve; acquit.

- Justification can also mean PROOF...to show a claim to be just or right.
- Now in dealing with the centuries of controversy over verse 24 I decided to consult some high power theological wisdom

R.C. Sproul says:

I'm convinced that we don't really have a conflict here. What James is saying is this: If a person says he has faith, but he gives no outward evidence of that faith through righteous works, his faith will not justify him. Martin Luther, John Calvin, or John Knox would absolutely agree with James... You can't just say you have faith. True faith will absolutely and necessarily yield the fruits of obedience and the works of righteousness. Luther was saying that those works don't add to that person's justification at the judgment seat of God. But they do justify his claim to faith before the eyes of man. James is saying, not that a man is justified before God by his works, but that his claim to faith is shown to be genuine as he demonstrates the evidence of that claim of faith through his works.

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John MacArthur said:

James is not at odds with Paul. In 1:17-18, James affirmed that salvation is a gift bestowed according to the sovereign will of God. Now he is stressing the importance of faith's fruit--the righteous behavior that genuine faith always produces. Paul, too, saw righteous works as the necessary proof of faith.

- Good deeds don't make us **RIGHTEOUS** they are the **EVIDENCE** that we **ARE RIGHTEOUS**.
- They prove that we don't have **FAITH WITHOUT FRUIT** or **RELIGION WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP** to Jesus Christ.
- One last point...Are we saying that if there is **NO FRUIT** there is **NO FAITH**?
- Are we saying if you don't do **GOOD WORKS** you're not **SAVED**? **NO**
- Here's an illustration:
 - Think about "a lazy heir" a lazy son or daughter. Because of their birth they are **IN THE FAMILY** and no one can change that. But they make no contribution to the family. They are still entitled to the inheritance. But you would question how much they love the family based on the lack of contribution they make.

- James sums it up in verse 26:

²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

- You know the old joke about Baptists going first in the rapture?
 - Because scripture says the "dead in Christ shall rise first".
- Is our faith **ALIVE**?
- If we put a mirror in front the face of our faith would it fog up?
- Is there movement?
- Is there growth?
- Is there **ACTION**?

The other day I read a story in a little book called: "The Power of Small". It came to mind as I studied this text:

A Little Bit of Kindness

Simone and Jake had been dating for nearly two years. In Simone's mind, they were a perfect couple. She was con-vinced that Jake was the man she wanted to marry. Jake, on the other hand, wasn't ready to make a formal commit-ment. Every time Simone tried to talk to him about their future, he would change the subject.

As time passed, Simone began to despair. Finally, she decided that she had to take a stand. If he didn't get seri-ous about their relationship, she would have to break up with

him. Simone knew that it would devastate her to walk away from Jake, but she saw no other option. She certainly wasn't going to beg him to propose.

One evening, as Simone and Jake were hurrying along the street to dinner, they passed a homeless man, huddled against the icy wind. Simone, who had been wrapped up in her concerns, stopped in her tracks, jarred back to reality by the sight of this cold, dirty, hungry stranger. "I'll be right back," she told Jake.

Simone dashed across the street toward an open thrift store; next, she went into the deli on the corner. When she returned, her arms were full. Simone walked over to the man sitting on the street. In the larger bag was a big woolen coat. The smaller bag held a container of hot soup and a freshly made sandwich.

"Here," she said simply. "This is for you."

As Jake and Simone walked on to the restaurant, Simone silently vowed to tell Jake that night how she felt. Once seated, she took a deep breath. "Jake," she began, "I have something to tell you."

"I have to tell you something first," he interrupted. And then he leaned over and blurted out, "I don't have a ring, Simone, I'm sorry. But I have to ask you: Will you marry me?"

Simone was overwhelmed. "Why now?" she managed to stammer.

"When I saw you stop to give that homeless man a coat and a warm meal," Jake said, "I thought, 'How could I not spend the rest of my life with someone this kind?' " Needless to say, Simone said yes. Today, Simone and Jake are happily married, and the proud parents of three wonderful children. (*The Power of Small: Why Little Things Make All the Difference* -by Linda Kaplan Thaler & Robin Koval)

- This is not a Christian book and I have no idea about Simone's faith. But the story makes the point. Even in relatively small deeds we show how serious we are about our FAITH.
- Do we just have FAITH without FRUIT?
- Do we just have RELIGION without RELATIONSHIP?
- Is our FAITH ALIVE or DEAD ON ARRIVAL ?
- If we have FAITH without any FRUIT it makes people wonder if we just have RELIGION and not a RELATIONSHIP.
- We've talked about it. Now let's go LIVE it...this week.