

James 2:14–26

- 14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?
- 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
- 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?
- 17 Thus 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 without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.
- 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
- 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?
- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?
- 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?
- 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.
- 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
- 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?
- 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

## ***Faith and Works*** **James 2:14-26**

### INTRO

Here in **James 2** we find an often misunderstood passage on the importance of faith that makes a difference in our lives. Our task is to first understand James statements and illustrations and to check out our own lives.

***I. Profession Does Not Equal Possession (v. 14-17)***

***II. Works Produced by Our Faith Show Our faith (v. 18-22)***

***I. Profession Does Not Equal Possession (v. 14-17)***

**James 2:14** *“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”*

A. We need to take a small step back before we run head long into this passage. We need to look carefully at what the Apostle Paul taught about salvation. In **Ephesians 2:8-9** we read one of the most treasured summary about salvation through faith alone.

***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”***

Salvation is not from us or the result of anything we do. The means by which we enter into salvation is grace through faith, but is absolutely apart from works. While we somewhat take hold of these verses, we forget that this thought is not finished here. **Verse 10** reads,

***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”***

While works do not merit salvation, they flow from faith because God recreated us in Christ to walk in them. God saved us so good works would flow out of our faith. This is what James is talking about here.

B. ***“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”***

Saving faith is more than an intellectual assent to facts about Christ. It involves a work of Grace in the heart. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:17**:

***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”***

James also asserts too that faith that does not change the person is useless!

C. James then gives an illustration to show us how useless this kind of faith is.

***“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?’ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”***

The point is that just saying is not enough to change anything. Faith had to do something in us or nothing of eternal value happened.

***II. Works Produced by our Faith show our faith (v. 18-22)***

**James 2:18-20** *“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and*

***tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"***

A. There are those who say, we just need the proper content, the content has to be more than just known. It must be believed with the heart and it must change our lives.

1. I have heard some who are afraid that orthodoxy, i.e. being correct Biblically will produce coldness. We forget the answer then is *NOT* to fear being orthodox because if we are not correct we will surely be lost.

2. We do well if we are orthodox. Yet, if intellectual assent is all we have we possess the same faith that the demons have. This kind of faith is dead and it cannot produce life.

B. To support his point, James cites the example of Abraham and Rehab. First we will look at Abraham.

**James 2:21-23** ***"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God."***

1. Before we can understand these verses we need to understand the meaning of this word *"justify."* Although James used the same verb Paul did, he is using it in a different sense. Many times a word means different things according to its context. In **Matthew 11:19** we read,

***"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."***

Clearly justified does not mean *"declared righteous"* in **Matthew 11**. It means more "vindicate" or "show to be correct" or "right by what it produces." In like manner here James wrote that our deeds demonstrate our faith.

2. Abraham was vindicated by his deeds because His faith worked to produce his deeds in offering up Isaac to the LORD. His deeds did not save him. It provided evidence God worked in his life. Don't miss James' explanation.

**Phil 2:12-13** ***"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"***

His inner salvation was worked out in his life.

D. After citing the most famous example, James cited the example of one so marvelously changed by her faith.

**vs.25-25**     *“Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified (vindicated)by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

1. Why did Rahab do what she did? It was because she believed in Israel’s God. God worked in her heart and she chose to side with Israel’s God instead of the very people among whom she lived or to serve the gods of the Canaanites. Her choices and deeds reflected in a dramatic way on the genuineness of her faith.

2. From this James reiterates the point from which he started. If the One in Whom you believe does not change what you are, you probably are not saved. Paul would utter a hardly amen to this statement.

***What does this say to us today?***

1. I’m sure you have heard it said God does not care how we act today. Read Paul and you will find out that faith alone saves us. However, faith that is alone (that makes no change in how we live) is not saving faith.

2. Those who try to drive a wedge between Paul and James do not understand what James is saying. This is vitally important! Don’t ignore it, but ask yourself, how real is my relationship with Jesus Christ?

**Hymn #515 *Since Jesus Came Into My Heart***