

Faith and Works (James 2:14-26)

Scripture Text:

14. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?
15. If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,
16. and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?
17. Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.
18. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."
19. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.
20. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?
21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?
22. You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;
23. and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.
24. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
25. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?
26. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.
(James 2:14-26 NASB)

Outline:

- I. Faith without works is dead (vv.14-17)
- II. Faith without works is useless (vv.18-20)
- III. Justified by works of faith (vv.21-25)
- IV. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so also is faith without works (v.26)

Worksheet:

- I. Faith without works is dead (vv.14-17)
 - a. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (v.14)

- i. In this portion of James we find that he asked many questions of his readers. These questions were relevant for early believers and they are relevant questions for believers today as well. **What** is meant by a “[said] faith” in this verse? *[discussion]* _____

- ii. **Who** is being spoken *to* in this verse of scripture? _____
- iii. **Who** is being spoken *of* in this verse of scripture?
 1. A person who _____ he has faith.
 2. A person who _____ no works.
- iv. **What** is meant by a “[saving] faith” in this verse? *[discussion]* _____

- v. **What** is implied about the value of a “said faith” compared to that of a “saving faith” *[discussion]* _____

- vi. “Can *that* faith save him?” Notice the word “that” in this verse. The use of this definite article should cause one to make a comparative analysis of one *type* of faith relative to another *type* of faith. **What** is the answer to the question asked by James regarding “that faith” as a type of faith that is really not faith at all? *[discussion]* _____

- vii. Is there any use for “that faith” in the life of a believer or anyone for that matter? Apply this concept to the “faiths” of people around the world. What can be said about faith and the object of one’s faith as it relates to true salvation? *[discussion]* _____

- viii. **Application:** What does this suggest about the exclusivity of the Christian faith and how does this impact the faith of Christians relative to the secular notions of “political correctness”, “hate speech”, “bigotry” and/or “intolerance”? *[discussion]* _____

- b. If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, (v.15)
- i. **Who** is being spoken of in this verse of scripture? _____

- ii. **What** are two needs specified in this verse? _____ and _____

iii. **How** should the practice of a Christian be guided and influenced when they see a “brother or sister” in need according to the spirit of James 1:27? _____

1. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27 NASB)
2. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18 NASB)

c. and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? (v.16)

i. **Who** is being spoken of in this verse?

1. “One of you” _____
2. “them” _____

ii. “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled”. Is this representative of what a believer should say to one who is obviously in need of specific things to sustain their physical life? _____. Is there any real value in this? _____.

iii. **Application:** If not, what would be a more appropriate response for a believer as it relates to:

1. A person’s “peace” _____
2. A person’s “warmth” _____
3. A person’s “filling” _____

d. Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (v.17)

i. Is this verse saying that salvation is not dependent upon “faith alone” – **sola fide**? _____. Is the subject of this verse “salvation” or “faith”? _____.

ii. The Five (5) Solas of Scripture:

1. Sola Gratia – Grace Alone
2. Sola Fide – Faith Alone
3. Solus Christus – Christ Alone
4. Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone
5. Soli Deo Gloria – Glory of God Alone

iii. Sola fide is one of the five solas that came to define and summarize the key issues of the Protestant Reformation. Each of these Latin phrases

represents a key area of doctrine that was an issue of contention between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church, and today they still serve to summarize key doctrines essential to the Gospel and to Christian life and practice. The Latin word *sola* means “alone” or “only” and the essential Christian doctrines represented by these five Latin phrases accurately summarize the biblical teaching on these crucial subjects: *sola scriptura*—Scripture alone, *sola fide*—faith alone, *sola gratia*—grace alone, *sola Christus*—Christ alone, and *sola Deo gloria*—for the glory of God alone. Each one is vitally important, and they are all closely tied together. Deviation from one will lead to error in another essential doctrine, and the result will almost always be a false gospel which is powerless to save. (Got Questions, 2020)

II. Faith without works is useless (vv.18-20)

a. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (v.18)

i. **Who** is being spoken of in this verse?

1. One who _____ he has faith without any _____.
2. One who _____ faith shown by his _____.

ii. **Why** is “saying” you have faith not enough? *[discussion]* _____

iii. **How** do “works” show genuine faith? *[discussion]* _____

1. When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they *came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith *said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, *said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —He *said to the paralytic, “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were

all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this." (Mark 2:1-12 NASB)

2. A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

(Mark 5:25-34 NASB)

- iv. **What** are some other instances in the scripture that show genuine faith characterized by active, intentional, works of expectancy? *[list]*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- b. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (v.19)

- i. Is believing in the triune God of scripture enough to substantiate any claim of genuine saving faith? _____ **Why** or **Why not?** _____

- ii. If believing in the triune God revealed in scripture is not enough, then is having reverence for the Members of the Godhead enough? _____. **Why** or **Why not?** _____

- iii. Is the belief in and reverence of the Godhead enough to save the demons who not only believe, but also revere the Godhead for who they are?

_____.

- iv. If a person only believes in and reveres God for who He is, and does not couple that with works of faith, leading to maturity, they are no better off than the demons who do the same.
- c. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (v.20)
 - i. "But are you willing to recognize" The problem with "foolish fellows" is that they are not _____ to recognize, that _____ without _____ is useless.
 - ii. James moves from saying that faith without works is "dead" to faith without works is "useless".
 - iii. This drives home the idea of faith and it's "utility" or "usefulness". Faith that is not accompanied by works is not only void of life, but it is as useless as a dead corps!
 - iv. **Application:** If the faith of a believer is not accompanied by works it is not only dead, but it is useless! How should this motivate believers who claim to be people of faith, as they live out their lives before others? _____

III. Justified by works of faith (vv.21-25)

- a. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? (v.21)
 - i. James pivots to the Old Testament patriarch Abraham the _____ of Faith.
 - ii. **What** "works" did Abraham do that "justified" him in the sight of God? _____
- iii. Was it the faith of Abraham or the works that justified him? _____.
 1. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called ." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19 NASB)
 2. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3:27-28 NASB)
 3. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NASB)
 4. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (Romans 4:2 NASB)

5. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,
(Romans 4:3-5 NASB)
 6. nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Galatians 2:16 NASB)
- iv. **How** can James 2:21 be reconciled with these verses? *[discussion]* _____

 - v. Are the “works” of James 2:21 the same “works” in the other verses listed above? _____. If not, what is the difference? _____

- b. You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; (v.22)
 - i. James clarifies his previous statement and explains the relationship between “faith” and “works” in this verse.
 - ii. **What** is the ultimate goal of infusing faith and works together in the life of a believer according to this verse? *[discussion]* _____

 - c. and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ,” and he was called the friend of God. (v.23)
 - i. James makes reference to an Old Testament passage from Genesis 15:6 and also repeated in the New Testament passage from Romans 4:3-5
 1. Then he believed in the Lord ; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6 NASB1995)
 2. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness .” Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,
3. (Romans 4:3-5 NASB)
 - ii. **Why** was Abraham “called a friend of God”? *[discussion]* _____

1. Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of **Abraham Your friend** forever? (2 Chronicles 20:7 NASB)
 2. “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of **Abraham My friend**, You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. (Isaiah 41:8-9 NASB)
- iii. **How** can a believer be considered a “friend of God”? *[discussion]* _____

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1. You are My friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:14 NASB)
 2. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15 NASB)

- d. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (v.24)
- i. **What** is the closing argument made by James about the relationship between **works** and **faith** and how a believer is actually **justified**? _____
 - ii. “Justified” - **dikaioo** - to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be
- e. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (v.25)
- i. **How** could Rahab a “harlot” and a “liar” be justified by works? *[discussion]* _____
 - ii. **What** was it about her actions that won her a place in the “Hall of Faith” found in Hebrews 11 along with all the other heroes of faith? *[discussion]* _____
 - iii. **Read:** Joshua 2:4, 15; 6:17; and Hebrews 11:31)

- IV. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so also is faith without works (v.26)
- a. For just as the body without the spirit is dead (v.26a)
 - i. James gives another analogy to drive his point home using the relationship of the “body” (physical) and the “spirit” (spiritual) that when separated signifies the death of the body.
 - b. so also faith without works is dead. (v.26b)
 - i. James, in like manner, compares that relationship to “faith” (spiritual) and “works” (physical) that when separated signifies death. (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14)

References:

Got Questions (2020). Why Is Sola Fide Important? Digitally retrieved from GotQuestions.org on October 22, 2020