

“Faith with Saving Results”

(James 2:14-26)

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¹⁴What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps one of the most common arguments and discussions centre around this very question that the Bible poses to the individual professing believer.

Notice I have chosen the word “**professing believer**” very carefully, because this is a question that comes back time and time again to challenger those who say they believe.

➤ Is it in fact so?

The Bible which is the very Word of our Lord, and the ultimate source of truth and instruction becomes very challenging when you look at this question?

- ✓ The question asked here is more of a statement than only a question because it asks the question from the standpoint of knowing the answer already.
- What is the reward if no works?
- What is the point of all faith and no works?
- Can a man say he has faith? And really mean it without any outward result?
 1. There are many who say that they have faith but cannot show anything to prove their faith?
 2. So, then what now is the question? Can faith without works save them?
 3. This question is not talking about anything other than salvation and security in the Lord?
- ✓ The Apostle Paul said this about those that professed faith in God.

Ask yourself this question?

- ✓ If faith was not important why did the Apostle Paul quote it in the NT. The Book of Hebrews 11 in the whole Chapter 11 reminds us of exactly why “Faith is Important”.

Hebrews 11 (Authorized King James Version).

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a good report. ³ Through faith we

understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

⁴ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰ for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and

confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹ accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.

²² By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

²⁸ Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: ³³ who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: ³⁶ and others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: ³⁷ they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; ³⁸ (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

1. You will notice that in the hall of faith of Hebrews 11 that all of those mentioned who had faith were people that “took action”.
2. They had “movement to their ministry”.
3. Their “faith” carried and action. In other words they showed their “faith” to God by their actions. It was not their actions that saved them, but it was their “faithfulness” demonstrated by their works.
4. Your works don’t save you, but your works demonstrate your faith.
5. God does not need your works to save you, but he wants to see your faith, in Jesus to save you.
6. “faithfulness” is what demonstrates your faith.

That’s why the scriptures remind us in 2 Corinthians 13:5-6 of the following.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 Authorized (King James) Version

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? ⁶ But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

- ✓ True faith in Jesus in the Bible always reveals an outward working of faith. There was always an action associated with it.
- ✓ Even the believing thief on the cross verbalised his faith in Jesus to Jesus. That believing thief on the cross with hands and feet nailed only had the means to “call out” to Jesus to save him, which Jesus indeed did. He showed his faith by “calling out to Jesus”.

1. The disciples even asked our Lord how they could increase their faith.

Luke 17:6

⁶And the Lord said, **If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed**, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

2. Our Lord in several passages of scripture used the mustard seed as an illustration to show that when a mustard seed is planted it does not sit and do nothing, but transforms itself into this great tree, where even the fowls of the air can use it for lodging.
3. It shows an outworking of its character and that it was to grow tall and strong if indeed it was a mustard seed.

Luke 13:19

¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

- So also were the disciples to grow and reveal their character of who they really were.

The issue is this folks:

- In the scripture James, he is concerned with people who loosely profess their claim and allegiance to the Lord, with devastating eternal consequences.
- ✓ He uses verses 15 and 16 to deliver his example of an empty faith. Words without action are just that, empty words.
- ✓ Then in verse 17 he ties the two thoughts together again, speaking of faith in our Lord.
- Have you ever been in a position when you see loved ones battling it out in poverty, or finances to make ends meet, and falling into hard times.

- Have you ever known of their plight and only responded by saying I will pray for you? Or “I hope things improve for you”. But never lifting a helping hand to physically help them?

So is faith.

- If it is a genuine faith there will be a response to help those loved ones in need regardless.
 - There will and even should be a sacrifice on our part to do away with those luxuries and excess we might otherwise have had and used it to see that their basic lively hood needs are met.
 - Sometimes it could have been just a helping hand.
 - We should not always wait for people to ask for help, we should be able to recognise the problems also.
- ❖ That is love folks? A love with a heart, and a faith with feet.
 - ❖ It’s that example to which faith in our Blessed Lord we should have.

A faith that pours from our heart with a labour and work of love.

V17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

1. It can be said then that “Faith is kept alive by your righteous works of love”.
2. We can argue and dispute these things, but the Lord is true and just and righteous by every word of His.

Therefore a “professing Christian”, is made alive by faith and righteous work in Christ.

- ✓ If all we ever do is say I believe in the Lord, but cannot show fruit, then the tree must be dead.
- And what happens when the tree is dead or has no fruit, it is cut or hewn down, and cast into the fire as dead wood. And that means no salvation in the Lord.
- ❖ I want to show you a scripture which at first glance may seem to be a contradiction to this statement here in James. And that is Ephesians 2:8-9. But it is not a contradiction at all.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The Apostle Paul reminds the readers here in the scripture about two things.

- ❖ **Firstly**. You are saved by Gods Grace, not yourselves. It is Gods gift. The reason is because you have shown faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. You have demonstrated that **through faith**. The true faith speaks volumes of a person who has shown his faith to the Lord, through an outward working faith of righteous works.

- ❖ **Secondly.** The boasting of a person about what he can do or has done in thinking that he has somehow earned a favour with the Lord to merit his salvation is not acceptable. The kind of works described here is something that a person does to think that he has had a part in his salvation, and that he has worked his way up to a point to deserve the kingdom of God, and his salvation.
- ❖ No amount of boasting or works can earn even a second in heaven. Of ourselves we cannot see God.
- ❖ It is the Grace of our Lord, and upon his mercy that is shed upon us, as we serve and honour him by our outworking through faith in him alone.

So Ephesians 2:8-9 enhances what James tells us here in James 2:17.

As we step onto Verse 18. We see more signs of faith producing works of righteousness.

1. Yes a man may say I have faith and that is all I need.
2. But there is also the man who will say I have the works to prove my faith.
3. It is hard for anyone to prove they Love the Lord if only by faith, and therefore the loving person of God will prove his Love for God by righteous works in His Love.

Talk is cheap as we say. Show me the money.

Verse 19. All “talkers” believe that there is a God. They have said they believe God is able to raise them up in the Last day.

- Well, that is all it is – Talk.? Where is the Faith?
 1. Because even verse 19 here tells us that the devils believe there is a God, and even tremble, even as you may, who believe but have no works to reveal your love towards God.
 2. You do well to believe there is a God as the Bible says, but that’s where it stops.
 3. You have realized a need for the saviour. But stopped short of Faith.
 4. You might have even trembled before Him, but you have not come to Him for the living water of life, to be washed and cleansed by Him.
 5. There is every intent by you, but no commitment. No outward sacrifice in the Lord has taken place.
 6. But empty words have prevailed, and you have sealed them up for a later day. But it may be getting too late, as that day is rapidly approaching, and soon **“our so called decisions for the Lord”** will be tried as wood hay and stubble and will be consumed in that day of the fiery trial.
- They are not the works built upon the foundation of the Lord.

Continuing now in Verse 20 of our text in James.

James changes his tone of voice here. He becomes more aggressive in his stance towards the misinformed believer.

- He starts to put into perspective the salient points of justification.

Listen to what he has to say. **Verse 20.**

“But wilt thou know”, O vain man?

1. There it is the chastisement, the rebuke.
2. Man is vain in his knowledge and James knows it, that’s why he engages in calling him ignorant. “wilt thou know”.
3. In other words you who think you know everything think again. You know nothing of the Lord and his judgment to come. You think you are ok, but you in fact are not. Therefore, he is calling them vain.
4. I will tell you again, if you weren’t listening in verse 1, then here it is again he is saying. “faith without works” is dead?

Then comes the examples again for the second time in this passage of James.

- If the first was not enough then here it is again for those who are vain believers.
- He delivers up Abraham for assessment, and follows it up with a question?

Verse 21.

²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (Hebrews 11:17).

- To believe is to show you faith.

²²Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

²⁴Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

²⁵Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Verse 26, ends on a glorious note.

- ❖ Reminding the professing Christian of what faith really is.
- ✓ Faith has feet. When your feet stop moving for the Lord, your faith is dead.
- ❖ Remember the mustard seed our Lord spoke of. It changed and grew, it never stayed a small seed.
- Can your faith be seen by you is the question this morning.

PRAYER.....