

The Test of Faith: Faith - Works = ??

October 16, 2016 — Epistle of James series — Msg 23— Pastor Andrew Coleman

James 2:14-17

English Standard Version

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? **17** So 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 apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. **19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! **20** Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? **22** You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; **23** and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. **24** You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. **25** And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **26** For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Verses 14-26 deal with the test of faith.

- there are 6 rhetorical questions (a case is being argued)
- the word ‘*faith*’ is used 11 times
- the word ‘*works*’ is used 12 times
- the word ‘*dead*’ is used 3 times

Twice repeated key declarative statement (end of vs 17 and 26):

FAITH -- WORKS = DEAD FAITH

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

1) **The problematic claim:** vs 14

if someone says he has faith but...

2) **The problematic understanding of 'faith':**

-- faith, an intellectual acknowledgment?

-- faith, a feeling?

-- faith, a spirituality?

-- faith, a tradition/ritual?

-- faith, an ethnic or familial identity?

-- **faith, a belief in Christ's sacrifice that transfers trust, identity and obedience to Him.**

Just as Christ loved and obeyed the Father,
(as seen in his *works* of teaching and death)
we too are called to love and obey the Father.
(we trust and obey what he has said).

3) **The problematic absence of 'works':**

What '*works*' are required?

A life of behavior that consistently conforms
to God's Word of truth and commands.

vs 15 -- example of compassion/sacrifice

FINAL THOUGHTS / PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

- 1) Just because someone claims to have faith
it doesn't mean that they actually do.
- 2) It is better to humbly verify your faith than
proudly vilify someone for questioning it.
- 3) Carefully evaluate what kind of faith you have.
- 4) **Does your faith dictate a difference in
the way you live and what you do each day?**