

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

By David Feddes

Some time ago, the Bible Society of the Congo noticed something strange. They noticed that Bible sales were way up, and yet people's lives in the Congo weren't much different. Those who went to church weren't much different, and not that many people were coming to church above and beyond what had been before. But for some reason, Bibles were selling like crazy.

After looking into it for a while, the Congo Bible Society found what was going on. People were buying Bibles because when they built new church buildings, they would put a whole bunch of Bibles all the way around in the ground, in the foundation, because they believed that if you put a bunch of Bibles in the ground at the church building, it would keep the evil spirits away. But all those Bibles were not changing anybody's lives. They were just buried and used superstitiously. It was a dead faith that viewed the Bible in that way, that had the Word in a sense but didn't do anything about the Word. Dead faith doesn't work.

Let's listen to what the apostle James writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If 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?¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." ¹⁹ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In 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? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James says in chapter 1, "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). It's a major theme—that we do the Word and not just listen to it. James has been emphasizing this all along.

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

Now James asks the question, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" (James 2:14).

James replies: dead faith doesn't work. It doesn't work in the sense that it doesn't do any works—it doesn't do any godly deeds. And it doesn't work in the sense that it doesn't bring about salvation. Dead faith doesn't work.

So if you thought that doing is optional, that as long as you have some sort of belief you're going to go to heaven, as long as you once raised your hand at a meeting or walked an aisle once upon a time, that automatically means that you have saving faith, James would say, not so fast. If you claim to have faith but no deeds that grow out of that faith, you need to realize that dead faith doesn't work.

And then he starts into some examples, as James always does. He never just stays in the abstract or talks about it as a doctrine or philosophy out there. He talks about life.

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If 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? In the same way, faith by itself, if it's not accompanied by action, is dead' (James 2:15-17). Literally, it says, "Go in peace." That was the common way in Hebrew of saying goodbye, or as another translation puts it, "Goodbye and good luck." That's what you say to somebody who doesn't have enough clothes and daily food. James says that is absolutely worthless. Nice talk doesn't cut it.

The apostle John says the same thing: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:16–18).

Jesus himself says that on the final day he will tell the wicked: "I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me" (Matthew 25:42–43). Jesus says this not to people who have a few small difficulties that he's now pointing out. These are the people to whom he says: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Dead faith doesn't work. Dead faith does not help Jesus in his time of need when the poor are there before you, and it doesn't work in saving you from the wrath of God.

Empty words, rather than helping somebody, is a sign of dead faith. But you can also have correct, accurate belief and yet have dead faith. Someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." They're separating faith from deeds when they say that. James doesn't want to separate faith from deeds. "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do"

(James 2:18). "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder" (James 2:19).

The demons have correct beliefs. When Jesus was ministering here on earth, he met demons who said accurate things about him. They said, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" (Mark 1:24). Another demon said, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" (Luke 8:28). These demons knew that God is real. They knew that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. They knew that they were headed for hell and that Jesus was the one who would destroy them. They knew all that. They had accurate beliefs.

And that shows us that it's possible to believe true things and not have a real and living faith at all. You can believe in the existence of God. You can believe that Jesus is the Son of God. You can believe that Jesus came into the world. You can believe that he died on the cross. You can believe that he rose again. You can believe that salvation comes through faith in him—and you can still be lost. You can believe that heaven is real. You can believe that hell is real—and still end up going to hell.

Satan believes all those things. The demons believe all those things. Satan is in some ways the greatest theologian in the universe aside from God and the holy angels. Satan knows more about God than any limited human on earth. Satan lived in the very presence of God. He saw all of history. Satan knows more than any of us knows, and yet he doesn't have real and living faith.

So belief in one God, or belief in a lot of other true things, is not the same thing as saving faith. "You believe that God is one"—that was the central conviction and belief and confession of God's chosen people, the Jews. Their greatest passage of the Bible that they clung to was the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). But what does James say? "You believe that God is one. Well, good for you—so do demons, and they shudder."

Right after the Shema, what does Deuteronomy 6 go on to say? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). If you believe that God is one and you have a living faith in him, then it leads you to trust and to love him, and it leads you toward obedience: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). A living faith loves and obeys and trusts. It doesn't just say, "Yeah, there's one God. I checked off that correct belief on my list, and now I'm headed for heaven." The demons believe that God is one—and shudder.

Dead faith doesn't work. Nice talk, just warm words with no real help, is no good at all. Hungry people can't eat a speech. Correct belief can be dead faith that doesn't work. You can be dead orthodoxy—accurate doctrine but no love for God, no loyalty to God, no obedience to God.

The demons have accurate beliefs, but they don't love God. They hate him. They don't have loyalty to God. They rebel against him. They don't obey God. They do what they want to do. And their correct belief—their dead faith—doesn't work for God, and it doesn't work to bring them salvation. Demons know many truths. And some religious people know many truths. But dead faith doesn't work. James makes that very clear.

Living Faith Works

Living faith works. It works in the sense that it goes into action, and it works in the sense that it brings salvation. Living faith is the way we become righteous before God. We become right with God through active faith. And James speaks of two people—Abraham and Rahab—to make this point.

Faith is not just believing; it's trusting God, and that involves loving, obeying, even sacrificing for him. And we see that in the life of the important man, the lofty patriarch Abraham, the father of believers. Faith involves trusting God and entrusting yourself to God. And that means faith is commitment. It's venturing or risking. It's joining God's side and not the side of evil.

And we see that in the life of the lowly prostitute Rahab. James speaks of Abraham, and he says, "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?" (James 2:20–21). He goes back to the greatest figure in the history of the Israelite people—Abraham himself, the father of faith.

God came to Abraham when Abraham was 75 years old, and he and his wife had not been able to have a child. And God promised that they would have a child, and that through their offspring all nations on earth would be blessed. Abraham believed the Lord, and God credited it to him as righteousness. Abraham had grown up in an idolatrous culture, in a family of idol worshipers, and God had called him out of the land of Ur to go to a different land. And then he made this great promise.

So Abraham hadn't earned God's favor—he had been an idol worshiper, and he sinned in many ways—but he believed God. He believed God's promise, and he walked with God, and God credited that faith to him as righteousness.

But Abraham, as he grew older, still didn't receive that child of promise. He and Sarah became older and older, and eventually God gave them a baby when Abraham was 100 years old. And this baby was called Isaac. He was the child of promise.

And as Isaac grew up, they delighted in him. And then one day God said to Abraham, "Take your son Isaac and offer him to me as a sacrifice." So Abraham set off with Isaac up the mountain. And when they got to the top of the mountain, Abraham built an altar, and then he laid his son Isaac on the altar and was about to kill him.

But before he could bring the knife down, God spoke to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham! Do not harm the child. Now I know that you fear God, because you haven't even withheld your own son from me." And then God told Abraham to take a ram, who was caught in the thicket, and to sacrifice that ram in place of his son.

God said to Abraham, "I am going to bless you, and I am going to make great nations from Isaac, and all nations on earth are going to be blessed through you." He renewed the promise that he'd made all along. But now Abraham's faith had been shown more strong than ever, by his

willingness to give up even his son—the child of promise—because he believed that somehow God was going to fulfill his promise, even if he killed his son as a sacrifice to God.

Never would God require a human sacrifice again. He gave Abraham his son back. The only sacrifice of a human ever was God himself offering his Son Jesus for the salvation of the world. But Abraham, the Bible says, believed that God could raise his son from the dead. So he obeyed God, and he had such tremendous faith that he would do whatever God asked him to do.

So James says, "You see that Abraham's faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (James 2:22). Faith and actions are inseparable. They always go together. And in Abraham, his living faith matured into action. His faith was made complete—or made perfect, as it says in other translations, or made mature. The same word in Greek can refer to completeness, or maturity, or perfection.

Abraham already had that faith when God first made the promise, and God credited his faith to him as righteousness. But over the years, his faith matured so that he could even offer his own son to God when required to do so. And his faith was matured or made complete by what he did in action. "And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend" (James 2:23).

James speaks again and again of what it means to be God's friend. One thing it means is you're not a friend of the world. God called Abraham out of the world—out of the land of Ur, out of living the world's way.

Now, if you believed in faith without deeds, here's a question: what if Abraham said, "I believe God," but he didn't obey God? He didn't leave Ur. He didn't offer Isaac. He didn't live by faith in God's promises his whole life. What if he just said, "I believe"? That doesn't cut it. The kind of faith Abraham had—the kind of faith that God credited to him as righteousness—was a faith that trusted and a faith that obeyed.

Does James contradict Paul?

"You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24). If you hear that statement and you've been taught well in the faith, your alarms should be going off or jangling about now: "A person is justified by works and not by faith alone"? You say, "What?" If you've been taught the doctrine of justification by faith, then you know the words of the apostle Paul elsewhere in the Bible: "A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:28).

Well, is a person justified by works and not by faith alone, or is a person justified by faith apart from works of the law? Does James contradict Paul?

We have to keep in mind who Paul is talking to and who James is talking to, and what kind of problem they're addressing.

Paul, in Romans and Galatians, combats legalists who seek salvation in rituals and in law-keeping. They think they can earn their salvation, they can earn points with God, and they will deserve to be saved. So when Paul uses the phrase "faith apart from works," he's describing living faith that trusts in Jesus, not in one's own merit. And that's what he means when he says, "A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law." It's still a real and living faith, but it's not depending on your own merit or your own goodness to make you right with God or get you into eternal life.

Now, James has a different target. James combats careless believers who profess faith, but they're all talk, no walk. They show favoritism. They neglect the poor. You cannot tell in their lives at all that they belong to God, because they do not live like it. And the words "faith alone" in James mean head knowledge. It means you believe something and you say something, but you have a cold heart—without love for God and love for others—and you have idle hands. You're not doing anything for the Lord or doing anything for others, but you say you believe. And James says that kind of faith alone is dead.

"A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (James 2:24). It's your actions that show the living reality of your faith, and you're justified before God if you have a faith that works.

Now, just a reminder—we sometimes think that Paul teaches salvation by grace through faith and James teaches works. Well, if you think that way, think again. Paul teaches the importance of works. He says: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*" (Ephesians 2:8–10). So even in the most famous passage of Paul about being saved by grace through faith and not by works, he says that we were saved and created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Elsewhere, Paul uses such phrases as "the obedience of faith," or "faith working through love," or "your work produced by faith." Paul teaches that a living faith works. It works by going into action, and it works by connecting you with God and bringing eternal life through Jesus.

As for James, he doesn't teach that you're saved by what you do and earning merit with God. James teaches grace. A few examples: "God gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5). "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17). "God chose to give us birth through the word of truth" (James 1:18). We didn't earn it. He gave us that new birth. "Have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (James 2:1). "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). "God gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11). James teaches grace.

So we need to realize that you can make errors about salvation in more than one direction. A. W. Tozer says, "To escape the error of salvation by works, we have fallen into the error of salvation without obedience."

Paul stressed very much: works don't save. Don't get involved in the idea of salvation by your own works. But James stressed that saved people obey. Paul and James agree: Jesus saves by grace through faith, and it is active faith.

Douglas Moo says: "It is absolutely vital to understand that the main point here in James is not that works must be added to faith, but that genuine faith includes works." You don't say, "Well, I'm saved by faith plus some stuff I do." No—I'm saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and that's a faith that moves me to work for the Lord and to work for the well-being of others. Living faith works. You're right with God through active faith. You trust God, and that moves you to love and obey and sacrifice.

We see that in the lofty patriarch Abraham. But we also see it in somebody who's not a man, who's not important, who's not widely respected in many ways, a lowly prostitute named Rahab. And we see in her life that faith works. It goes into action. James says: "In 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?" (James 2:25).

Maybe you already know the story of Rahab and the spies. But if not, here it is. Rahab is a prostitute in the city of Jericho. One day, two men come to her. And those two men are spies who have been sent by the Israelite leader Joshua to check out the land of Canaan—in particular, the strong city of Jericho. They come to her. They want to stay at her place while they're spying out Jericho. And so she accepts them. But the king of Jericho finds out that these two men have come there and finds out that they're at Rahab's house.

What does Rahab do? She lives in a house that's on the wall of Jericho. The top of her house has a flat roof. So she takes the spies up to the roof, and then she hides them underneath a bunch of flax plants that have been drying out on the roof. When they're hidden there, the soldiers from the king of Jericho come to check her out, and they ask if those spies are at her house. She says, "No, they left. I'm not sure which direction they went, but if you hurry, you might still be able to catch them." So the soldiers take off.

Rahab goes back upstairs and talks with the spies. She says, "We've heard about you Israelites, and we've heard of your victories over some very powerful kings already on the other side of the Jordan River. And I know that the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. And I've been kind to you—can you spare me and my family when you conquer the land?"

The spies say, "If you don't tell what we're doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land. Just make sure when the city is surrounded that you stay in your house and that you have a sign to show which house it is. Then everybody in that house is going to be spared."

Rahab has a house on the wall, and the city gates have been locked up to try to catch the spies if they haven't already left the city. So Rahab lets them down through a window with a rope and they escape outside the city. She tells them, "Now, make sure you just hide out in the countryside for three days while they're looking all over the place for you. Just hide out, and then after the coast is clear, you can go back."

The spies tell her, "Now make sure that as a sign, you have a red cord hanging from your window." So she has that red cord hanging from her window so that when the Israelites come

and conquer Jericho, she and her family will be spared. The spies hang out in the country for three days, as Rahab told them to. Then they return to Joshua.

Joshua leads the armies of Israel and the priests of Israel, and they march around the walls of Jericho for seven days. Then on the seventh day, the priests blow their trumpets, and the walls of Jericho collapse. The city is conquered. The people of the city are destroyed—except for Rahab. Rahab and her family are in that part of the wall where a red cord is hanging. It doesn't collapse, and the house is spared. She and her family are rescued from the destruction of Jericho.

The Bible says of Rahab, "And she lives in Israel to this day." That was written long after Rahab had died. "She lives in Israel to this day." You know why? Because she became part of the people of God, and she was the mother of a person named Boaz—whether his actual mother or a mother by descent. And Boaz became an ancestor of King David, who eventually became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. So you have the prostitute Rahab, who becomes a believing member of the people of God and produces godly offspring, eventually leading to the great King David and the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

That's why James says, "In 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?" (James 2:25).

Here's the question: what if Rahab had said, "I believe God will win," but refused to protect the spies? Would you say that Rahab had faith because she believed that God exists and that the Israelites would win with God's help? That alone is not enough. Of course, that was part of her faith—her belief that God is real and belief that God was mighty and powerful, the God of heaven and earth. But her faith meant she sided with God. She entrusted herself and risked herself for the sake of God and joined God's people. If she just said, "I believe, but I'm not helping you guys out," that would not have been faith at all, and she would not have been saved.

In all of this, it was not Abraham's work that earned him salvation or Rahab's work or deeds that earned her salvation. The Bible emphasizes again and again that it was rooted in faith. "By faith Abraham obeyed... By faith he went to live in the land of promise... By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead. (Hebrews 11:8-19)

It was faith that moved Abraham, and it was faith that moved Rahab. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient" (Hebrews 11:30–31).

Rahab wasn't saved by her good deeds and a good life. She was a prostitute. Abraham wasn't saved by his deeds and his good life. He had been an idol worshiper, and he committed major sins even after he had come to put his faith in God. But he repented of his sins, and he kept believing in God. He kept striving to obey God by the faith that was in him. It was by faith that Abraham and Rahab became who they were and were saved.

After saying all of that, James asks: can dead faith save? That's really the question he started with. And he says again and again what the answer is. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" (James 2:14). No way. "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by deeds, is dead" (James 2:17). "Faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20). "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26).

James wants us to think about that. If you have some beliefs and you think that head knowledge is going to save you, James says you might as well just have a tag on your toe and be lying in a morgue, because your faith is deader than a doornail.

Do you have a living faith? Is your faith more than just an idea flitting around in your head or a belief about something, an opinion you have about God or religious things?

Dead faith doesn't work. It doesn't work by doing godly deeds, and it doesn't work in bringing salvation. Nice talk doesn't cut it. Hungry people can't eat a speech. So just nice words without any action is useless. Correct beliefs, accurate doctrines—though they're very important—are not enough, because those true things need to take hold of your heart and fill you with love. Correct belief without love, without loyalty to God, without obedience to God, is not real faith at all. The demons know many truths. They have better theology than most of us do. But that theology does not create in them love, loyalty, and obedience to God.

Living faith works. You are right with God through active faith. So ask yourself: Do I really trust God—not just have opinions about God or correct beliefs about God? Do I trust him? Do I count on Jesus' blood and righteousness to save me? Do I believe God's promises and live by them? Do I love God? Do I do what he says? Do I obey him? Am I willing to give up things for him—sacrifice things that are dear to me if he requires it? Do I trust him enough to do that? And not only do I trust God, but do I entrust myself to him? Do I commit myself fully to him? Am I willing to risk my life for him?

Rahab took a risk. She did not side with the king of Jericho and side with the troops of Jericho, who easily could have killed her. She sided with the people of God. She joined the people of God. You need to commit your life, to risk your life for God, to join with God's people and to live for him.

And so, whether you're looking at a man or a woman, whether you're looking at somebody who's lofty or somebody who's lowly, whether you're looking at a patriarch or a prostitute, the way of salvation is always by faith—and by a living faith. Abraham and Rahab are proof of that.

Do you have that kind of living faith? If not, then ask God to change your heart right now, so that you'll not just have a head full of facts but a heart full of trust and love, and then a life filled with obedience and commitment. Join up with God's people if you haven't already. Confess your faith in him. Then live that faith, and be glad that living faith really does work.

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

By David Feddes

Slide Contents

James 2:14-26

Doers of the word

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves... Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (1:22, 27)

Faith without deeds?

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

Dead faith doesn't work

- Doesn't work in doing godly deeds
- Doesn't work in bringing salvation

Nice talk

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If 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? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

God's love in action

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:17-18)

I was hungry

I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. (Matthew 25:42-43)

Correct belief

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." ¹⁹ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

Demons believe

What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God! (Luke 4:34)

What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me! (Luke 8:28)

Correct belief—plus!

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. (Deut 6:4-7)

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

- **Nice talk:** warm words; no help
*Hungry people can't eat speech.
- **Correct belief:** accurate doctrines; no love, no loyalty, no obedience.
*Demons know many truths.

Living Faith Works

Right with God through active faith

- **Trust God:** love, obey, sacrifice
*Lofty patriarch: Abraham
- **Entrust self:** commit, risk, join
*Lowly prostitute: Rahab

Abraham

²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

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

Faith in action

²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

- Faith and actions are inseparable.
- Living faith matures in action.

Living Faith Works

The scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. (2:23)

What if Abraham said, “I believe God,” but didn’t obey God nor leave Ur nor offer Isaac?

Contradiction?

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (2:24)

A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Does James contradict Paul?

Paul’s target

- Paul combats legalists who seek salvation in rituals and law-keeping.
- “Faith apart from works” in Paul describes living faith that trusts Jesus, not one’s own merit.

A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Rom 3:28)

James’ target

- James combats careless “believers” who are all talk, no walk, who show favoritism and neglect the poor.
- “Faith alone” in James means head knowledge, cold heart, idle hands.

A person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:24)

Paul teaches works

By grace you have been saved, through faith... For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works** (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The **obedience** of faith (Romans 1:5)

Faith **working** through love (Gal 5:6)

Work produced by faith (1 Thess 1:3)

James teaches grace

God **gives generously** to all without finding fault. (1:5) Every good and perfect **gift** is from above... He chose to give us **birth** through the word of truth. (1:17-18) Have **faith** in Jesus Christ

(2:1). **Mercy** triumphs over judgment! (2:13) God gives **grace** to the humble. (4:6) The Lord is full of **compassion and mercy**. (5:11)

Errors about salvation

To escape the error of **salvation by works**, we have fallen into the error of **salvation without obedience**. (A. W. Tozer)

- Paul stressed: works don't save.
- James stressed: saved people obey.
- Paul and James agreed: Jesus saves by grace through faith—active faith!

Living Faith works

It is absolutely vital to understand that the main point is not that works must be **added to** faith but that genuine faith **includes** works. (Douglas Moo)

Living Faith Works

Right with God through active faith

- **Trust God:** love, obey, sacrifice
*Lofty patriarch: Abraham
- **Entrust self:** commit, risk, join
*Lowly prostitute: Rahab

Living Faith Works

In 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? (2:25)

Living Faith Works

In 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? (2:25)

What if Rahab said, “I believe God will win,” but refused to protect the spies?

By faith!

By faith Abraham obeyed... By faith he went to live in the land of promise...

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead. (Hebrews 11:8-19)

By faith!

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. (Hebrews 11:31)

Can dead faith save?

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ... Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by deeds, is dead... faith without deeds is useless... **As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.**

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

- Doesn't work in doing godly deeds
- Doesn't work in bringing salvation

Dead Faith Doesn't Work

Nice talk: warm words; no help.

*Hungry people can't eat speech.

Correct belief: accurate doctrines; no love, no loyalty, no obedience.

*Demons know many truths.

Living Faith Works

Right with God through active faith

- **Trust God:** love, obey, sacrifice
 - *Lofty patriarch: Abraham
- **Entrust self:** commit, risk, join
 - *Lowly prostitute: Rahab