

Love In Action

James 2:14-26

Purpose of series: The purpose of this series is to assist you in taking off the limits of God's expression through you and in your life and His blessing on your life. The book of James reveals many practical duties and activities of Christian, that is not heeded will hinder God's expression through them and blessings on them, especially during difficult seasons of our life. This series will provide us with a practical view of how to live a life of spiritual impact and personal fullness in a difficult world under pressure.

Purpose of this message: Today we are going to be challenged to review our life by the measure of a true Christian, Love in Action. As we read in James 2:14-26, he addresses a larger issue, the question of a so claimed believer who has no evidence of his faith in the way that he lives. This is the most controversial and misunderstood passage in the book of James. Every cult misunderstands it and they try to use this passage to prove you have to work your way to heaven. The entire New Testament teaches that we are saved by faith alone. What we will do is bring balance to this word and invest the truths in our lives so that we can proclaim Christ in action and not just verbally. We will live outwardly what is supposedly alive inwardly.

Intro: All of us know someone who believes they are destined to do great things. They talk about it all the time. They are absolutely sure they are supposed to be this wealthy, classy, famous individual with great affect. But as time goes on you can see that there is no action in their belief. They make no effort to make that dream come true and they have no conviction of sitting around waiting for it. This individual eventually turns around after four years and watches everyone else graduate...and they still haven't realized that they are behind. They get married and have their first kid and now there is no time to make college work, but they will get to it some day. Two or three kids later, five or six years down the road, this constant repeating that you are going to do it, you are going to make it resounds in your head. Finally there is this explosion, someone screams, "Do it or just shut up!"

A Man Who Awakens

As I was reading in Proverbs this week I find it interesting to see an individual who awoke from his "future comma" to the reality that was around him. A man by the name of Agur actually writes this oracle. He begins his oracle with a story relayed through two people, (Ithiel and Ucal), that Agur evidently knew. This story is a sad story and the two tell Agur of the man's plea for help and confession of self-awareness:

"I am the most ignorant of men; I do not have a man's understanding. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One."

Proverbs 30:1-3

Somehow this guy gets a wakeup call about his life. I don't know if he was fifteen, thirty or fifty years old, rich or poor, smart or intelligent, what is evident in this passage is that he comes to two guys and lays it all out there, "I'm ignorant, I have no understanding of things, I've not positioned myself in the place where I could learn wisdom and I am clueless of who God is."

There are some people who wakes up to the challenge in their lives and does something about it. They don't talk about it, they do it! There are actually four positions that people take in this world, but only one of them wake up! One of those positions are assumed, and then the other three are addressed by James. He gives us the picture of three of the four positions that we can live by in this world but only one of the four are of most importance.

Last week we discussed how James dealt with those who professed to be a Christian and who professed to love others but were practicing the sin of personal favoritism and prejudiced, (*prosopolempsia* [respect of persons]). In his writing, James attempts to challenge the genuineness of our faith to God by having evidence of active love toward others...all others.

- **Paul says- "By grace, through faith, we are saved."**
- **James comes along and says, "It's not just faith but faith and works."**

In the Hebrew alone there are 812 different usages of words that is translated 'to save' or 'salvation' in the Old Testament, only 58%, (7.1%) refer to eternal salvation. Nothing is more broader in discussion, more richly fought over and more varied in opinion that the biblical concept of salvation. It is hard to put it all in a box. Even without the bible, many seem to have their own interpretation of what it means to go to heaven or miss hell. Some refuse to discuss it. Some refuse to believe in either. But there is a process of responding to a living God that credits or awards us the opportunity to miss one and enjoy the other, we call that 'salvation' (Gk. *Soteria*).

What were they talking about? (James and Paul.) They are talking about different things.

- **James was saying that faith without works cannot save a person, (works are a condition for some kind of salvation) and though works will not save you, the lack of them question your true faith.**
- **Paul was fighting the problem of legalism -- the problem of "I've got to keep all the Jewish laws and regulations to be a Christian." Paul is talking to that group.**
- **James is not fighting legalism but laxity -- those that say "It doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe."**

They are fighting two different enemies. But they both use the word "works" in different ways.

- **Paul uses the word "works" to address those keeping the Jewish laws like circumcision and things like that.**
- **James uses the word "works" to address the lifestyle of a Christian -- acts of love.**
- **Paul focuses on the root of salvation – addressing what salvation is. What happens on the inside.**
- **James focuses on the fruit of salvation addressing what salvation does. What happens on the outside.**
- **Paul is talking about, "How to know you're a Christian."**
- **James is talking about, "How to show you're a Christian."**
- **Paul is talking about his passages on faith alone, how to become a believer.**
- **James talks about how to behave like a believer.**

Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them."

The Three Essentials

*"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**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Ephesians 2:8-10

Look at the **three essentials of this passage** -- "**by grace**", "**through faith**", "**to do good works**". The challenge of our Christian walk can get out of balance if you get those out of order. If you think you're saved by works, for faith you're in trouble. But he's saying we're saved by grace through faith. We're saved just by accepting God's gift.

"Immature people talk about their beliefs, but the mature person lives his faith. Hearing God's Word (James 1:22-25) and talking about God's Word can never substitute for doing God's Word." (Warren Wiersbe, p. 63)

William Barclay wrote:

"We are not saved *by* deeds; we are saved *for* deeds; these are the twin truths of the Christian life. And Paul's whole emphasis is on the first truth, and James's whole emphasis is on the second truth." (William Barclay, The Letters..., p.87)

There is a fundamental question that resonates in the book of James and it is this,

"What use is faith alone?"

*"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

There are three views of this scripture,

1. **The Arminian interpretation** of this verse is if a person claims to be a Christian but gives no evidence of true faith by the way he lives, he may never have been saved or he **may no longer be saved**.
2. **Reformed view** is that if a person claims to be a Christian but gives no evidence of true faith by the way he lives, **he was never saved**.
3. **Calvinist view** is if a person claims to be a Christian but gives no evidence of true faith by the way he lives there are two possibilities. He may not be saved, or he may be saved, but he is **not living by faith**.

In our teaching today, it really doesn't matter how you view it in either of the views, they all say basically, no evidence by works, no faith...no salvation.

- **What good is it to have a faith that doesn't cause action?**

Four Kinds of People In This World

As we study James, especially in today's message he speaks of three kinds of people

while it is assumed that there is a fourth kind. I want to briefly identify that assumed individual and then we will discuss the three that James identifies for us. The assumed person is...

1. **No Faith, No Deeds**

Our world is plagued with hopelessness. Darkness covers so much of the earth and there are so many areas where people have invested, billions of dollars, and it continues to sink in a hopeless pit. There you find no faith or deeds. Of course Satan has caused so much desperation that people will trade their soul for a bowl of rice. We have never experienced that as Americans. The thought is so hard for us to understand. These people are not complacent in this bondage, they have no idea how to develop a faith, a hope that raises them up beyond their despair. They don't have faith nor do they have deeds.

The sad truth is that you do not have to go around the world to an isolated village to see this truth. You can look right here in our own country, our own state and city to see those who do not have a faith nor any deeds in assisting the betterment of another human being.

In my observation, especially here in the United States, typically no deeds are a reflection of no faith. But if Satan cannot influence us stuck to settle to be one kind of person he will gladly challenge most of the Christians here in the U.S. To be the second kind of person...

2. **Active Faith, No Deeds- Love in Action is not something you say!**

Look at James 2:14:

“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 asks two important questions here:

1. **Earthly Common Sense Question-** I can see the personality of an Italian Man saying this: *If a man claims to have faith but no deeds, what good is it?* In other words, how smart is the person and what would they benefit if they have faith to swim but they never jump in the pool? Someone who says they have the faith to walk but never gets off of their seat?

James wastes no time here getting to the point, point being, “Can you say that you think confidently on certain matters but you never do anything about it, what good is that?” In this first question, James offers a rational challenge, “if a man claims to have faith but does nothing...what good is it?” I can see James scratching his head waiting for an answer, then he slaps the second question on as though he is already tired of dealing with the process of an argumentative debate and gets right to the core of his questioning. He turns from a matter of logical and common sense to one of theology and eternal truth! The second question has an eternal twist to it.

2. **Eternal Truth-** Can a faith that has no response, no responsibility and no activity save him? Can I get wet if I don't jump into the water and can I walk if I stay in my chair.

There are many people who claim to be Christians. George Gallup says that 50 million Americans say "I'm born again," but you don't see anything different in their lifestyle. We tend to label people as Christians if they give any indication that they are a believer. And mostly it is because of our understanding that if you confess Him as Lord they you are born again. But James indicates that there is action in relationship to the verbal commitment.

My wife and I got married in Waco, Texas December 6, 1980. It was a wonderful day. But if I started calling an old girlfriend the next day and started seeing her, and not only her but others, that would be appalling. If I made a confession but has no relationship with God or any action of loving response, my confession would be totally in question.

This relationship with God is more than just talk, there is an understanding that we will now live in relationship to that of God's, a life that is involved in real faith. Jesus said, *"Not everybody who says to me 'Lord, Lord' is going to enter into the kingdom of heaven."* **Not everybody with a Christian bumper sticker is a believer. Not everybody who is a professor of Christianity is a possessor of Christianity.** "Can such faith save him? What value is this kind of faith?"

James Illustrates This Person:

"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?"

James 2:15-16

- **Love in Action is not something you say.**
- **Love in Action is not something you feel.**

James gives us a hypothetical situation to illustrate his point. There is no doubt that what he illustrates may very well have taken place in his church in Jerusalem where there were many poor saints (Romans 15:25-31; 1 Corinthians 16:3). All the people in the illustration are genuine Christians since he addresses them as "brother or sister." He brings to our attention the absurdity of claiming to have real faith while at the same time not having a faith that allows them to do deeds of service. Their simple, loving words will not save a starving man from death or a freezing woman from the cold.

The Illustration: He is telling them to imagine that there is a brother or sister, someone who is part of your family, not someone from China, who comes up and knocks on your door. They are standing there without clothes and daily food, the practical amount of food for a day. They are not asking for unreasonable things, only the basics of life. They are freezing, standing on the porch of your house ringing your door bell. You look out the peephole and then

eventually open the door and say, "You'll need to go next door, you know I mean well and I wish for you to have all the food that will make you full. Good-bye!" Now, what good is that?

James does not contradict Paul, who insisted that we are saved not of works (Ephesians 2:9). James merely clarifies for us the kind of faith that saves.

"We are saved by grace through faith, not by works; but saving faith will have works that accompany it."

As the saying goes:

Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone - it has good works with it.

Paul also understood the necessity of works in proving the character of our faith. He wrote:

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

Ephesians 2:10

He also wrote:

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works."

Titus 3:8

Important Points:

- **Good Works ARE Obedient Deeds if generated from God!**
- **Responding to the people around you is responding to the people God loves**

John Calvin said: "It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone."

James gives us a final statement concerning the second kind of person:

"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

James 2:17

James very clearly makes a connection to the illustration as not to be misunderstood and says, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

When I am around gracious people, giving people it humbles me. I automatically am taken back and review my own life of generosity. When I see them extend their hand to people that would most likely reject them and they are not marred by it, frustrated with it, I am compelled to follow their example. I am inspired by people who truly know how to love other people. I am challenged and changed by their dedication.

LIFE Groups: I believe that our life groups offer a place for people to encourage

one another and build each other up. In

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

1 John 3:14

This passage says that one of the proofs of our salvation is that we love other Christians. Do you have fellowship with other believers? Real faith wants to be around other believers. Do you love them? It is known we are Christians by our love. But many so called believer's are not so comfortable with other believer's. They don't like the accountability. They want to live their life but when they are having a crisis they want everyone to respond as a Christian should. If we are not careful we will allow a world to identify a real believer rather than the Word of God. We can become exhausted in this process, trying to please a world that does not want to have any relationship with you at all. The difficulty with all of this is, this world I'm talking about is not outside the church walls but inside. Before I contribute to the idea that I am encouraging judging people in the house of God I want to say that often, people within the walls of our church are demanding the love deserved for those outside the wall. They are not mature or they are basically not even saved. We do have an obligation as believer's and that is to love. Love generously. To be open handed with those around us, but we are also to help people realize that they are dead in their faith and that they need to become a contributor, activate their faith in action, making their confessed faith line up with an active faith.

“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?”

1 John 3:17

Real faith is generous. It wants to give. Who can count on you in a crisis? How many Christians have the freedom to call you up in the middle of the night if they are in an emergency? This passage is not talking about the pastor, it is talking about the body of Christ. It is talking about a small groups of people who can stay in touch with their group and know the condition of their hearts.

Bill Hybels tells the story of a young couple who came up to him after one of his services and ask if he would pray for their baby. They had mentioned that the baby was not supposed to live but a few days and outside of a miracle the baby would not live. As they pulled the blanket off the babies face he saw the shocking seen, the whole baby's face was caved in and you could not see any indication of eyes or nose, it was a difficult thing to see.

As Bill finished praying over the baby, his heart went out to them. He said that they could have asked for anything and he would have done it for them. He asked, “Is there anything I can do? Is there anything you need me for?” And they said, “No, we really don't need you pastor, our life group has been there for us. Actually they have helped us plan all the meals, some have come over to our house and cleaned it for us since we have to have 24 hour care for our baby. They have also helped paint and decorate the room so the baby can have a beautiful place to live it's short life. We have already worked out all the funeral

arrangements too. My life group is going to do everything we need, but thanks for asking.”

He was shocked. He realized that the life groups in his church had an Active Faith. They were the church! They were the hope and the light of the world. They were not just talking the talk. Not just feeling for people. They had activated their faith!

We are a lot better at verbalizing our faith than practicing it. I can't meet everybody's needs but I can meet somebody's needs. Even Jesus couldn't meet everybody's needs. James is saying that if my faith doesn't lead me to share with others it's wrong.

“...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

James 2:17

If I don't feel like helping other Christians, I don't have a sick faith, I have a dead faith. James is laying it on the line. He says, “Do you want real faith? It's more than just something you say and it's more than just something you feel.”

- There is no such thing as faith without works, it's impossible!
- There is no fruit with faith alone.

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Matthew 3:8

Fruit is the *outward* evidence of an *inner* life. Just as some fruit trees bear little or no fruit, it is possible for some genuine Christians to bear little or no external evidence of their eternal life simply because they have avoided the pruning of the Lord. I believe the three T's of James 1, trials, temptations and testings are the pruning rod either used by the Lord or directly given by the Lord. Refusal to go through the trials or yielding to the temptations equally keep a person shallow, bearing small to no fruit in their life. They are so desperate to maintain their life for themselves they have no room to bear fruit in their life for any other.

The Holy Spirit desires to lead us into all truth. He wants to transform the inner workings of every believer. Often the inner work of the Holy Spirit is shaped by things that affect our outer man. But, unless the believer allows God to give direction and go through unpredictable challenges of life, he quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit even though, as a believer, he seeks to manifest the life of Christ through himself.

There are many people in church today that would agree that they have a problem with their faith. It just seems like so many other people have an incredible faith in God. As I am writing this I don't want you to confuse what I'll call information with administration. Suppose you went to visit a college. You go to the administration building and ask, “I'd like to go to college here and get my degree.” They ask you to fill out your paper work and give them a certain amount of money and to come back Monday for school to start.

You show up Monday looking for your classes, but there are no classes. There

are no teachers or curriculum or class rooms. You go to the administration building and ask where everything is. They tell you that You will have whatever degree you really believe you can have, but you need to make sure to show up everyday for the next four years, pay the payment and then you will get your degree. Actually this sort of school would be full today, it would not bother some to spend four years doing nothing to get a degree to attempt to do something.

But in some way, having faith without action is trying to get a degree without going to school, without ever taking a test, without showing up every day. There is no possible way that you would be honored with a recognized degree from this college neither will your Heavenly Father recognize your degree of faith without activating it in DEEDS of action.

3. **No Faith, Active Deeds**

Up to this point James has been talking about those who say they are a believer, that they have faith but they do not have action. James now turns the this key statement around and exposes the second position, that of a somewhat antagonist who is defined by the statement he makes...

"But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."
James 2:18a

- **Love in Action is not something you say.**
- **Love in Action is not something you feel.**
- **Love in Action is not something you think.**

This individual is Action+No Faith, he is an **philanthropist**. He loves to help people but does not see himself inspired by any Godly persuasion but has a great sense of moral responsibility to humanity. This is exactly what Humanism is all about, service to man without God; meeting the needs of humanity without the inspiration or acknowledgment of a greater call or purpose.

Some unbelievers appear to bear the fruit of saving faith, but God will one day expose their "wheat" as "tares"

"Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."
Matthew 13:30

In James' third scenario, we are looking at an individual who has substantial evidence of active service and fruit in their life, because they do something, they don't just talk about it. Jesus will say it is hard to determine who is who. James is saying that there are those who confidently say, "I've got deeds, I'm producing everything that you are talking about, what makes you any different than me?"

Many times people of faith are not people of action. And the action here is not the action of stepping out on their faith, believing for something incredible. The faith being challenged here is a faith that is activated in DEEDS not just DREAMS.

A good question to ask if a person confronted me and asked, "Hay, what are you doing for mankind, for humanity, for our community?" According to James, he deserves an answer, and we cannot hide in the confines of how we have so defined it. Here are two ways we have mostly defined our faith:

- Faith is something we activate to reach our dreams
- Faith is the necessary means that people have to activate to receive Christ in their heart and miss the wrath of God.

But James allows a little antagonistic individual to jump in and ask a perturbing question, "What make you different than me, I have works you have faith?" The answer to this question is, "Nothing, they are both dead!"

This should alarm us and cause a concern in our heart. James is being as clear and precise as he can. I think he uses way fewer words so we wouldn't look for some loop hole in something else that he says. Here is the fourth position that James desires that we all arrive at:

4. **Active Faith, Active Deeds**

James tags on the definition of this position as quick as he can in the second part of James 2:18.

"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."
James 2:18

Circle "show me". Real faith is visible. You can see it. It's apparent. If you claim to be a Christian, people will be able to see it. It's visible. Someone once said, "We've got a lot of Lady Clairol Christians -- nobody knows for sure." Only God knows for sure. Faith is odorless, weightless, invisible so anybody can claim to have it. How do you know for sure?

James says, "Show me." If you claim to be a Christian I have a right to ask you to prove it by looking at your lifestyle. Somebody said, "Faith is like calories. You can't see them but you can sure see the results."

You can't see faith but you can see the results. Notice, look who he is talking too. James is confronting the person stuck in the role of the number two person, Active Faith, Inactive Deeds. I liked this thought:

Only DEEDS can make FAITH visible!

James is telling us, "You cannot prove you have faith unless you have works, but because I have works you can see that I have faith."

You Are Not The Only One Who Believes

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

- **Love in Action is not something you say.**
- **Love in Action is not something you feel.**

- **Love in Action is not something you think.**
- **Love in Action is not something you believe.**

I believe that James is striking at the arrogance of Christianity. It is easy for us to look around the world, to look at our country and city and think, "We are the only ones who gets it, Jesus is Lord. One day He is coming back to judge this old dark and nasty world. There are so few believers who get this." James jumps in on that distorted, arrogant thought and says, "No way, all the host of hell believes this, that's why there is such an attack on your life to remain hiding out, believing you are righteous and approved of being inactive. You think that your only responsibility is to know Jesus Christ as your savior and bring people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to activate your faith for things such as healing, money and a better life. But you don't even go there in your heart and mind that you should be active in this EVIL community. Don't dare connect with the DIRTY WORLD, stay inside, don't acknowledge the neighbor next door, they are not believers! What? Are you kidding me?"

Just saying I believe in God is not enough to get you to heaven. Even the devil believes that. The Bible says in Proverbs, "The fool has said in his heart, there is not God." It's foolish to be an atheist because the devil is not that foolish. The devil believes in God! The devil is a great theologian. He knows a lot more about the Bible than you do. He's been around a whole lot longer. He knows theology backwards and forwards. He believes. His demons believe and shudder. The Greek word is "to bristle" -- their hair stands up on end. It's the kind of word you'd use reading a Steven King novel. Why? Because the devils understand the majesty and awesomeness of God.

They believe in God and they tremble. The word believe in Greek means "to trust in, to cling to, to rely on, to commit yourself completely." I believe in Hitler but I'm not a Nazi. I'm a Christian because I believe in Jesus. But it's more than just a head knowledge. A lot of folks are going to miss heaven by 18 inches. They've got it in their head but not their heart. They say "I believe in God." James says, "Big deal. Everybody believes in God. How do you have a creation without a Creator? But that's not enough."

I believe in the active participation of believers in God's house. I believe that half of our church should be active to very active in every ministry that we have here. But I also believe that we have got to continue to figure out how to break down the walls of this church and activate DEEDS to this community. I am pleased with the garden even though I believe it is over taxing a few people. We are attempting to change culture here. We are attempting to change the normal inbreeding of the Christian culture, Active Faith, Inactive Deeds. I'm not saying that you are not shining your light in this neighborhood. I am not saying that you need to go and work yourself to death. I am not saying that some of you are not helping with those who are less fortunate and that are not at the point of coming to our church or Christ and that we don't see your love and care toward those people. But I am talking to a body of Christ who may not realize that there is a call for God's people to rise up and activate their faith in a dark world on behalf of the world instead of themselves. That it might be the case that even though this world has no clue who our God is.

Satan and the host of hell knows who our God is and they are not taking tea breaks to

sit back and talk about how good the world is and how they need to ruin it. They tremble at the fact that there is a God and they shutter at the fact that there is coming a day of reckoning. They are in great despair and in a hopeless estate. If they can't have you then they will get you satisfied with yourself disconnected to a world that is suffering and held on to by the grips of hell itself. The demons believe in the sense that they acknowledge that God exists. But this "faith" does nothing for the demons, because it isn't real faith, proved by the fact that it doesn't have works with it.

There is a God. There are demons who cannot keep their knees from buckling when they hear of this because of the terror that it brings to them. Their time is short and they know it. They know this God, we are not the only ones. How does that knowledge affect us? How does it resonate in your soul? This teaching is not so we can live out a bumper sticker I once saw on a car:

“Jesus is coming, everybody look busy!”

But this is how we have a tendency to hear a message like this. Like Jesus is the boss's son and he is going to tell on us to His dad. It's not that way at all. God is sending His Son to this earth with great joy and gladness. It is a victorious homecoming and a displeased gathering. But what will you have to shout about? Will it be what God had done for you? That will definitely be a wonderful expression of praise. But will you be shouting because of what God had done through you? I don't believe anything will be in comparison to the humbling experience of how God chose to use us in His incredible plan.

Barclay Commentary:

"The devils are intellectually convinced of the existence of God; they, in fact, tremble before God; **for all that they are none the less devils; their belief has not in the least altered them.**"

I wonder if there are areas of belief in us that has not altered who we are? Active Faith, Inactive Deeds! James challenges us and confronts us with this leading question.

“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?”

James 2:20

- **Love in Action is not something you say.**
- **Love in Action is not something you feel.**
- **Love in Action is not something you think.**
- **Love in Action is not something you believe.**
- **Love in Action is something you do!**

Foolish Man- In response to what James has just written he affirms his view with an harsh and strong statement in three words, “You foolish man...” I can almost see him screaming in his mind as he writes this. He could not be more explicit in attempting to get his point across. You are a fool if you do not get this! You are a fool to hear this message and go out and act like the demons. You are no different than a demon!? Can I go that far to say that? Yes I can, James is grabbing our shoulders and shaking us with all his might and attempting to wake us up from this spiritual slumber that so many Christians fall into. Wake up! Wake up!

Am I over exaggerating? Where else in the bible can you find this strong of a point being made about anything? If I'm not over-exaggerating, is James? No, he is speaking the truth, from growing up with Jesus, to watching Jesus as a teacher/prophet while he remained an unbeliever. He watched this brother of His be nailed to a cross in distant disbelief, hoping Jesus would snap out of it. "Stop this show Jesus," I think James could not resist thinking. James is speaking from experience of being transformed by the grace of God into a faith in Jesus as being the long sought after Messiah and then being filled with the Holy Spirit and now, preaching to the community of believer's in Jerusalem. In unbelief, in transformation, in restoration, in persecution, James only writes of the necessary things that he understands about the Christian walk, as he sees it, in few but clear words. Don't be a fool! You can't miss this. Everything that you do in response to God is useless if you do not get this. Stop, listen, learn, respond!

Here's Your Proof:

- **Active Faith Illustrated- Abraham**

"Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?"

James 2:21

1. Faith Is Perfected By Our Action

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

James 2:22

Works must accompany a genuine faith. If there is no evidence of a new life, there was no genuine, saving faith.

- As Charles Spurgeon is reported to have said: **"The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul."**

2. Action Justifies Our Faith

"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 reinforces this thought in the next scripture,

"You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone."

James 2:24

- **Justified Faith Illustrated- Rahab**

"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? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

James 2:25-26

Rahab demonstrated her faith in the God of Israel by hiding the spies and seeking salvation from their God (Joshua 2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be a living faith

because it activated her to do something. Her belief in the God of Israel would not have saved her if she had not done something with that faith.

Extreme Illustration: Look at the extreme case that James uses here, Rahab. Try to wrap your spiritual brain around this one. This is extreme in the way that God honored such little faith but great action. I believe that James may be saying, I would rather have people who don't have it all together and have little faith in God that activates their life of service than have all these people who consider themselves aggressive in their faith but cannot touch humanity!

Wiersbe: "You could not find two more different persons! Abraham was a Jew; Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham was a godly man, but Rahab was a sinful woman, a harlot. Abraham was the friend of God, while Rahab belonged to the enemies of God. What did they have in common? Both exercised saving faith in God."

Ross: "James concludes his argument here by making use of this figure of the body and the soul. When body and spirit are separated, death and putrefaction result: so, if faith be separated from works, it is a dead faith; it is 'dead in itself' (v. 17). Faith of that kind indicates the absence of all real spiritual life, and shows that spiritual death and corruption still reign."

Two Statements Concerning This By John Calvin:

"He, (God) designedly put together two persons so different in their character, in order more clearly to shew, that no one, whatever may have been his or her condition, nation, or class in society, has ever been counted righteous without good works."

"Man is not justified by faith alone, that is, by a bare and empty knowledge of God; he is justified by works, that is, his righteousness is known and proved by its fruits."

James uses these two examples to reinforce the idea of active love regardless of one's background and or past. Abraham and Rahab were of opposite ends of the spectrum.

- Abraham is a major Bible figure- Rahab, a minor participant.
- Abraham the father of faith- Rahab a foreigner to the faith.
- Abraham is highly respected- Rahab most disreputable.
- Abraham a man- Rahab a woman.
- **The lesson from Abraham is clear:** If we believe in God, we will do what He tells us to do.
- **The lesson from Rahab is also clear:** if we believe in God, we will help His people, even at our own expense.

Conclusion:

Our faith is not determined by what we do, it is demonstrated by what we do.

A friend of mine was telling a story about his Dad, who at the time of this story worked in the office of Sam's Warehouse in Amarillo. The news had come that Sam Walton himself was coming to Amarillo to visit their store. They spent two to three weeks getting ready for his coming. The day arrived and everyone was in their office looking as busy as they could, because Sam Walton was coming. The morning passed and by mid afternoon, one of the stockers went up to the office and mentioned that some old man who was wearing a Sam's

warehouse cap and a flannel shirt was standing outside the store greeting everyone who came in. No one knew what to do, they thought he would want to see how well they ran the store, how clean it was and how efficient it was. But Sam never came into the store, by late that afternoon someone watched him get in his little four cylinder pickup and drove away.

We are so impressed with ourselves aren't we? We are to be good stewards of our time our money and our lives. But God says, "Why don't you get out of the store, talk is cheap. Put your money where your mouth is. 'I believe in Jesus!' Prove it." Our faith is demonstrated by our actions. Actions speak louder than words. Our behavior shows what we really believe.

**"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith."
2 Corinthians 13:5**

Test. Check it out. See if you're really a believer or not.

Some important questions:

Am I really a Christian after all? In the light of what James says, am I really a Christian? What changes can I point to in my life that reveal that I am a Christian? Is my lifestyle any different at all from unbelievers? So many people think it doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe. James says that's not true.

He's not saying you work your way to heaven. He's not saying works deliver salvation. He's saying they demonstrate it. He's saying, that if your faith doesn't work, what good is it? How do I know for sure? You settle it in your mind. Maybe some of you have had doubts whether you're really a believer or not. You're a good person, you've gone to church, and maybe you've known about Christ, and you've read the Bible, and you've had religion and you've gone to classes. But are you absolutely sure that if you died tonight you'd go to heaven? The fact is you can be sure. You don't have to leave here and have the shadow of a doubt. You can settle it right here.

How do you do that?

***"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, for a life of good works God has already prepared for us to do."
Ephesians 2:8-9***

God's grace. God reaches down. He says, "I want you to know Me. I want to have a relationship with you." That's the grace of God. And you look up and say "I want to know You, Lord. I want to have a relationship with You." **When God's hand of grace comes down and your hand of faith goes up, that's called salvation.** That's what it means to be a believer. Saved by grace, through faith to do exactly what God made you to do in the first place. He has a plan for your life. You are not here by accident.