

# CAN FAITH SAVE HIM

## JAMES 2:14-26

Text: James 2:14

### **James 2:14**

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

Introduction:

This is one of the most controversial texts in the New Testament. So before we sit down in the courtroom and listen carefully to James present his case, I think we need to be clear about what is actually on trial in this text.

There are some who say that James is arguing for salvation by works, and is contradicting what Paul's claim that we are saved by faith alone.

However, James is not contrasting two methods of salvation (faith verses works). His contrast here is between two kinds of faith: one that saves and one that doesn't.

James is condemning the profession of faith that doesn't result in the practice of faith.

Notice:

# 1. THE COMPLAINT RAISED AGAINST FAITH WITHOUT WORKS

## James 2:14

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

Notice the phrase, “*though a man say he hath faith*”. The faith that is under indictment in this case is a faith that a man merely claims to have, even though there is no evidence of it in his life.

In verse 14, James lays out two clear indictments against this faith without works. Notice them with me. The first is this: the problem with faith that is not accompanied by works is that:

### A. It Has No Profit

James asks the question in verse 14, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?”

The word “profit” there literally means a benefit. It could be translated “What good is a faith that does not have works with it?”

James illustrates this in verses 15-16.

## **James 2:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

James illustrates this in verses 15 and 16. He sets up a scenario in which a hungry, poorly-dressed individual comes to one for help.

Now look at verses 16:

## **James 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

James says, “It may sound right religious for you to speak a blessing to this person, but what good is that blessing if it is only spoken? Your words won’t feed and clothe anyone.”

In much the same way it may sound good for a person to say they are saved or a believer, yet if that profession is never carried out by a life filled with good works, what good is that profession?

If we have truly been saved, knowing Jesus should have a visible, effect upon our lives.

As we listen to James he charges that faith without works has no profit.

The complaint raised against faith without works is not only that it has no profit, but listen further as James explains also that:

### B. It Has No Power

Look again at the question in verse 14.

#### **James 2:14**

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

James contends that a faith that is only professed, but is not carried out into practice is a faith that does not have the power to save anyone.

That is why he sums up the complaint against faith without works this way in verse 17.

#### **James 2:17**

<sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

This is a very serious matter.

James alleges that it is possible for a person to claim a belief and faith in Christ, and to die and go to hell claiming that faith.

The Lord made a very similar statement.

#### **Matthew 7:21**

<sup>21</sup> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into

the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Notice secondly:

## **2. THE CASE REVEALED AGAINST FAITH WITHOUT WORKS**

### **James 2:18**

<sup>18</sup> Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

#### **A. Invisible Faith**

James contends that it is impossible to prove and demonstrate that you have faith apart from some visible and viable good work.

“Only Christian deeds show real faith. Can one display faith in any other way? How much would one square foot of faith weigh? What...color is faith?” The only real way to measure faith is by the works it produces.

James’ argument is not only that faith without works is invisible, but he goes on in verse 19 to argue that mere faith or belief without action is also insufficient.

## B. Insufficient Faith

### **James 2:19**

<sup>19</sup> Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

James contends that even the devils in hell have a faith without works.

They recognize who Jesus is. They “believe” in Him, to some extent, just not enough to repent. James argues that faith without works is invisible and insufficient.

Notice thirdly:

## **3. THE CONCLUSION REACHED AGAINST FAITH WITHOUT WORKS**

James sits down, his closing argument and restates the point with which he began.

Notice:

### **James 2:26**

<sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James concludes his case with this statement, “Just as a body without breath is dead, so also is a faith without works.”

What are we to conclude about this issue of a faith that is only professed but not practiced?

There are two conclusions that we see:

### A. Works Are the Consequences of Real Faith

#### **James 2:21**

<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

That phrase “justified by works” is bothersome to many who study this text.

What James is teaching is that works justified and verified the fact of Abraham’s already existent faith.

To prove this look at verse 23:

#### **James 2:23**

<sup>23</sup> And 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.

When did Abraham believe God and have righteousness imputed to him? It was in Genesis 15.

When did Abraham take Isaac to Mt. Moriah to be sacrificed? That is in Genesis 22.

There is a full 40 years between the time when God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness, and the work that James says verified that faith.

Rahab the Harlot; she confessed her faith in the one true God before she hid the spies. Her faith came first, but it was confirmed and demonstrated by her works.

James is simply saying that true saving faith will always result in good works!

Illustration:

An old preacher put it a little differently, he said, "Salvation is like the measles. If you got it, it will show up on you somewhere."

## B. Works Are the Confirmation of Real Faith

### **James 2:26**

<sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

How do you check to see if someone is alive? You check for vital signs. You check their pulse. You find out if the person is breathing. You may check for blood pressure. You might ask if the person can move their fingers or toes. You may even holler out the person's name. There are several ways to check to see if someone is alive.



Breath is evidence of life. Likewise, James says that good works are the evidence and confirmation of true saving faith.

With that being said, regardless of what you or anyone else professes to believe. If you don't have the good works that must exist in a true Christian, you can no more be confirmed saved, than a dead man can be confirmed alive.

Close:

**Ephesians 2:8-10**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

If you've been saved by grace, then it will be evident by the good works that characterize your life.

If you claim to have faith in Christ, but it does not prove itself by the works of your life, then you have no defense, and you are condemned as guilty before God.