

Book of James



LESSON 4

Scripture

James 2:14-25

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their 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." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. 20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father 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 considered righteous by what they do 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?"

The Big Idea

James pinpoints this by asking the question, "What good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" He questions the nature of true faith. He brings to mind again the words of Jesus that were found in Matthew 7:21, "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."

James and Paul are both looking at faith but from different perspectives. Paul looks at faith from the perspective that it is faith in Jesus alone that brings salvation, not

our works, but trust in what Christ has already done. Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, “8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Paul is making it very clear – it’s by grace that you’re saved, through faith. However, Paul goes on to say in verse 10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In Galatians 5:6 he says the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Faith is seen in our love for our brethren and our love for God.

The perspective that James is sharing is that true genuine faith has a response and action, saying that faith is dead apart from works. So faith has an action and we express our faith by our actions. Rather than just giving pious doctrine and saying to those in need, “be warmed and well-fed, go in peace,” we make an effort, desiring to meet those needs.

The Conversation

1. Faith is expressed in many ways, how do you put yours to work?
2. Satan knows God and trembles. Beyond knowing God, what does your faith look like?
3. Works do not pay for our salvation, only faith can access it through the blood of Jesus. How do you know you have salvation?

The Take Away

The main idea that James is saying to us is that knowing God and Christ is important, but it is not enough. There must be an acceptance, a surrender, and a seeking of God’s plan and purpose for our lives. There must be a desire to put our faith to work in serving others. The whole lifestyle of the Christian is that faith grows from one step to the next.

Today we need biblical faith, biblical trust, and a realization that God is calling on us to act. He wants to help us not to simply have a shallow faith, but to have a real faith that finds itself expressed by touching one another, loving one another, blessing one another, and reaching this world.