

Show Your Faith by Your Works

Key Verse: “*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”
—James 2:26

Selected Scripture:
James 2:14-26
of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”—
Eph. 2:8,9

JAMES ASSERTS IT IS NOT possible for anyone to simply have a faith that is not accompanied with works of obedience and still be pleasing to God. Neither does he contradict the words of Paul. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”—

On the contrary, Paul understood the necessity of works in order to prove the character of faith, saying, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12) James also does not limit faith merely to spiritual matters, but indicates that a believer who would fail to aid a brother who had a temporal need would give evidence of having a dead faith, one that is not matched by deeds of compassion.—James 2:14-17

The essence of James’ emphasis in this lesson is that a living faith cannot be separated from doing appropriate deeds in God’s service. In a hypothetical scenario, he speaks of two individuals who debate the relative importance of faith versus works. “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.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"—vss. 18-20

Referring to two Old Testament characters, James first recalls how Abraham demonstrated his life of faith by offering up his son Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God's instruction. This demonstrated that Abraham trusted God even though he did not know exactly how the matter would turn out. Writing about this same incident, Paul even indicated that Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead in order to accomplish his intended purpose of blessing all the families of the earth through his seed. (Heb. 11:17-19) This demonstration of faith by Abraham's obedience in carrying out God's command was the means by which Abraham was counted as being justified, or righteous, in God's estimation.—James 2:21-24

Another example of faithful obedience was noted in that Rahab, the Canaanite harlot, was also justified by her works. She learned that an army was advancing towards the city of Jericho, where she resided, and then determined to identify herself with the God of Israel by hiding two spies and sending them away in safety when their lives were threatened. (Josh. 2:1-24) James declares that Rahab's actions in this matter gave evidence of her faith in God by accompanying good works, and she also was considered to be righteous from God's standpoint. "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"—James 2:25

Our Key Verse stresses the necessity of manifesting faith through activity in God's service. May this principle serve to motivate all true believers in Christ to do with their might what their hands find to do, as evidence that we have a living faith. ■