

## **James 2:14-26- True Faith is Fruitful**

Whether we like tests or not, they reveal to us important information. They identify weaknesses and strengths so we can make necessary changes.

James, from the beginning, is testing his readers so they can evaluate their faith...

- test of perseverance and suffering- are you counting it all joy?
- test of temptation- are you drawn away by your desires?
- test of response to the word- are you being doers of the word?
- test of love- are you caring for/loving others equally?
- test of works- does your behavior reveal true faith?

We can't justify or accept excuses for "bad grades" when it comes to our faith.

We need to stop making excuses, genuinely evaluate our faith and ask God to show us: Do we have true faith that is fruitful? Or do we have just head knowledge? Or do we have just works? True faith has both.

### **1. True Faith Believes God's Word.**

When we come to faith in Jesus, we have believed the truth of His word; that he is who He says he is and that he can do what he says he can do.

"Do you take Him by faith to be what He reveals Himself to be? That is believing on Him. All your sins were laid on the Lamb of God, who bore the sin of the world. There is no longer a case against you; the summons is dismissed. There is no condemnation; you are pronounced acquitted and accepted in the beloved." (Aitken)

Our life is no longer ours. We were bought with a price and as a result we glorify God out of true faith and devotion.

Do James and Paul contradict themselves? No, they aren't contradicting each other because the bible does not contradict itself because God doesn't contradict himself.

It's important that when we read scripture, we understand the context.

In each of these situations with James and Paul, the context is completely different. James and Paul are simply trying to correct misunderstandings within those different groups of people about what it is that saves us.

When Paul warned that a person could not be saved by works, he was dealing with legalistic people. He was telling them that their salvation was not based on what they did but was based on what Jesus did.

When James called for works, He was dealing with lazy people. He was telling them faith is not just head knowledge, but that your actions prove your faith.

**There's nothing that you can do to earn faith, but real faith will be accompanied by works.**

“Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again—until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other.” (Booth)

## **2. True Faith Obeys God's word.**

### **A. Obedience proves our faith.**

We can't “see” someone's faith, but when they obey God's word and genuinely love others, forgive, serve selflessly, choose not to gossip, fight for their marriages, etc. that is evidence of their faith lived out. Their works prove their faith.

“Real faith, and the works that accompany it, are not made up of only spiritual things, but also of a concern for the most basic needs – such as the need for comfort, covering, and food. When needs arise, we should sometimes *pray* less, and simply *do more* to help the person in need. We can sometimes *pray* as a substitute for *action*.” (unknown)

Prayer is good and necessary but more times than not God not only calls us to pray for someone, but to do something else as well.

What we do matters. What we do speaks louder than our words.

If we're not obeying God's word and living out our faith, then our faith is dead.

True followers of Jesus, we will be known for their fruit.

“Works are not the root of our salvation but the fruit. Faith brings a person to salvation and works bring that person to fruitfulness.”

Abraham believed God and that was enough for him to be counted as right with God, but James points out that Abraham didn't just believe. He also obeyed.

Prostitute Rahab hid the spies and helped reroute them safely. There was action behind her faith.

### **B. Obedience proves our Father.**

True faith is seen in action because our life is no longer ours. We are reflecting our holy God. The same Father that adopted us into his family.

If we insult, lie, gossip, cause division then it's clear that God has little place in our lives, but if we live a pure life, pursuing Jesus and loving others, then we are reflecting the holiness and love of God.

Our actions don't make sense to a dying world. When people see us forgiving the unforgivable, loving the unlovable- it's obvious it's not us! It's God's transforming power in us!

As Christians, we now "bear the image of the heavenly." Therefore, our actions should reflect God's holiness and love.

### John 15:5-8

"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be<sup>[a]</sup> my disciples."

We must remain in him and let his words remain in us. This is how truth faith is fruitful. This is how we believe God's word. This is how we obey God's word.

## **Homework Questions**

1. Why are tests important? What do they reveal?
2. Why do we need to take spiritual “tests” frequently?
3. Describe a time when you have made excuses or justifications for weak faith. Is that helpful or harmful? Explain.
4. How is believing God’s word the first step to true faith?
5. How do we know God’s word is true and trustworthy?
6. Why do some think that Paul and James contradict one another?
7. Why is context important when we’re reading scripture?
8. In your own words, harmonize Paul and James’s thoughts on salvation.
9. Why is obedience important to our faith?
10. Describe a time when you witnessed someone living out their faith and how it challenged you to do the same.
11. What is dead faith?
12. What the difference in living out our faith and legalistic work?

13. Why are Abraham and Rahab such great examples of faith and works?

14. How does our faith prove our Father?

15. How do you know God is worthy of our devotion?

16. Is your faith fruitful? How do you know?

17. What changes do you need to make to live the best fruitful life?