

“Faith Proves Itself”

James 2: 14-26 14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if people claim to have faith but have no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without cloths 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 what I do. 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 so 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 people are justified 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? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

[NOTE 1] The teaching of James in this passage is a call to integrity, a call to live out the gospel. This “living out” is seen not only in the persuasive power one life can have over others in terms of evangelism, but also in the potency of the gospel of Christ to confront structures of evil that infect our world. James calls us to live consistently according to Christian principles. According to James, we need to do this for at least three reasons. 1) It brings glory to God; that is our number one purpose as Christians ...to glorify God. I believe that God is going to grow Doster church. And He has and is setting it up so that He gets all the glory. When we grow it will give glory to God. The same as us doing well financially right now. God provided in a way that gives Him all the glory. Praise God! 2) We need to live consistently according to Christian principles because in chapter 1 and verse 4 James says that growing up in faith is what makes us mature and complete. It is ultimately to our benefit that we grow into what God intends for us. And #3) There is something that others find attractive about lives that are lived with consistency. Honesty and integrity is attractive. When people see a community/family that loves one another, that has consistent integrity they will want to be a part of it.

[NOTE 2] But this honesty and integrity is not easy. Today we are here to talk about the second part of James chapter 2. James is about faith that acts. James tells us that faith that does not drive us to action is useless, worthless, and dead. You can't say it much stronger or with more power than that. People of Doster Church, it is time to put actions to our words, to our faith. Our Vision is to become Disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit by standing on God's Word, walking in love, and resting in the arms of Jesus. We need to start living our lives that way or God will not bless us. I believe that our sincere desire to live that way, is why we have been blessed financially this year.

Faith is a personal response in genuine gratitude to the grace of God which Jesus proclaimed and manifested in his life, death and resurrection. It is a relationship of trust, loyalty, gratitude and affection. Faith is a verb meaning firm persuasion, conviction, and trust. The author of Hebrews chapter 11 writes in verse 6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. Biblical faith is best defined as active obedience, a deep-seated trust that leads to ACTION! One of the worst results of being merely hearers of the Word and not doers is that we deceive ourselves into believing that we are something that we are not! As we progress we will come to understand that James makes it extremely clear to us that if our faith does not drive us to action, it isn't true faith. One commentator writes that to believe in God and then not obey Him is the very essence of sin. If we believe in God and claim to have faith, if we claim to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ and do not love the Lord our God with all our heart mind, soul and strength and refuse to love our neighbor as ourselves, and if we do not go and make disciples and teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded, we fail to prove our faith and that makes our faith useless. People of God, the Great Commandments and the Great Commission, which tell us to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, love our neighbor as ourselves, and go and make disciples, teaching them all that Jesus commanded are NOT great suggestions! But how we are living our lives makes the average person outside of the church think that they are just suggestions. Because that is the way we are living. How we are living does not jive with our Biblical call and the commands of Jesus. That is a big reason we have plenty to confess every Sunday.

[NOTE 3] At this point I want to be crystal clear. We are saved, meaning that we can be sure we are going to heaven by grace through faith, not by works so that no one can boast. But I also want to clearly state that I believe Paul and James are NOT saying opposite things. People will point to this passage and say that Paul and James contradict one another. I say, "no, they don't." They are just addressing different people in different circumstances but essentially they are saying the same thing. Faith and works are two sides of the same coin. James explains the active side of faith and Paul the passive side. Paul is addressing Jews who seek to obtain salvation by keeping the law and

says, "Not by works (of the law) but by faith in Christ alone." Paul writes, "However, to the one who does not depend on works but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited to him as righteousness," in Romans 4:5. James is talking to the person who says that he has faith, but fails to put it into practice. James is talking about the difference between mere intellectual assent or agreement and deep commitment to live according to God's principles. James can't stand profession without practice. His first illustration demonstrates how useless sympathy without action can be. Sympathy and compassion without some attempt to turn it into practical help is useless. Faith without deeds is dead. James is very specific to talk about the person who CLAIMS to have faith. James is not saying that we are not saved by grace through faith. What he is saying is that if that faith does not drive a person to action that it very well may not be a genuine trust in Christ. Faith in God through Jesus Christ is a certainty that flows from our hearts, emanates from our minds, and translates into deeds! If we love Jesus Christ and we say this and say that, but we are too busy for it ever to translate into actions, we prove our faith is not very useful at best and not genuine at worst. A saving faith is a vibrant, active faith of word AND deed, spoken and acted on out of a deep love for God and for His children. In other words, faith is bound to overflow into action. It is only through deeds, works, actions, that faith proves itself. Prayer is not a substitute for effort. We need to retrain ourselves to first think of how we can pray for someone and then immediately think what we can do for them. Ask yourself, "has God gifted me in any way to make it possible that He would help this person through me?" If the answer is yes then you must act, within the first ten seconds. In his book "The Ten Second Rule," Clare DeGraaf says that statistics show that if we have a thought and don't take action within 10 seconds the odds begin to grow exponentially of us not doing anything about that thought. He talks about how a person that feels a noble impulse and does not listen to it becomes less likely to listen to it the next time until he never takes action. We need to think, pray, AND act. Thoughts lead to feelings. Feelings lead to actions and actions lead to results which I define as impact.

[NOTE 4] We talked several times in the last month about how we can choose our feelings, we can choose our thoughts, and we can choose our attitude. Nobody and no circumstance can make you feel a certain way or think a certain way. Just like the Jews in the Nazi death camps chose to be joyful even in the worst of circumstances, so you can choose to be happy or joyful no matter what happens in your life. I recently read about a man who has a whiteboard on the wall in his office and he has on it the words "choose your attitude". Then he has three words below: positive, neutral, negative. And each day he chooses to, as an act of his will, to circle the positive attitude. It's kind of like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a couple of things "bad" happen to you in the morning and you expect it to be a bad day, 9 out of 10 times you will have a bad day. But if you wake up

every morning and “believe” that you are going to have a great day, that you will have an impact on others, that you are going to prove your faith by loving God, loving others, and making disciples; 9 out of 10 times you will have a great day and you will have a positive impact on the people around you.

[NOTE 5] Faith without deeds is dead. So wake up and let the voice of Jesus Christ be heard through the tomb of darkness around you, the circumstances you are in, “Lazarus, come forth.” Lazarus had been dead 4 days. Even if you are dead in your sin, Al come forth! Jamie come forth! Amy, Daisy, Sarah, Brian, (I hope you get the idea) come forth and be counted among those who want to become disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit by standing on God’s Word, walking in Love, and resting in the arms of Jesus. Let the voice of Jesus raise you from the tomb as it did to Lazarus. Come forth and plug into the power cord of the Holy Spirit and let the Spirit start producing fruit in you. The fruit I’m talking about here is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let the Holy Spirit that is within you, if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Lord, produce fruit from your life. Hear Jesus words echo in your ears, “you will know a tree by its fruit.” A tree without good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit and a good tree cannot produce bad fruit. We need to start producing fruit which essentially means we need to put our faith into action. Let the Holy Spirit prove to the world that you want to become disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit. That sounds wonderful Pastor Rick but what does that actually look like?

How many friends do you have in this family of devoted Christ-followers, this church family, that you feel like you could call for help if you encountered an emergency in the middle of the night. I pray that you can easily come up with 4 or 5 names, at least 1! If you can’t then I believe James would say to Doster Church as a whole family, you have missed the mark! Genuine faith is proved by works. Our faith must be accompanied by action or it isn’t really faith.

Those who speak well but fail to act may hear Jesus say, “Away from me you evildoers, I never knew you” from Matthew 7:23. And Jesus says just prior to this that some people will say that they have even done miracles in his name, but they will still here those words, “I never knew you” because they didn’t have a personal relationship with Jesus. If we have a personal relationship with Jesus, we will believe that He is the Son of God. But that isn’t enough, even the demons know that God is one and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We must have faith and that faith (given by the grace of God) must produce fruit. The true believer who shows his/her faith James says in verse 13, just prior to our text for today, may God produce in me “deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”

Let's go back to the text. After the illustration of the person who is in need James talks about the person who says, "I have deeds, you have faith," it's all good. James says NO! James says, faith and works or faith and deeds must go together. James says that action begins when a person has faith in some great cause or principle which God has given him. Then James offers two illustrations. The first one is Abraham. Abraham was a great example of faith. He demonstrated his faith by his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, even though he was a very old man and he believed God had provided Isaac as an answer to prayer, a fulfillment of God's promise. He believed that God would provide, one way or another, somehow even if (in his mind) he could not think of anyway that was possible. When Isaac asked where the sacrifice was Abraham said, "God will provide." Isaac must have been horrified when his father began to tie him onto the wood to be the sacrifice and lifted the knife into the air. But God provided ... a ram caught in a thicket. Abraham's willingness demonstrated his faith. Unless Abraham had faith he would never have answered the summons of God to leave his homeland or to go and sacrifice his son. But Abraham is the father that all Israel points back to. Abraham is the ultimate example and he was righteous in the sight of God. Abraham enjoyed a right relationship with God because his faith was proved in his actions. On this Father's Day may we look at "father Abraham," and learn something. But someone might object, "Abraham was special, he was different, I could never be like Abraham." OK, so James uses Rahab the prostitute. In ancient Jewish society you couldn't get any lower than a gentile woman who was a prostitute. Women were looked on as property, she wasn't even a Jewish woman and on top of that her profession was looked down up and that puts her at the bottom of the food chain, so to speak. But even though she only knew about Israel's God through hearsay, she displayed her faith by identifying herself with God's people in Joshua chapter 2 and verses 9 to 11. Rahab's faith was matched by her deeds. She was considered righteous because at great danger to herself she saved the Jewish spies. She was considered righteous and was saved. Because her faith was proved by works her sins were covered. She is even mentioned in the Genealogy of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew 1: 5 as the mother of Boaz. Unless Rahab had had faith she wouldn't have taken the risk to hide the spies and help them escape. Unless Rahab had been prepared to risk all to help the spies her faith would have been useless. No one is moved to actions that further the Kingdom of God without faith and no one's faith is genuine unless it moves them to action.

[NOTE 6]

In Galatians chapter 5 and verse 6 Paul writes, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." To me that is proof that Paul and James are talking about the same thing and not on opposite sides. For James, everything he does is rooted and grounded in faith proving itself in love. Of what use or value is faith if it never proves

itself in actions. Proclaiming the gospel without any regard for the physical needs of the hearers isn't worth much and it produces very little fruit. People don't care what you know until they know you care. Who do you think makes more of an impact? A group that sets up a big screen and proclaims the gospel and preaches to a village in the third world and then goes home, or a group that comes in and ministers to the physical, educational, and spiritual needs of the people first and then also proclaims the gospel, teaching the indigenous to equip others. The second group every time! The group that Amy and I went with to Honduras "Hands In Mission" are making a difference by providing a way to minister to the physical, educational, and spiritual needs of the people. Then the indigenous pastors have a powerful voice and can lead many people to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The first year that I went by myself, we built a church. Two years later "Hands in Mission" built on a vocational education center to teach how to weld, bake and sew. Then the following year we built a medical clinic. So the people of the El Nance community now can find spiritual direction, learn a trade, and find physical healing. It had the potential to be a powerful ministry and has produced fruit. Inspired by our selfless work the people grew a field in the courtyard so the locals could play soccer unmolested by the gangs. Unless faith is demonstrated in loving care and concern, faith is dead. We need to find ways to show we care about this community. We need to find ways to help them first, before people will listen. We need to discern the needs of the people of Doster, Pine Lake, Delton and Plainwell. Once we show them we care, they will start to care about what we know. It is a great place to START! Doster Church needs to build from there and begin every day to choose a positive attitude that God will provide an opportunity to reveal our faith in some act of love, care, or kindness.

[NOTE 7]

Just as a motor produces power because an electrical current flows into it, so a Christian produces fruit, good deeds when true faith and the power of the Holy Spirit flows into him/her. Works done in humility and in the power of Spirit bring dead faith to life. Abraham and Rahab didn't talk about faith—they lived it out in their actions. We must not only believe in God. We are called to deny ourselves, pick up our cross daily and follow Jesus. We must follow Him in active obedience. That's what it means to live by faith. Only when we have this "alive" faith can we fulfill the Word of the Lord in Matthew 5:16 "Let your light (love, faith) so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." That's our ultimate purpose! May our deeds prove our faith! Let's pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for “Faith Proves Itself” based on James 2:14-26
Given at Doster Community Church June 18, 2023

- I. We need to live consistently according to Christian Principles if we want to claim to be Christ-followers. Here are three reasons:
 - a. It brings glory to God
 - b. Growing up in faith is what makes us mature and complete
 - c. There is something attractive about honesty, integrity, and consistency.
- II. James tells us that faith that does not drive us to action is useless, worthless, and dead. Faith is a verb meaning firm persuasion, conviction, and trust. Without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11).
- III. Paul and James are NOT contradiction each other! We are saved, by grace through faith, not by works so that no one can boast. But gratitude for that must necessarily result in works. Faith without deeds is dead.
- IV. You can't control other people or circumstances but you do have the capacity to choose how you will react. You choose your attitude, what you dwell on, and how you act.
- V. Plug into the power source of the Holy Spirit and let Him produce fruit through you.
- VI. Galatians 5:6 “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Faith must prove itself in actions.
- VII. People don't care what you know until they know you care! Works done in humility and in the power of the Holy Spirit bring dead faith back to life. Please write down what you will do in the next week to show you care, to live out your faith, to produce fruit. I will _____