

4. What are the main things you learn about faith and works from Abraham and Rahab? Which came first – faith or works? How do they “work together” in both these illustrations?

5. Someone insists that James and Paul are in hopeless conflict, as seen by comparing Ephesians 2:8, 9 and James 2:24. How would you try to untangle their confusion?

Living It Out

1. You have a friend or family member who says, “Sure I believe in Jesus.” Yet they show no evidence of meaningful spiritual interest or concern to live a life of love. Although you know God alone knows their hearts, how would you respond to that profession?

2. If someone lacks the kinds of works James describes, would you encourage them to work harder or to trust more? What is the solution to “dead faith”?

3. What is the most important truth in 2:14-26 for your life?

Looking Ahead

Mission Celebration Week begins Sunday, February 22. Take advantage of the opportunities to be inspired by what God is doing around the world!

A Faith That Works James 2:14-26

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“Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.” Martin Luther

I. True faith is not a profession of religious experience

(verses 14-17)

A. The question: is professing faith possessing faith? *(verse 14)*

B. The illustration: actions speak louder than words *(verses 15-16)*

C. The verdict: a “said faith” may be a dead faith *(verse 17)*

II. True faith cannot be separated from works *(verses 18, 19)*

Connecting

An old question asks, “If people were arrested for being Christians, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” How does what I do reveal what I really believe?

As you think back on the sermon, was there a principle or idea that you found clarifying, challenging or confusing?

Digging Deeper

1. The famous summary of biblical teaching about faith and works, usually ascribed to Martin Luther, declares, “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” Or, as John Calvin put it, “We are justified not without, but not by, works.” Consider Galatians 5:6, Matthew 7:15-23, and 1 John 3:10, 16-20. In the light of what we read from Jesus, James, John, and Paul, what do you conclude about the statements of Luther and Calvin?
2. James scorns pious words without practical action in 2:15, 16. What is significant about the kinds of works James says is part of true religion (see also 1:27, 2:1-13)? How do they differ from “religious activities”?
3. In 2:19 James describes the “faith” of demons. What do they “believe”? It is interesting that, in the gospels, demons regularly confess the truth about Jesus. What does this indicate about what James means here by “faith”? Is that the same meaning Paul has when he talks about being saved by faith?

III. True faith is a faith that works (*verses 20-26*)

A. Exhibit A: the working faith of Abraham (*verses 20-24*)

B. Exhibit B: the working faith of Rahab (*verse 25*)

Conclusion