

Saving Faith is Fruitful

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- [0 : 0 0] Chapter 14, verse 14. What good is it, my brothers and sisters,! In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- 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.
- You believe that there is one God. Good. Even the demons believe that and shudder. You foolish person. Do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?
- Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.
- 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.
- [1 : 3 7] You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do, and not by faith alone. 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?
- As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. Thanks, Stacey.
- And please do keep that open in front of you. Please do keep that open as we look at it together. Let's take a moment to pray and to ask God's help as we look at his word.
- Heavenly Father, we are grateful, and I want to acknowledge again your kindness to us in many, many ways. And Father, we do pray that you'd use the offering that we've made, Lord, to build your church in this place, that you'd use it to your glory, and Lord, as you see fit.
- Father, we pray for the children as they learn from your word in Sunday school, that you would be at work by your spirit in their hearts and their minds, helping them to see, Lord, the wonder of what Jesus has done for them on the cross.
- [2 : 5 2] And Father, we pray for ourselves, that you'd help us not just to be hearers of the word, but to be doers of the word also. And so we ask this in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Some years ago, I had the unpleasant experience of sitting into my car and trying to turn on the engine, and nothing happened.
- The battery was dead, and a very kind neighbour got his jump leads out and started the car, breathed new life into the battery, and I got going.
- And I can tell you, it feels good after your car not starting when you turn the key and it starts, and you can drive wherever it is that you're wanting to go.
- And of course, I knew that the battery was no longer dead because the car was now going where I wanted it to go. Two very different experiences.
- [3 : 5 5] Either the battery is dead and the car doesn't do what you want it to do, or the battery is charged and you can go where you want to go. And what James does for us in this section is he maps out two very different experiences for us.
- He maps out two very different experiences. The first is the experience of dead faith, and the second is the experience of living faith.

So there's dead faith and living faith that James speaks about in these verses. And we need to keep in mind, as James is speaking here, that he is speaking to people who have faith.

So you remember back in chapter 2, verse 1, James describes them as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. So they are believers.

They are people who have faith in Jesus. Or back in chapter 1, verse 18, he describes them as those who God has given birth to through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

[5 : 06] So he's writing to people who have turned their back on living for themselves. They have faith. They have turned to Jesus in repentance, not living for themselves anymore, living in their own way, but now living for Jesus and recognizing him as king, recognizing him as Lord, recognizing him as savior.

And so James describes them as this kind of first fruits. And of course, fruit is a sign of life. And already in the letter, James has said to them, as those who are a kind of first fruits, that they are to bear fruit, in a sense.

That they are not just to be hearers of the word, but doers of the word. So this idea of doing what God calls them to do as his people.

And in this section, James returns to that idea, really, he is speaking about faith again in this section, believing again in this section in verse 23.

It says, Abraham believed God or had faith in God or trusted God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So there's the faith.

[6 : 20] There's the belief. There's the trust that Abraham had in God. But James wants us to realize that faith, living faith, will be seen in works, in good deeds, in doing good for others.

And so James wants us to realize that faith without works is actually a dead faith. He says that in verse 17, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

He says similar in verse 20, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? He says similar again in verse 26, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

And so as James speaks to these people who have this lively, fruitful faith in their glorious Lord Jesus Christ, he wants them to be able to see the difference between dead faith and living faith.

So let's think first of all about what a dead faith looks like. What does a dead faith look like? James gives us two examples of what dead faith looks like.

[7 : 35] And the first one is that faith without deeds is no good. It's no good. He asks this question in verse 14, what good is it?

My brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds. He asks the question again at the end of verse 16, what good is it? And the implication is, the answer is, it's no good.

Because a faith without any good deeds going along with it is no good. He gives an example of that in verse 15, suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.

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? You can imagine this situation that James is painting for us.

A brother or sister who has known the Lord's teaching asks, give us this day our daily bread. And maybe this brother or sister is praying this, they're lacking in daily food.

[8 : 43] And then another brother or sister has an opportunity to be an answer to that prayer, to give them the food that they need, or the clothes that they need, or the cup of water that they need.

Here's an opportunity to love their neighbor as themselves. And James says, if one of you speaks kind words, but there's no action to go along with that, that's no good.

James says, this type of faith, this so-called faith, this claim to faith, without the works accompanying it, is no good. You realize that though the person may claim to have faith, it's not faith in any meaningful sense.

If it is not accompanied with good deeds, not accompanied with a desire to love their neighbor, God. And James' point here is not that someone can meet every single person's every single need, but of course there are opportunities when someone can meet a need with what God has given them.

And James doesn't want his hearers to fluctuate between thinking they have faith and they don't have faith based on whether they do a good deed or they don't do a good deed.

[10 : 03] He doesn't want them to flip-flop between those two ideas, but what he is saying is that if the ongoing pattern of somebody's life is that they have no desire to do good to others, that they have no willingness to care for a brother or a sister, then the faith that they claim is not real, it's not lively, but it's dead, as he says in verse 17.

And so that's the first example of a dead faith that James gives. the second example of this dead faith that he gives is in verse 19. In verse 19 he says, you believe that there is one God, good, even the demons believe that, and shudder.

Now the you that he's speaking to there is the someone that he's mentioned in verse 18. Someone will say, so he's kind of speaking about this hypothetical person who he's having this back and forth with.

Someone will say this, you have faith and I have deeds. And then he's saying to that someone, well, you know, even the demons believe that God exists.

See, this someone that James is speaking about thinks that you can separate out faith and good deeds as though some were blessed with faith while others were blessed with this desire to do good deeds to people.

[11 : 32] That one is strong in one area and another is strong in another area, but James says, no, they go hand in hand. He says in verse 18, show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

And when he calls on this person, this someone, to show their faith without deeds, he's asking them to do something that's impossible because, as James says, I will show you my faith by my deeds.

My deeds are the concrete evidence of the faith that I profess. James says, if someone says they have faith but there's no love for their brothers or sisters if there's no deeds to go along with that, that that faith is not only no good but it's no better than demonic faith.

Verse 19, you believe that there is one God. Good, even the demons believe that and shudder. You know, there's no atheists in the demonic realm.

The demons believe that God exists. You remember in Mark's gospel in the very first chapter this demon, this demon cries out to Jesus, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

[13 : 02] Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Isn't that breathtaking? The first chapter of Mark's gospel we're 24 verses in and the first one to recognize who Jesus is is a demon.

You are the Holy One of God. It's another seven chapters before Peter, the apostle, recognizes that Jesus is the Christ. But of course, that demon recognized who Jesus was but did not want him to be God.

Fought tooth and nail against the fact that Jesus was God. God. James says if somebody says you have faith but no deeds that this is no better than the demons who believe that there is God and they shudder.

they trust that there is a God but that doesn't move them to good deeds that just causes them to shudder because they don't want God to exist.

They don't want him to rule over their lives. They don't want to know him. And so James shows us what a dead faith looks like.

[14 : 27] He gives us two examples of it and he says one is no good and one is no better. One is no good if we aren't caring if someone isn't caring for brothers and sisters and one is no better than the demons if all the person says is they have faith but they don't have works.

James is really wise in how he handles this. So he's speaking to brothers and sisters. You see that at the start of verse 14 what good is it my brothers and sisters?

But then he shifts to speaking about someone if someone says. And then he gives a situation where he says suppose this happens. Part of the reason I feel that he's wise in how he handles this is because of a plumber who visited our house maybe 25 30 years ago.

The plumber was fixing our kitchen tap. The tap was dripping and after the plumber had fixed the tap he noticed that I was in the kitchen and so he called me over and he said to me about the tap.

Here's what some people do with taps. They grab it with their fist and they twist it as hard as they can to turn it off. And what some people should do is twist it with their fingertips so there isn't too much pressure applied to the tap because if you grab it with your fist and twist it that hard then it wears down and the drip starts.

[16 : 02] And I always remember how he phrased it this is what some people do. He wasn't accusing me of doing it but I was in no doubt after I left that conversation I need to be careful not to grab the tap and twist it too hard.

And you know James speaking to believers he's not saying you're doing this you're not caring for your brothers and sisters but he's saying look suppose this does happen if someone does say this he's making them aware that it isn't beyond the realm of possibility that in a church family that there may be some who would say that they have faith and yet there's no tangible evidence of that there's no outward expression of that he wants them to be aware of this so that they can avoid it avoid this dead faith if you're here this morning and you would say that you don't have faith in Jesus or if you haven't heard about Jesus if you haven't turned your back on living for yourself and living for Jesus what you need to do is not start trying to do really good things to start trying to give clothes to people and feed people and so on because all the good deeds in the world will not make us good people before God that would be like me trying to push my car when the battery was dead and to push it up a hill if we try to push a car up a hill what will eventually happen is that it will crush us and so if you don't have faith in

Jesus if you don't trust him if you don't know him if you haven't heard about him what you need is to put your trust in him put your faith in him to turn to him and acknowledge I've just lived for myself Jesus and I want to live for you I need your forgiveness but James is saying if we have turned to Jesus in repentance and faith if we do have faith if we do trust him he wants us to realize that there are good works that go along with that that flow from that that grow from that and so James on the one hand wants us to realize what dead faith is so that we might see it and avoid it and then on the other hand he wants us to show what living faith looks like he's given us two examples of dead faith and now he gives us two examples of living faith the first example he gives us is of

Abraham and what James does with Abraham is first of all he shows us Abraham in action Abraham doing something in verse 21 James says was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar now you'll remember that what Abraham was doing as he went to offer his son Isaac on the altar was in response to a command that God had given him and if you know the story you'll know of how breathtaking this moment is because God had promised Abraham I'm going to make your descendants like the sand on the seashore I'm going to make your descendants like the stars in the sky you won't be able to count them and at the point when

Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac he has one descendant by his wife Sarah he has one little grain of sand called Isaac and God is saying to him I want you to throw that into the sea Abraham and the amazing thing is that Abraham is willing to do what God calls him to do the amazing thing is that as Abraham is going up the mountain with Isaac he tells his servant wait here we will come back as we're told later on in the book of Hebrews we're told that Abraham believed that God could even bring Isaac back from the dead he believed he trusted he had faith in that moment of going up the mountain with Isaac what was this good deed what was this act that Abraham was going to do it was concrete evidence of his faith in

[20 : 56] God concrete evidence of his trust in God concrete evidence that he believed God that's what James says in verse 22 you see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did James is not saying that Abraham didn't have faith before that James quotes for us in verse 23 Abraham believed God he had faith in God and it was credited to him as righteousness and James knows that that quote is from Genesis chapter 15 and when Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac it is Genesis chapter 22 seven chapters and many many years later so Abraham had already trusted God he had already believed God it had already been counted to him as righteousness in other words it put him in a right place with God or to use the warmer language of the end of the verse he was called

God's friend but James says the way you see this faith is in Abraham's actions and isn't it profound what Abraham does in response to God by going to offer his son to God you see then the depths of his faith you see then the trust that he had in God you see the extent to which he believed God in that act of obedience and isn't that what James wants for us to see to be shown to have concrete evidence of faith to encourage us in verse 18 he says show me and he says I will show you in verse 20 do you want evidence verse 22 you see verse 24 you see

James's desire is for us to have this tangible concrete evidence of the faith that we have in the deeds that we do and James says not only do you see this in Abraham you see this in Rahab verse 25 Rahab is the second example of a lively faith verse 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 you couldn't think of a more shocking contrast for James to put before us than Abraham the father of the faith a friend of God and Rahab this one who was overlooked who was a prostitute and who was a non-Israelite this is the contrast he puts before us and Rahab says to the spies who came in to spy out the land we have heard of

God's power we have heard of God's might we have heard of what he has done and how he has saved you the whole city had heard of it but it seems only Rahab went on to trust God to put her faith in God to believe in God and James says you can see that you can see that because of how she treated the spies she gave lodging to them and she sent them off in a different direction to keep them safe she says it herself if you read the account back in Joshua she says I have treated you kindly she's not operating out of fear she has known something of God in what she has heard about him how he has kindly rescued his people from slavery and even in those moments when she's sending the spies off in a different direction her kindness to them is a reflection of the character of the

God that she has faith in James says to us as those who have faith in Jesus see you can feel it you can hold on to it these wonderful acts of faith actions of faith deeds of faith on the part of Abraham and Rahab and he wants us to know that even though we will maybe not have opportunities for such drama in our lives where we are hiding spies and sending them off in different directions or doing these dramatic things of faith he wants us to know like his half brother like his saviour that even giving a cup of cold water to a brother or sister in need is an expression of the faith that we have in our saviour and so James wants us to realise as he writes to these believers as we hear God's voice this morning if we say and know that we have faith if we have turned from our sin in repentance and faith in the

[26 : 43] Lord Jesus and we want to do good we want to obey God not perfectly but increasingly and we do good deeds to people this is proof concrete tangible evidence of our faith it is the natural fruit of our faith and so it's something for us to dwell on it's something for us to consider to be encouraged by where we see God changing us where we look back five ten years and we think I wasn't like that before I wouldn't have done that before I wouldn't have wanted to care for that person in this way before if you're here as a believer this morning and you're struggling to see ask somebody who knows you ask somebody who knows you well and they will be able to point to clear examples of good deeds that are done in faith and so

James gives us these two pictures he gives us a picture of dead faith and he gives us a picture of living faith and the amazing thing is even the picture of dead faith is not hopeless but James wants us to realize if we do not have a real lively faith in Christ that's what we need we need to turn to our saviour turn to our saviour to be our saviour Jesus brings life where there is death and if we have faith this morning we can see evidence of that and others see evidence of it in our lives James' point is not that we compare ourselves with others but when we see over the years him growing in us the desire to do good to love our neighbour as ourselves it's such an encouragement it was such an encouragement when I got into the car after my neighbour jump started it and turned the key and the engine went I was like wonderful it's alive

I didn't say that but you know what I mean and the engine powers away and off you go doing whatever it was you were going to do and James says what an encouragement if you see yourself like Abraham like Rahab just doing these good deeds in response to God and faith what an encouragement of what's chugging away inside this lively faith moving you motivating you to love others as you have been loved let's pray and ask God to help us as we reflect on what he has said to us Lord we are thankful for James' word for ultimately your word to us this morning Lord we pray that you'd help us if any here don't know you as saviour Lord that they would turn to you in repentance and faith and father for all who do Lord may we be encouraged as we reflect and see genuinely good deeds being done not in our own strength not in our own efforts

Lord not for our own praise but done in Christ done in faith done in response to all that you've done for us help us to encourage one another as well where we see these good deeds being done that we might say that to each other that we might encourage them where we see the fruit of faith in their lives Lord help us to be a church family who grow in this fruitful faith Lord that there would be a genuine tenderness and care and kindness for one another where we see needs that we can meet Lord help us to do that help us to be prompt in that help us not to hesitate in that and help us Lord to do it in faith in Jesus name amen