

A Living Faith

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[0 : 00] I trust you are doing well this morning. And looking at the time, we're not too far gone actually.

! I thought quite frankly that it would be pretty close to noon.! But we do have some time remaining.! For just a brief while, we want to share on the topic living faith. A living faith.

The context the scripture from which our thought is developed is James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26.

James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26. Indeed, you're going to find that we are going to consider the entirety of the book of James.

But mainly this particular section. Let's open with a word of prayer. Father, Lord, we ask that you would speak through us and that you would enable us, Lord, to hear what only you would have us to hear.

[1 : 50] and in the manner in which you would have us to hear it. More importantly, Lord, we pray that we will be doers of the word that we hear today we hear today and not hearers only.

We ask your blessings upon this time in Jesus' name. And all God's people say, Amen. James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26 reads What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, you have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works. Verse 19, James continues, you believe that God is one, you do well.

[3 : 38] Even the demons believe and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by works.

that says, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. And he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

Then he concludes this section in verse 26. For as the body apart from the spirit is dead is dead.

[4 : 50] So also faith apart from works is dead. The book of James is written by James who is believed to have been the brother of Jesus.

and many of you would know that James did not at the beginning of Jesus' ministry really did not was not one of his disciples.

He did not believe that Jesus was the son of God. But later on church history tells us that James was among the leaders of the church.

this book was written to as James says to the twelve tribes in the dispersion. James wrote this book essentially to Jewish believers and indeed to Christians everywhere.

Many have said that this book James was written as if James had preached a sermon. It's very, very direct, very pointed. And James goes from point to point.

[6 : 11] Though, I hope as we go through this message that you will see that really James is narrowly focused. Some have taken issue with the book of James in its entirety.

That's principally because some see the thread, the message of this book is contradicting the primary teaching in the New Testament.

The first thought this passage evokes is this. Point number one.

[14:08] It is a dire warning. The notion that faith apart from works is dead is a dire warning.

It is a serious warning. James says to us, you can have faith from works.

It's dead. It's useless. What a warning to those of us who say that we have faith. It's a warning that we can exist with this belief that we have faith.

And what it is, is nothing. It's dead. It's useless. Take a look at what James says in chapter 2, verse 26.

James is very unequivocal when he says, for the body apart from this, as the body apart from the spirit is dead. So also, faith apart from works is dead.

[15:20] There is no dispute about that. There is no two ways about it. He says, faith that is apart from works is dead.

It is dead. It is useless. It is useless. Just as the body without the spirit is dead. It says it's dead.

It's useless. It's good for nothing. James in chapter 2, verses 14 through 17, says, what good is it, my brother?

If someone says, and listen to this, James says in verse 14, what good is it, my brother, if someone does what? If someone says, if someone says, it's an important word for us to bear in mind, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works, what good is it?

Can that faith save him? Then he goes on, if a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in food. Now here's what James is saying. James asks the question.

[16:26] The question is, if someone says, merely with their mouths, that they have faith, can that faith alone save them?

And then he, in order to make his point, he uses an illustration of a poor person who comes into the presence of that brother or sister.

He says, this poor person who is not clothed and is lacking in daily food, if they come and they, to that brother and sister, and the brother or sister says to them in response, go in peace.

Says, look at what he says, what James says again. And one of you says, one of you says, see the consistency, and one of you says to them, go in peace.

Be warmed and filled. He says, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? I don't want us to lose the important point here that James is making.

[17:33] Yes, I believe that James is suggesting to us, is saying to us that we ought to help the poor, that we ought to provide clothes and food, that we should do our best.

But let's not miss the key point that James is making here. The key point James is making here is that just as it is unhelpful to one, just as it is meaningless to one who needs clothes and who needs food for you to say, for you to say, merely to be warm and to be filled, it is equally as meaningless to say that you have faith and there is no works to back it up.

Tire warning to the church. James in James 1, 22 tells us that we ought to be, remember this one?

We quote this one all the time. James said, but be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. That works, James says, that we ought to be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

James is telling us those words, that we ought not to deceive ourselves as some do. this warning calls for deep and sober introspection and we would all do well to engage in it.

[19:15] Calls for each one of us to consider where we are, to consider whether our faith is genuine or not.

too many of us live as if we are not called to be different from the world.

But there should be a difference. There should be a difference. But sadly, there is no difference or insufficient difference in areas such as the level of our patience that James deals with in this chapter.

These are the elements of walks that he deals with. James suggests in this, tells us in this book that there should be a difference as it relates to the level of our patience, our treatment of the poor, our language, the control of our tongue, our ambitions and our overall worldview.

James says, is there a difference between you and the world? And if there isn't, what is your evidence that your faith is alive?

[20:32] What is the evidence that your faith is not dead? In short, the deeds of many who profess Christianity are sadly informed by the same perspective as non-Christians.

God Let's go back to chapter 2 verse 26 for a moment. We consider the danger here. Look at what it says again.

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. Now we know the spirit. We know the spirit which we cannot see resides in a person because the body breathes. that body breathes, so we know that person has a spirit. It moves. We know that person has a spirit. The person eats, so we know the spirit has not left that person.

The person walks, talks. We conclude from those activities that the spirit is alive because the body behaves in a certain way.

[21 : 42] Well, similarly, we know that saving faith exists in someone's life based on the works that we see from their life.

That's how we know it. We know that saving faith exists in someone's life based on the works that we see from their life.

Now it is noteworthy, it's noteworthy that in James chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 that James warns us against judging each other.

We're not here to judge, but I'd say two things about what James warns us about in those two verses. Yes, we should have a certain expectation of behavior from someone who professes Christianity.

Christianity. Let me say that again. We should have a certain expectation from someone who professes Christianity. There should be a demonstration of Christian works.

[22 : 54] We should see the manifestation of a living faith in your life. That's the essence of the book of James. And such a person should be open to correction and change when confronted by someone who points him or her to the error of their gaze.

In that way, we don't judge the authenticity of the person's faith. We don't judge the authenticity of their faith when we point them in the direction, in the right direction.

Ultimately, ultimately, we judge the rightness of their actions. But this dire warning that we have, it should challenge us.

What a challenge that you and I have today as believers because we know, we know this faith that we proclaim apart from works is dead.

It challenges us. It causes us to do introspection. That faith is not just a challenge.

[24 : 15] It is a compelling challenge. And that's my second point. Faith without works is dead.

Vokes in us a compelling challenge. A challenge to do what? A challenge to do what? A challenge to evidence our faith with works.

That's the challenge that you and I have. A challenge to evidence our faith with works. Why? Why do we want to do that? Because we want to just have people call us holier than thou or nice or oh there goes Mr.

So and So from Kingdom Life. No that's not it. That's not it. That's not it. Because it's an act of obedience. But as we're going to see in a moment that this is what God designed for our ultimate happiness and our salvation.

It's a big deal. there are specific challenges that James addresses in this book.

[25 : 35] The book of James. Remember we said that the verses that we read are central to the entire book of James. And this point of faith without works is central to that section.

but all the entirety of James' book points us in the direction of the works that you and I should be doing.

And we find in the beginning of James in James chapter 1. 1, 2 through 4. James chapter 1, 2 through 4.

James challenges us to be steadfast in the face of suffering. What are the works that James talks about here in this book?

Number 1, James talks about steadfastness in the face of suffering. He says, look at what he says in verse 2. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

[26 : 47] Count it all joy. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. And why is this?

Why do we count it all joy? He says, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. So James is saying to us that the works that our faith should produce is steadfastness.

It should produce growth and maturity. James is saying as you and I face inevitable trials and tests and temptations, we should be brothers and sisters of joy.

Joy, not because we are masochistic, not because we like pain and punishment, but because we know, as he says, that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness.

Are you going through trouble today? James says, count it all joy, because tomorrow your faith is going to be more steadfast than it is today.

[27 : 59] You're going to be able to endure more. Your foundation is going to be firmer. you are going to have works, evidence, living faith.

Then James tells us, in James chapter 1 verse 26, James tells us, if anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

It's worthless. How many of us have this problem? You know, Bahamians, we've got this problem, don't we? But James says to us, James says to us, you want to know whether your faith means anything?

are you able to control your tongue? That's what it says here. He says, can you control your tongue? He says, if anyone thinks he is religious, if anyone thinks he is spiritual, if anyone thinks he's got saving faith, if anyone thinks that his faith is alive, but he's unable to bridle his, if he's unable to control his tongue, all he does is, all he's doing is deceiving himself.

You control your tongue. What are the works? What are the works? James tells us about. James tells us also about the sin of partiality.

[29 : 40] In James chapter 2, verse 1, James writes, my brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

And then he goes on in verse 2, for if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place, while you say to the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet, have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

James is saying that's a no-no. That's a no-no. James is saying that we should show no partiality based on anything for that matter, certainly not based on what people have.

the next evidence that James talks about in this book, evidence of a living faith, found in James chapter 3 verse 13.

James chapter 3 verse 13. James writes, who is wise and understanding among you? Then he says, he asks the question firstly, then he answers, by his good conduct, let him show his works in meekness of wisdom.

[31 : 13] Meekness of wisdom. James is telling us, you want to demonstrate that you've got a living faith. He said it should be within the context of humility.

It should be within the context of meekness and not arrogance. Indeed, he goes on further in that same section in verse 14.

He says, he talks about worldliness. Worldliness that is evidenced by arrogance and jealousy and selfish ambition.

And James says to us, that if you want the kind of works that evidence living faith, then your life must not demonstrate these things.

But rather, it must evidence humility, arrogance and jealousy and selfish ambition of things of the world. And then James tells us, that we should not presume about the future.

[32 : 35] In James chapter 4, verse 13, he says, come now, you who say today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit.

Then he says in verse 14, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? James is just here making the point that we should not presume as believers on the future.

He says to us that we should say if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. Because as it is, you boast in your arrogance and all such boasting is evil.

But how do we meet these challenges? How do we meet these challenges? You see, what I've just done is I've just gone through a list of a number of things that James referred us to in this book which he said that we ought to pay attention to.

Things that should mark the Christian's life. Things that should evidence the walks in our life. Walks that come out of the faith that you and I declare.

[33 : 54] But how do we meet these challenges? And what happens if we do? How do we meet them? How do we meet these challenges?

And what happens if we do? Well, that leads us to my final point faith, which is there is a glorious promise, a glorious promise.

Faith, apart from works, implies that there is a glorious promise.

And I'm going to show you that in a moment. it implies that there is a glorious promise. And why do we say that? We say that because implicit in James' warning, that faith apart from works is dead, is the notion that faith with works is living.

If faith, that's a simple deduction, if faith apart from works is dead, then faith with works is living. That's a big deal.

[35 : 12] So we have a fundamental and life changing promise that we can indeed have living faith, that you and I can indeed have living faith.

Living faith. You and I can have living faith from God above. And according to James, according to this book, that we will consider further, this living faith produces a number of benefits, if you will.

First is, we talked about it already, the first benefit that this living faith produces in us, it produces patience in suffering.

We all suffer. But good works, which evidences living faith, results in steadfastness and maturity. There will come a time in your life if you're not there yet, when the suffering that you endure like everyone does, it becomes easier, you are more steadfast, you are more grounded, you are a mature believer.

And James says that this living faith produces patience, we can endure, we can joy, we can count it all joy in the face of suffering, in the face of temptation.

[36 : 40] Why? Because we've got a living faith. Then in verse, in chapter 3, verse 13, chapter 3, verse 18, James says to us, look at what he says in verse 18, and a harvest, a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

A harvest of righteousness. See, you and I can expect with this living faith, we can expect a harvest of righteousness. James tells us that the result of good works is that one would produce a harvest of righteousness.

In the verses prior, he explains what harvest of righteousness is by first telling us what it is not.

James 3, verse 15, James says that the harvest of righteousness, it is not earthly, it is not unspiritual, but in James chapter 3, verse 17, the righteousness we have, according to James, it is pure, it is peaceable, it is gentle, it is open to reason, it is full of mercy, and good fruits, it is impartial, and it is sincere.

It's all those things. James says that we've got a glorious promise, that living faith produces a harvest of righteousness.

It's pure, it's peaceable, it's gentle, it's open to reason, it's full of mercy, good fruits, impartial, and sincere.

[38 : 32] You know, my mind goes right back to the teenage children, and perhaps that is so because I've got a teenager myself, and I think about how the warnings I might give to her, how she might regard those things as constricting her, but once she goes through them, she can look back and say, what a blessedness, having followed the advice of my father, look at what I'm able to enjoy today.

And James is saying to us today, that if our faith is living, if there is works that accompanies, good works that accompanies our faith, we will have a harvest of righteousness.

Here James is giving us believers our marching orders. He is saying that we can choose to live based on the wisdom of the world. We can choose to live based on the wisdom of the world, which is characterized by pride and bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, or we can choose to embrace the wisdom from above.

Listen, listen, we have one thing in common, all of us. All of us have at least one thing in common. And I firmly believe this.

I firmly believe this. It's this. We all want to be happy. All of us want to be happy. No question about it. James understood that as well.

[40 : 08] And he knew that we pursue happiness either with the aid of earthly wisdom or good works motivated by faith, by living faith.

Let me say that again. James understood that we pursue happiness either with the aid of earthly wisdom or on the other hand, good works motivated by living faith.

The promise to those of us with a living faith is that we will be blessed with a harvest of righteousness, a bounty of happiness as we perform our good works.

James chapter 3 verse 18 The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace. But there is, there is yet another promise that James makes to us because of our living faith and we find it set out in James chapter 2 verses 21 through 26.

James uses two Old Testament accounts to show the importance and results of good works. He uses Abraham's works of obedience and Rahab's works of action to demonstrate that faith alone is not sufficient.

[41 : 37] Both showed that confession with their lips had to be accompanied by action to result in their salvation. James concludes this section with the words, Faith apart from works is dead.

But the glorious promise, the glorious promises for us today are these. If our faith causes us to act like it did in Abraham's and Rahab's case, it's a living faith.

that's the first thing. And the living faith means that we are in right standing with God and that like Rahab, we will be saved.

A glorious promise said before us today that if our faith is living, if our faith is not dead, if there is works that accompanies our faith.

We've got this promise that like Rahab, we will be saved. Like Abraham, we will be declared righteous in the sight of God.

[42 : 49] What a promise you and I have today. As we conclude, James wrote to a Jewish audience as he now speaks to us with those same words to challenge us, to question whether our faith is real or not, challenges us to question whether our faith is real or not.

To do this, James calls believers to do introspection. The call to good works is a spiritual call to a lifestyle or embracing a worldview that leads to happiness in all circumstances and ultimately salvation.

Believers, believers, believers present, believers listening. I want you to hear this. James calls us to a life that evidences living faith which results in happiness, steadfastness, maturity, humility, righteousness, obedience.

And the greatest of all will lead to salvation. Let us magnify God, not only with our lips, but also with our lifestyle.

Let's praise him in the dance and also with our deeds. Let's worship him with our words, also with our works. Glorious is that.

[44 : 41] As the praise table comes to close us, I trust you have been able to see that faith apart for works has no practical value whatsoever.

Faith apart for works has no practical value. And it is evidence of no salvific benefit. Our living faith is the fragrance of our lives.

It is the garment we wear and the language we speak. Yes, our living faith is evidential. It is the undeniable witness of who we are.

Our faith should infuse our lives on Sunday and on Monday. When we worship and when we are tested.

When we interact with pastors and when we interact with pagans. what a glorious faith we have.

[45 : 54] What promise you and I have today. Glorious promise. A promise that we can come to a point of a place of patience and suffering.

A promise that we can try a harvest of righteousness. A promise that we can be saved and declared righteous with the one who created all things.

What a joy today to be reminded of these words. You and I ought to do it introspectively. Let's pray.