

Faith Possessed Is Faith Expressed

Scripture Reading — James 2:14-26

14What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18But 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. 19You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. 20You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. 25In 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? 26As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. —

Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

Today many Christians will be gathering in churches to worship God and listen to his Word. After the service, we often greet the pastor and say things like, "Good service, pastor," or "Great message."

I like the way one pastor responds to those comments at the door of the sanctuary. Sometimes he'll smile and say, "We'll see!" In other words, it's a great message if we not only hear it but also go out and practice what we've heard. The faith we possess must also be the faith we express in words and deeds.

Jim Wallis, a well-known preacher and advocate for social justice, says, "In the Bible, faith is not something you possess, but rather something you practice. You have to put it into action, or it really doesn't mean anything."

The goal of worship and preaching today is not simply to transfer biblical knowledge. Churches that prepare people for mission in the world equip them to obey rather than simply to know. If you worship today in a church with fellow believers, ask yourself some of these questions:

What is God's Word calling me to do this week?

How committed am I to obeying God's Word?

What spiritual disciplines do I practice to help me know and grow--and show that God lives in me?

Prayer

Lord, I want to walk my talk. I don't want to grow fat on knowledge that never gets used and tested by action. Use what I learn to help me show my faith in you. Amen.

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Printed on July 18, 2018