



Lesson 6 March 25, 2010

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## Dead, Or Alive

James will now discuss the relationship between faith and works, and he stresses that real faith is confidence that God's word is truly coupled with the conviction to ACT on that word. Note that belief demands doing as James exhorts the reader to be a doer of the word. There is, however, an empty, dead faith which James identifies, and then he contrasts its lack of action to that of a dynamic, saving faith by illustrating the difference between the two in the attitudes and exploits of two distinctly different Old Testament saints who each had a vibrant, living faith in common – Abraham and Rahab. James emphasizes that it is not faith AND works, nor faith OR works, that saves a man; rather, it is a faith that works.

1. In verses 14-17, James rhetorically questions whether a professed faith of lip service only, unaccompanied by works, is actually a saving faith (v14), using the example of one who speaks piously but makes no effort to meet the tangible needs (v16) of the destitute (v15). James answers his question with a resounding "NO!" by declaring that such a faith is dead (v17). How do these verses amplify James' thoughts?

Matthew 7:16-27; 25:35-40

Galatians 5:6a

Titus 1:16; 3:8

1 John 3:17-18



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2. In verses 18-19, James reinforces his point of the preceding verses with the shocking observation that the demons believe in God and tremble before Him (v19), but they certainly do not have the saving faith that can be clearly evidenced through good works (v18). What further insight do these passages offer on the subject of works?

Galatians 6:9-10

Ephesians 2:8-10

1 Thessalonians 1:3

3. In verses 20-26, James repeats his denunciation, with increased vigor to the foolish man, that faith without works, or fruit, is dead (v20), even as the body without the spirit is dead. He then cites Abraham as being justified by his works (v21, 24) which perfected (or completed) his faith (v22); however, scripture plainly declares that Abraham was saved when he believed God **Who** imputed righteousness to him (v23). James then interestingly illustrates these same points through the story of Rahab, a gentile harlot, whose care and protection of Joshua's two spies revealed her saving faith (v25). How do you think these verses relate to our practical responsibilities as believers?

Micah 6:8

Matthew 23:23-24

1 Corinthians 15:1-2



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## Personal Application

Since we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), we can therefore surmise that faith cannot be seen; however, James contends that the root of such faith will produce fruit, or evidence of that faith. Apart from God, Who alone can see the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), the reality of our faith can usually only be measured by the fruit, or works, of our lives. The story of Abraham illustrates that point in that the work of faith – the commitment to offer Isaac – was the evidence of God imputing righteousness to Abraham for his belief and faith which transpired years before Isaac was born. Note that no one else was there to witness the event or act of salvation. As James admonishes, action or lack of action, will always speak louder than words, and he has exhorted the reader throughout chapter two to put faith into practice through the practicality of tangible and visible good works.

We have earlier discussed the fact that in today's church, all emphasis has seemingly been placed on the salvation of the unbeliever, the born again experience (John 3:3), and little attention is directed toward the sanctification process of maturing into "those that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14)." Jesus' great commission was to "go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20)." Accordingly, we have a responsibility in the teaching and discipling of the new believer, but we have an even greater responsibility to ourselves for our own personal discipleship and maturity, *"for when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such that have need of milk, and not solid food (Hebrews 5:12)."*

Paul exhorts each of us to *"examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your ownelves. Know you not that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates, or disqualified (2 Corinthians 13:5)?"* James had earlier and similarly stressed the need for such a realistic self appraisal and subsequent obedience in being a "doer." As we each strive toward personal maturity, we must heed these practical instructions and consider our relationship with Jesus as Lord – "why do you call Me Lord and not do the things that I say (Luke 6:46)?" James accordingly asks is faith without submission to His lordship and obedience to His word real and alive and if therefore we be dead or alive?