

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

(James 2:14-26)

There is a place in Shenzhen (Shin-gin) China called Luo Hu (Low-hoe) Commercial City. Everyday thousands of people go there to shop. Five hundred thousand square feet, called the counterfeit capitol of the world. You can get an Armani suit, a Gucci handbag, Channel perfume, a Rolex watch at a fraction of the cost. It's for people that want to look like they've got the real thing without having to pay the price.

A. There are a lot of people that want the appearance of faith without paying the price that real faith costs.

1. "How do you tell artificial faith from the real thing?"
2. In our text, James is not telling us to add works to our faith, he is teaching that genuine faith works (obeys).

[What does real faith look like?]

I. GENUINE FAITH

A. Genuine faith is NOT just what you say.

1. Notice the emphasis on what people "say".

2:14-18 – What does it profit, my brethren, **if someone says** he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked & destitute of daily food, 16 & **one of you says to them**, "Depart in peace, be warmed & filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But **someone will say**, "You have faith, & I have works." Show me your faith without your works, & I will show you my faith by my works.

A preacher was interviewing with a church & the search committee was headed by an English professor & he was very concerned that the future preacher would use the language properly. So he asked the preacher, "Now when the hen is on the nest does she sit or set?" The preacher thought a moment & finally said, "It really doesn't matter if she's sitting or setting, what I want to know is is she laying or lying?"

2. Are we laying or lying about our faith.

John 14:11 – Believe Me that I am in the Father & the Father in Me, or else **believe Me for the sake of the works themselves**.

Titus 1:15-17 – To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled & unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind & conscience are defiled. 16 **They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him**, being abominable, disobedient, & disqualified for every good work.

B. **Genuine faith is NOT** just what you feel about the needs of others (2:14-16).

1. Empathy: “I feel your pain.”
2. Sympathy: “I’m sorry for your loss.”

1 John 3:17-18 – But whoever has this world’s goods, & sees his brother in need, & shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed & in truth.

3. In the gospels the word “compassion” is always used to describe Jesus.
 - a. In every context, His compassion caused Him to take some action to help.
 - b. He came to seek & save the lost with His message, but He proved His genuine love for man (His faith) by helping them with their physical needs (an individual not congregational work).

C. **Genuine faith is NOT** just what you feel about the nature of God.

2:19 – You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even **the demons believe — & tremble!**

1. The demons go further than many who profess to have faith in God.
 - a. They are in such awe of His power that they “tremble”, & yet they cannot be saved because they do not or did not obey the commands of their Maker.
 - b. Thus, their faith is of no profit; it is dead!

D. **Genuine faith is NOT** just what you believe.

2:19-20 – **You believe that there is one God.** You do well. **Even the demons believe — & tremble!** 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

1. In the four gospel accounts the demons gave a fuller confession of the true nature of Jesus Christ than did the apostles.
 - a. That's how we know that genuine faith is NOT just what you believe.
 - b. Satan is a masterful theologian.

2. The Priest & the Levite of in the parable of the Good Samaritan were theologians (Lk 10).
 - a. And like so many theologians & seminary graduates with their doctorates of Divinity; their deep understanding of God's Word did not & does not pass for a living faith.

E. **Genuine faith IS** what you do!

2:15-17 – If a brother or sister is naked & destitute of daily food, 16 & one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed & filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 **Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

1. A genuine faith is full of compassion because the LORD is... (Psa 78:38; 86:15; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8).

Psa 145:8 – The **Lord is gracious & full of compassion**, slow to anger & great in mercy.

2. Verses 15 & 16 speak to a custom of the first century church.
 - a. Assemblies were dismissed with phrases like, "Depart in peace".

Num 6:24-26 (Priestly blessing) – The Lord bless you & keep you; 25 The Lord make His face shine upon you, & be gracious to you; 26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, & give you peace."

- b. But platitudes were no substitute for the necessary acts of kindness & love (cf. 2:8).

[James sealed his argument that faith without works is dead by pointing to the faith Abraham & Rahab: a man & a woman, a Jew & a gentile, a patriarch & a prostitute. You couldn't find two more different people.]

II. GENUINE FAITH EXEMPLIFIED

2:21-26 – Was not **Abraham** our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, & by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "**Abraham** believed God, & it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, & not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not **Rahab** the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers & sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

A. Genuine faith is evident in acts of courage.

1. Rahab was willing to risk her life & Abraham was willing to risk his son.
2. Here is a test to see if you understand the courage of a genuine faith.
 - a. How many of you believe that David's stone & sling killed Goliath?
 - b. How many of you believe that David's faith killed the giant Philistine warrior here?

c. If David's courage had not been supported by his deep faith in the LORD, then Goliath would have caught that stone between his teeth & crushed David's head under his heel.

3. The main point of the epistle of James is NOT that works build your faith, BUT that faith will work in response to the knowledge of God's will.
4. If you separate faith & works of obedience to God, you will have a corpse on your hands; though the body may rejoice in its prosperity, health & pleasurable pursuits in life.

B. Genuine faith is evident in its persistence.

1. Abraham remained faithful to God though the promise of a son was not fulfilled for many years; that's why he was called "a friend of God".
 - a. Friendship is built through trust over time; Abraham walked with God for the long haul (**Heb 10:36-39**).

2. We can safely assume that Rahab's faith was persistent too.
 - a. She was the wife of Salmon & the mother of Boaz, a truly genuine man of faith in the LORD God of Israel.
 - b. She was the great, great grandmother of faithful King David, & the ancestress of Jesus Christ the Lord.

[We don't want our faith to end up in the morgue, so what can we do to activate our faith?]

III. GENUINE FAITH ACTIVATED

- A. See Bible study as an opportunity to accept your duties, orders, assignments.
 1. Is what God commands of us important enough to write it down & remember?

- B. See the needs of others as an opportunity to act upon your duties, orders, assignments.

1. Don't let the opportunities pass you by.
2. Don't just say some pleasant words of hope & refuse to act because the time is not convenient.
3. Like Jesus, be on the lookout for opportunities to act out your faith.

I don't remember his name but I will never forget the man & what he did for us. We had a flat tire on the truck we were pulling behind the U-Haul on our move to Pittsburg, TX. He saw my dilemma & stopped to help. I remember him telling me that he drove around town in the evenings looking for such cases as ours' because someone once stopped to help him.

THAT'S WHAT A GENUINE FAITH ACTIVATED LOOKS LIKE.

[We may sum it up like this: faith does not just discuss the importance of good works, faith has them done before the discussion is over. *If you & I were arrested for being a Christians would there be enough evidence to convict us?*]

GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48