

# *Living Out Your Faith*

## *A Study in the Book of James*

### LESSON FOUR

## Faith Without Works is Dead

(James 2:14-26)

As we move on in chapter two, James builds on the theme he has been expounding on in the first half of the chapter. The **Bible Knowledge Commentary** gives a good intro to the verses that follow, stating: **“Just as the law of love gives no excuse for respect of persons, so the possession of faith gives no license to dispense with good works. A believer must not only demonstrate his love by ready acceptance of others, but he must also demonstrate his faith by responsible aid to others. James went on in his letter to emphasize the expression of true faith, to outline the evidence of true faith, and finally to cite examples of true faith.”**

Prayerfully read through James, chapter two, verses 14 through 26.

1. In **verse 14**, James asks two important questions. What are those two questions?
2. James goes on to make his point by giving them an example in **verses 15 & 16**. What example does James give?
3. What conclusion to this example does James give in **verse 17**?



**Ephesians 2:10 -**

**Titus 2:13 & 14 -**

**1 Peter 2:12 –**

8. **James 2:19** is one of my favorite verses, and James makes this point clear that a “**said faith**” is not necessarily a “**saving faith.**” Write **James 2:19** down below.
  
9. The demons surely **know** who God is. Their knowledge of God makes them tremble in fear of Him. Merely **knowing** is not faith that saves. The faith that saves has placed its **trust** and **reliance** upon the work of salvation Christ purchased for us on the cross. The **reality** of a **saving faith** is **demonstrated** by a **changed life!** People can **say** that they believe, and they can **acknowledge** Christ as God’s Son, but faith is **more** than **knowing** that something is true. James gives us an Old Testament example of true saving faith as we come to **verses 20 & 21**. In **verse 20** he asks, “Do you want to know, Oh foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” James is asking, “Do you need proof?” And he gives an example of proof in **verse 21**. Write out that example below.
  
10. Again, James isn’t saying the works are what save us. He clarifies his statement in **verse 22**. What does he say?

**David Guzik** points out that, “**Faith and works cooperated perfectly together in Abraham. If he never had believed God, he could have never done the good work of obedience when asked to offer Isaac. As well, his faith was proven true – was completed, was made perfect – by his obedient works.**”

**Commentator Adam Clarke** adds, “**Here is a proof that faith cannot exist without being active in works of righteousness. His [Abraham’s] faith in God would have been of no avail to him, had it not been manifested by works.**”

11. James sums up his point with this example in **verse 23**. What does he say?

12. Looking again at **James 2:23**, we find that James uses the same Old Testament Scripture as Paul does, each proving their points about saving faith. The Scripture is from **Genesis 15:6**. Paul referred to this Scripture in **Romans 4:3** to prove that Abraham was justified by faith. James uses it here to prove that Abraham was justified by a **faith that obeys**. What did Jesus say to His listeners in **Luke 6:46**? Write the verse down below.

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** points out that, “**Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith, and James said that Abraham was justified by faith evidenced by what he did.**”

13. Throughout Scripture we see that **obedience** is the **proof** of true faith that leads to salvation. **Hebrews 5:8 & 9**, speak of Christ’s obedience to the Father, making Him the perfect High Priest and Author of salvation. Write down these verses below, paying close attention to the last half of **verse 9**.

14. “**Who**” did He become the Author of salvation to? Write it down again.

15. This verse assumes that those who have come into salvation in Christ will **prove it by their obedience** to Him. Share your thoughts about these truths.

16. In **James 2:24** James sums up what he is trying to express to his readers. Write down the verse below.

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** points out, **“James emphasized the joint role of faith and... actions... working together. Faith is the force behind the deed. The deed is the finality of the faith.”**

17. In **verse 25**, James gives his readers a second example of true **saving faith**. Record his second example in **verse 25** below.

18. James’ choice to use Rahab as his second example should not go unnoticed. This second example ties in perfectly with the points he made in the first half of this chapter that God is no respecter of persons. Rahab was both a Gentile and a harlot. But she was a Gentile and a harlot saved by true faith that proved itself through her actions. How does this second example of James speak to your heart about how you look at others? Share your thoughts.

David Guzik's insight states, "**Rahab demonstrated her trust in the God of Israel by hiding the spies and seeking salvation from their God (Jos 2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be living faith because it *did* something. Her belief in the God of Israel would not have saved her if she had not *done* something with that faith."**

19. James concludes his thoughts on this topic in **verse 26**. Write down the verse below.

David Guzik summarizes, "As much as you can have a body with no life (a corpse), so you can have a faith with no life - and faith without works is a dead faith, unable to save."

Commentator **Donald W. Burdick** adds, "**Therefore, if no deeds are forthcoming, it is proof that the professed faith is dead. Notice that James does not deny that it is faith. He simply indicates that it is not the right kind of faith. It is not living faith, nor can it save.**"

20. How does this truth line up with your views on salvation, especially as we consider those loved ones we say have professed faith in Christ, without ever having any fruit in their lives that prove it? Share your thoughts on the points James has made.

21. How do the words of Jesus in **Matthew 7:21** tie into this truth? Write down the verse below.

22. We are not perfect people. Neither were any of the Apostles or Christ's disciples. Nor were those we call the "**heroes of the faith**" in the Old Testament. We are all sinners saved by God's grace through the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross, taking our sins upon Himself and clothing us with His righteousness.....what we call **the great exchange**. But once that exchange has been made, the proof that it has happened, that we have become a **new creation** through that gift of salvation, brings with it **observable evidence** in a new life we live, with a new perspective, a new attitude, new aspirations and goals, and most importantly, **a new love for others**. Look up and record the following verses.

**Romans 5:5 -**

**1 Thessalonians 1:3 -**

**2 Thessalonians 1:3 -**

**2 Thessalonians 3:5 -**

**1 Timothy 6:11 -**

**2 Timothy 1:7 -**

**Hebrews 6:10 -**

**1 John 2:5 -**

**1 John 3:10 –**

23. What is your greatest take-away from this lesson?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2025

LIVING  TRUTH