

6. A Faith that Works

James 2:14-26

- James deals with the dangers of a shallow and false faith
- He identifies the characteristics of false and true faith

1. **False Faith is head only v14-19**

- v14 – a vital question. Expects the answer ‘No’.
- James alerts us to fact that not all faith is saving
- Sometimes people want to get away with the bare minimum of belief
- 2 problems:
 - a) **A Life that doesn’t Match v15-16**
 - A simple scenario – fellow Christians in need
 - A pious wish, but no action—for people for whom Christ died!
 - Faith must impact our actions, otherwise we don’t really believe it.
 - False faith resides in our heads only – it may have little knowledge or much
 - Where are there gaps in our actions? Where do we fail to live out our faith?
 - b) **A Damning Verdict v17**
 - v16 – What good is your faith? To them and to you?
 - v17 – Such a faith is dead. Misguided (v20). Useless (v20). Dead (v26)
 - v19 – Even the demons manage more of a response!

2. **True Faith always has Fruit v18-26**

- v18 – No choice between faith and actions – they always go together
- The people Jesus saves he changes – every time
- v24 – James and Paul (Romans 3:20 & 4:1,2) – no contradiction
 - Paul is talking about **how** a person is declared right at the **moment** of salvation
 - James is talking about **what** a ‘declared right’ person looks like in a **lifetime** of salvation
 - Paul guarding against anyone **adding** to faith
 - James guarding against anyone **subtracting** from faith
- v18 – Fruit doesn’t make faith. v19 – Facts don’t make faith.
- 2 great illustrations of faith:
 - a) **True faith expresses itself in obedience in hard circumstances v21-24**
 - A key incident in life of Abraham – the hero of Jews – Gen 22
 - Abraham’s belief went hand in hand with his actions
 - Belief became trust. You can believe about Jesus without trusting Jesus.
 - His faith ‘was made complete’ = matured, flowered. His action was the perfect expression of what he believed.
 - For James ‘works/deeds’ isn’t always charity, but any belief-driven action
 - When trouble comes – what happens to all the truth we said we believed?

b) **True faith expresses itself in meeting needs at personal cost v25**

- An audacious 2nd example – Rahab (Joshua 2)
- Not saved because of her actions, but saved because of her faith, which was evidenced by her actions.
- Her faith caused her to risk her life for others – contrast v15-17
- She staked her life on the promises of God
- Do we live as people who believe our God controls everything?
- Do we take seek to help others at our own cost?
- We owe our salvation to one who met our needs at great personal cost
- We owe our salvation to one who obeyed in hard circumstances
- This is our motivation