

Have you done a first aid course? When you see DRSABCD what is the B? It is Breathing. If you find someone not breathing you need to do C & D, CPR and Defibrillator. If there is no breathing then the person will soon be dead. There is great urgency. You must act quickly. In the end if they don't respond no breath means it is just a body, a corpse. There is no life without breath.

James says, *"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."* (2:26)

Just as life in a body will be shown by breath so true faith will be shown by our actions, by deeds. James is saying if there are no deeds then faith is not real faith. It is dead. It is not weak faith or immature faith. It is dead! Faith must show itself in action in our lives. James says deeds are necessary for salvation.

1. James and Paul

Some people have said that James is contradicting Paul. Paul clearly says we are saved by faith not by deeds, by works.

⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—* ⁹ *not by works, so that no one can boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But James says, *"You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."* (2:24) Is he contradicting Paul?

No. Paul and James are dealing with two different problems. Paul is dealing with people who thought they were saved by works, that they could earn their salvation. James is dealing with people who claim to have faith but they don't show that faith by what they do. The way they live contradicts their claim to believe.

Paul says that our actions are never good enough to save us. We are saved by faith alone, by trusting what Jesus has done. James doesn't disagree. We are saved by faith but true faith will show itself in action. So if there are no actions then it is not true faith. In that way actions are necessary for salvation.

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

Faith without deeds is useless. (2:20)

You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. (2:24)

We are saved by faith alone, but true faith will be shown by action. "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone."

We hear a lot about "fake news" these days. That is news that is trying to mislead people - perhaps to create a bad image of a politician. Of course a certain powerful politician is calling some true news "fake news". So especially with social media we have to decide whether what we hear is true news or fake news, or fake news that is really true news, or...

How do you tell fake news from true news?

But a much more important question is whether our faith is a true faith or a fake faith. Is your faith living faith or dead faith?

2. Dead Faith

a) Dead faith is just words.

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (2:14-17)

Does our faith show itself in loving action? James talks about a "brother or sister" in need. In other words another member of the Christian family, the church. Here he talks about financial need, "without clothes and daily food". How do we respond when we see that sort of need? Do we help people financially or provide for their need?

But there are other needs around us. What sort of things? Practical help: shopping, cleaning, minding children, giving someone a lift to church or somewhere else. It might be they need someone to talk to them, to spend time with them or to phone them or visit them.

Our faith needs to show itself in care like this for a brother or sister in church.

For my birthday I was given a copy of Tim Winton's book about his own life, The Boy Behind the Curtain. When Tim was five his father, a motor bike policeman, was hit by a car and very severely injured. When he was finally sent home from hospital he was bed ridden. He couldn't get himself up. Winton tells how "a bloke just turned up", a complete stranger, and offered to help get his father out of bed and bath him. This went on till his father could get himself up. This "bloke" was a Christian and his dramatic example of practical serving had a great impact on Tim Winton's parents. They became convinced Christians

Now maybe you aren't able to do something like that but when was the last time you gave someone not in your family some money, did some practical help, talked to someone in need ...? Where has your faith shown itself?

Dead faith has none of these actions.

b) Dead faith is just ideas

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. (2:19)

James is saying that demons believe the facts about God. In the Gospels we read that the demons know Jesus is Son of God. But the demons shudder because they know God will judge them. They are not saved.

We are not saved by just believing the facts that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. We might believe all the facts of the Bible but not be saved. Once again our faith must be shown by our actions.

Back in Chapter 1 James says, ²⁶ *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.* ²⁷ *Religion that God our*

Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (1:26-27)

True faith will show in how we speak to other people and how we act in practical care for those in need. Religion that does not do this is *worthless*.

3. Living Faith

James gives two examples of living faith, Abraham and Rahab

Abraham

Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? (2:21)

God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham trusted God that he would make a great nation through Isaac. That was God's promise. You remember that in the end he didn't have to kill his son but Abraham's action showed his faith in God's promise. *His faith was made complete by what he did. (2:22)* His action showed his faith was real.

Rahab

Whereas Abraham was the father of the nation Rahab was Gentile Canaanite and a prostitute. Yet when Joshua was leading Israel into the Promised Land before they attacked Jericho he sent spies to check it out. Rahab believed God would give Jericho to the Israelites. Her faith showed itself in action by helping the spies. She risked her own life by turning traitor when she hid the spies.

She and Abraham had a living faith which was shown by their action.

The sort of actions James focusses on are:

- Perseverance in suffering (1:2, 13, 5:7-11)
- Listening to others (1:19)
- Controlling our anger (1:19)
- Avoiding moral filth (words, thoughts) (1:21)
- Helping the needy (1:27; 2:15-16)
- Not showing favouritism (2:1-13)
- Controlling our tongue (3:1-13; 4:11)
- Not acting in selfish ambition (3:13-18)
- Being peace makers not fighters (3:17-4:10)
- Not judging others (4:11-12)

In other words, all areas of life: marriage, family, church, work, leisure.... lived in obedience to Jesus. That doesn't mean we have to be perfect. We all fail and are saved by grace. But unless there are some actions of this sort our faith is a dead faith.

What is your response?

- a) If you are not a Christian, and are exploring what it means to be one. You need to see that you are not saved by doing more good things. That's not what James is saying. You will only be accepted by God when you put trust in Jesus. The good actions then show your faith is real.

- b) If you rely on faith, you are confident you are right with God because you believe. Then is your faith shown by action? Is it really true faith? James warns us that there are those who deceive themselves and their religion is worthless. (1:26) If your faith is just words or ideas then you need to repent.
- c) It may be that in hearing all this you feel a failure, you feel you can't be a true Christian because you don't do enough. You need to realise that we are not saved by doing enough. We all fail. Forgiveness is freely available at the cross.

And help is available.

James urges us to pray for God's wisdom (1:5)

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

God's help is readily available.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. (4:8)

God will be there to help you as you seek to serve him.

We can help each other

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (5:16)

Ask someone else to pray for you and encourage you.

But take seriously James' words,

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (2:26)

Do a spiritual health check on yourself and if you need help make sure you talk to someone.