

# The Basics of Christianity

## Active Faith

### James 2:14-26

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**James 2:14-26 (NASB95)**

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# The Basics of Christianity

## Active Faith

### James 2:14-26

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with "The Basics of Christianity" series. The purpose for this series is so we can be more effective in our witness to those who have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This morning I would like to look at an often overlooked element of our walk with God. It is not enough to just **believe** that Jesus was the Messiah and accept His plan of salvation, but our new life in Christ must also exhibit an **Active Faith**.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

##### **James 2:14-26 (NASB95)**

<sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

<sup>18</sup> But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. <sup>20</sup> But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

#### Prayer

The book of James was written by James, the half brother of Jesus.

If a title or theme were given to this book it could be called *Practical Christianity*. James, in a very simple manner, gives us a practical lesson on how we are to conduct ourselves as a Christian.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Imagine with me that Neil, Roberta, and Carol were called to go out of the country on a missionary assignment for six months. They tell us not to worry about all of the things that need to be done around the church. Since they have been doing many of the daily things, they will send regular emails to the church to tell us what needs to be done and when to do them in their absence.

In the first email Neil says that the south roof is in bad shape and needs to be replaced. He suggests that we contact contractors and get quotes, choose the best quote and get it repaired as soon as possible. He also tells us to change the furnace filters. Carol tells us to clean up inside the church and set up the room for the Guys and Gals. KEEP THE FAITH, and we will see you when we return.

Many other emails are sent over the following months with encouragement and jobs that needed to be done.

Neil, Roberta, and Carol return six months later and find the ceiling in the church wet and hanging down into the chapel. The heat is not working. The floors are a mess. Trash cans are overflowing. The Guys and Gals group no longer meets at the church. It appeared that none of the work that was requested had been done.

Disturbed at what they see, the following conversation takes place between them and us.

“Have you been receiving our emails?”

“Yes.” We replied.

“Well, what have you been doing?”

“We were very FAITHFUL. We read your emails with great interest and prayed about it. We even started a Friday night email study and broke the wording apart to fully understand what you were telling us. Many of us committed much of it to memory, in fact Rick, Nancy, and Jim can recite most of the emails by heart. There is great information in those emails and we have been enlightened by them.”

“OK, you studied about them, prayed about them, and memorized them, but what did you DO about them?” they asked.

“DO? Well, we didn’t DO anything. We just remained FAITHFUL”.

In the second half of chapter two, James is talking about a FAITH that does something; an ACTIVE FAITH. This is one of the main themes in the book, the relationship between faith and works.

It is critical that we understand the true **Biblical** meaning of FAITH in order to be a true Christian.

James gives a very practical description on how we are to live as Christians by FAITH.

## **BODY:**

James is talking about a FAITH that does something; an ACTIVE FAITH.

He tells us that Faith without Works is Dead **four** times. Verses 14, 17, 20, 26.

Remember in James 1:22 he says,

### **James 1:22 (NASB95)**

<sup>22</sup> But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

The result of being a hearer and not a doer is that we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are something that we are really not.

James is now telling us that hearing and not doing is like faith without works.

### **James 2:14 (NASB95)**

<sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

Other scriptures in the Bible tell us that we are not saved by our works.

### **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

If we are saved by grace through faith and NOT by our works, what exactly is James trying to tell us here?

Well, he answers that in verses 15-17.

### **James 2:15-17 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

James is saying that if we see a brother or sister in need and just **SAYS** to them Go in peace, be warmed and filled, but does not provide their needs, then we have not helped in any way. Our faith is just like that. If it is not an **ACTIVE FAITH** that is reacting to the needs of people or being obedient to the Lord, it is of no value. **FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD**. It is **NOT** a "**SAVING FAITH**".

### **How do we get FAITH?**

We are told in Romans 10:17.

### **Romans 10:17 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

### **What is FAITH?**

The biblical definition of faith that is often referred to is in the FAITH Chapter of the Bible which is Hebrews 11 and verse 1.

### **Hebrews 11:1 (NASB95)**

<sup>11</sup> Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

What is this scripture telling us?

We receive faith by reading and hearing the Bible, right? **Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Through the Word (or Bible) and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us, we can read of Christ and His death on the cross and His resurrection and have assurance that we will have **eternal life** through Him by His grace. God has always kept His promises in the past and I am certain that He will continue to keep them in the future.

Although we were not with Jesus when He was on this earth and did not hear His teachings and experience His miracles we still have an assured Hope. We know by studying the scriptures that things that we have not seen can be believed because of the **inspiration of the scripture**. We can see by the **fullness of the scripture** that it must be inspired by God. Through that study we build our faith or our conviction of what we believe.

We also know from James and many other scriptures that a true faith OR a saving faith, is an obedient faith.

### **What is OBEDIENT FAITH?**

James clarifies it in verse 18.

#### **James 2:18 (NASB95)**

***18 But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”***

If someone claims that they have faith without works, James **questions** them on how they can **demonstrate or justify** their faith. If your faith is **not active**, if it is **not obedient** to God's commands, how can you **show** your faith? On the other hand, if your faith is an **obedient and active** faith, you will see your faith **manifested** because of your works.

### **Let's Summarize What I Just Said.**

- 1. We get FAITH by hearing or reading the Bible.**
- 2. (Assurance of things hoped for). By reading the Bible we know that we can have HOPE of eternal life with God.**
- 3. (Evidence of things not seen). By the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by reading the Bible we can KNOW that things we have not physically seen is true.**
  - **Like the existence of God.**
  - **That Jesus was the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament.**
  - **That Christ Died on the Cross for our sins.**
  - **The existence of Heaven.**
- 4. That the Biblical definition of FAITH is an obedient and active FAITH.**

Now that we understand the Biblical definition of FAITH, consider the following from the "Faith Chapter".

#### **Hebrews 11:6 (NASB95)**

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

We must have faith (a true obedient and active faith) to please God.

for he who comes to God must...WHAT?

believe that He is. This is the conviction of things not seen.

and believe *that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*. This is the assurance of things hoped for.

By our faith, we **believe** in God and we have the Hope of eternal salvation. That is GOOD!

What does James say about this?

### **James 2:19-20 (NASB95)**

<sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. <sup>20</sup> But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

How many times have you heard on the radio or TV, "All you have to do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and pray the sinner's prayer to be saved?" How many people have been led to believe that this is all that is required for salvation?

James tells us that even the demons BELIEVE in God. They believe so fervently that they shudder at the thought. If the demons were asked to raise their hands if they believed in God, they definitely would.

What we know is that we must not only believe in God, but we must turn our lives around and leave behind our old worldly self and take on a new life in Christ. God says that we must have a active obedient faith to please Him. James tells us once again that a faith that is not active and obedient is dead.

**He then gives examples of faith in action.**

### **James 2:21-24 (NASB95)**

<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

You see, God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son and that their descendents would be as innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. They were both far beyond normal child bearing years.

God knows men's hearts. He knew when He told Abraham of the promises that he **truly** believed Him despite his years. God accepted that belief as righteousness. God knew that he had an obedient and active faith. And it wasn't until Abraham actually took Isaac to be

offered as a sacrifice on the altar that God stopped the sacrifice and placed a ram caught in a thicket for him to sacrifice in Isaac's place.

Although God knew Abraham's heart, and knew how he would respond, the actual act is what justified his faith by his works.

### **James 2:26 (NASB95)**

<sup>26</sup> For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Just in case we needed one more example, James compared faith without works to the human body. If the body is without the spirit, it is dead. It has no value. Do you see how absolute that is? We all know that if our spirit has left our body, then we are physically dead. James says if our faith is not active, then we are **certainly spiritually dead!**

### **CONCLUSION:**

When it comes to making decisions (big or small) for Christ, we must have an obedient faith. Let me share a few scriptures:

### **Colossians 3:17**

<sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

### **Philippians 4:8 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

This is the mindset that God wants us to continuously have. We know that just believing in God and having a faith that does not continuously praise Him and lacks in works will not please God. We cannot let worldly things that sound more profitable or attractive be our guide. We must follow God's word, the BIBLE.

I want you to consider this one last point. **LISTEN CAREFULLY!** We **CAN** say that we **are saved by works**. Because it is absolutely true! The catch is that is not OUR WORKS. We are saved by CHRIST'S WORKS of dying on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. And secondly, we can only be saved if our faith is complimented by our works. Because, as James tells us, a faith without works is dead! We are can only be saved **by His grace** but we must also have an obedient, active faith in Christ.

They both go hand and hand. Jesus has already done His part, **now we MUST accept His gift of salvation AND HAVE an active faith!**

### **The Family of God**