

**Lesson 6**  
**James 2:14 - 26**  
**Real or False Faith**

**Memory verse:** “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5 NIV)

Faith is a key doctrine in the Christian life. The sinner is saved by faith (Eph. 2:8–9), and the believer must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Someone has said that faith is not “believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequence.” When you read Hebrews 11, you meet men and women who acted on God’s Word, no matter what price they had to pay. Faith is not some kind of nebulous feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God’s Word is true and conviction that acting on that Word will bring His blessing

The psychologist, Dr. Alfred Adler holds an interesting theory of individual psychology. When dealing with people, he says, “Trust only in movement, life happens at the level of action.” In fact, Adler goes on to say, “We are not what we say but we are what we do”. “What we do,” he says, “is the real key to our intentions.” Trust only in movement. He has discovered what the Word of God teaches. He has discovered what James is saying here. He has observed in human behaviour from the viewpoint of psychology that the only real revelation of a person is through that person’s behaviour.

To sort of paraphrase James, faith plus nothing equals nothing. James, for example, describes the kind of faith that equals nothing, he calls it “dead faith” in verse 17, in verse 20 and again at the end of the chapter in verse 26...dead faith.

Now inevitably, people with dead faith always substitute words for deeds. They want you to believe that they are what they say when you must understand that we are what we do. Trust not in words, trust only in movement. True faith will always be seen in works. Dead faith will not be seen at all. The point that you want to understand as you approach this passage is that there is a kind of faith that does not save.

In Matthew, for example, chapter 3, the ministry of John the Baptist draws our attention...“And many people were being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River confessing their sins.” In verse 7, “When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said to them, O generation of snakes, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits fitting repentance and think not to say within yourself, we have Abraham as our father.” In other words, don’t count on your heritage, demonstrate by your works the legitimacy of your faith.

In Matthew 5 verse 16, Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” In other words, the light that shines out of the life of a believer is the light of good works, demonstrated deeds. Further in Matthew 7, the same Sermon on the Mount, verse 21, “Not everyone that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father.” It is not the sayers, it is the doers. Trust not in what people say, trust in what they do.

In this paragraph, James discussed the relationship between faith and works. This is an important discussion, for if we are wrong in this matter, we jeopardize our eternal salvation. What kind of faith really saves a person? Is it necessary to perform good works in order to be saved? How can a person tell whether or not he is exercising true saving faith?

Things to learn: 1) Dead Faith 2) Demonic Faith 3) Dynamic Faith

**Discussion Questions:**

1) Show how James in verses 14 to 17 demonstrated “dead faith”.

2) What is the intention of James when an illustration is given that demons have faith in verses 18 to 19?

3) In verses 20 to 26, James tells us what is real saving faith and it can be expressed as “dynamic faith”. How would you explain this truth?

Here are some questions we can ask ourselves as we examine our hearts:

1. Was there a time when I honestly realized I was a sinner and admitted this to myself and to God?
2. Was there a time when my heart stirred me to flee from the wrath to come? Have I ever seriously been alarmed over my sins?
3. Do I truly understand the gospel, that Christ died for my sins and arose again? Do I understand and confess that I cannot save myself?
4. Did I sincerely repent of my sins and turn from them? Or do I secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
5. Have I trusted Christ and Christ alone for my salvation? Do I enjoy a living relationship with Him through the Word and in the Spirit?
6. Has there been a change in my life? Do I maintain good works, or are my works occasional and weak? Do I seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that I have been with Jesus?
7. Do I have a desire to share Christ with others? Or am I ashamed of Him?
8. Do I enjoy the fellowship of God’s people? Is worship a delight to me?
9. Am I ready for the Lord’s return? Or will I be ashamed when He comes for me?

To be sure, not every Christian has the same personal experience, and there are degrees of sanctification. But for the most part, the preceding spiritual inventory can assist a person in determining his true standing before God.