Faith and Works:
Not All Faith Can Save

James 2:14-26

Key Thoughts

1. **Not all faith can save.** We put our faith in many things every day, and not all of them can hold our weight. Only genuine faith in the one true Christ saves, and genuine faith pours out in works.
2. **Works do not save; they show the faith that does.** We are saved by grace through faith, not of works, and we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Works are the fruit, the heartbeat, of real, genuine faith.
3. **Words alone do not warm or feed anyone.** Sending a cold, hungry brother or sister away with a blessing and nothing else profits nothing. Jesus met people's physical needs again and again, even when many of them walked away.
4. **Even the demons believe.** The demons know the facts about God, believe He is one, and tremble, yet they reject Him. Saving faith does more than agree with the truth; it trusts God and acts on that trust.
5. **Abraham and Rahab: faith that works.** Abraham believed he and Isaac would come back, and he climbed the mountain; Rahab trusted the LORD, hid the spies, and hung her hope in the window. The father of the nation and a Canaanite harlot were justified the same way, by a faith that was alive.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and James 2:24. We are saved by grace through faith, not of works, yet we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. How would you explain to a friend how these two passages fit together? What good works might God have prepared for you to walk in right now?
2. Read James 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 11:3-4. We put our faith in many things, from the chair we sit in to the ice on the reservoir, and not all of them can hold our weight. What are people around you trusting in instead of the true Christ, and how can you know your faith is the kind that saves?
3. Read James 2:15-16 and Isaiah 58:7. Who in our church family is going without right now? When have you offered words or a blessing when you could have offered help, and what kept you from doing more?
4. Read Luke 17:15-18 and James 2:17. Nine of the ten lepers never came back to thank Jesus, and most of the five thousand walked away, yet He never stopped showing mercy. Have you grown jaded because someone took advantage of your kindness? What would it look like to keep showing mercy anyway?
5. Read James 2:18-20. The demons believe that God is one, and they tremble, yet they reject Him. What is the difference between knowing the facts about God and trusting Him? If someone said, "Show me your faith," what would your works show them?
6. Read Genesis 22:5 and Joshua 2:9-11, then James 2:21-25. Abraham told his servants, "We will come back to you," and Rahab trusted the LORD before a single wall fell. Where is God asking you to act on what you believe before you can see how it will turn out?

Applications

1. **Meet a real need.** Find one brother or sister in Christ who is going without, and give them something they actually need this week, not just a kind word.
2. **Act on what you believe.** Name one step of obedience you have been putting off. Take it this week, and trust God with the outcome, the way Abraham and Rahab did.
3. **Keep showing mercy.** Think of someone you stopped helping because your kindness was taken for granted. Do one act of mercy for them this week, the way Jesus kept showing mercy to people who walked away.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that we are saved by grace through faith, and not of works, lest anyone should boast. Thank You that we are Your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. Keep our faith fixed on the one true Christ, and not on anything that cannot hold our weight. Forgive us for the times we have said, "Be warmed and filled," and walked away. Open our eyes to the brothers and sisters among us who are in need, and open our hands to meet those needs. When people take our kindness for granted, help us keep showing mercy, as Jesus did. Give us the faith of Abraham, who believed You would bring his son back down the mountain, and the faith of Rahab, who hung her hope in the window. Make our faith alive, active, and real, so that others may see it in our works. In Jesus' name, amen.