

James 2:14-26

Genuine Faith

Introduction

Question: When have you ever said words of encouragement but neglected to do anything practical to help people in need?

To this point in his letter, James has been making the case that once the new birth has happened to a person, it should result in a life of doing God's word. In 2:1-13, he began working that principle out in one specific example – his readers' wrong practice of showing partiality to the rich and powerful. Now, in verses 14-26, he returns to the principle itself, arguing theologically and biblically for its truth. James argues that faith always results in a life of obedience and good works. And a "faith" that does not do so is not saving faith at all; it is, rather, dead faith.

James 2:14-17

Question: Verses 14 and 17 best encapsulate James' main point in this section. What is his main point?

Question: James uses the word "faith" three times in these verses. What textual clues do you see that would signal James' understanding that this is not genuine faith?

James 2:18-19

Question: How does James' comment about demons' "faith" (v. 19) connect faith and works?

Question: What is the difference between merely correct theology and genuine, living faith?

Question: What other examples of dead faith can you think of? In what ways are you guilty of professing a faith that is not authenticated by works?

James 2:20-26

Question: What does it mean that Abraham's faith was made complete (v. 22)? Is he saying that faith is alive but deficient until we add works to it?

Question: How can our faith be made complete?

Question: Does verse 24 seem to contradict Paul's teaching that we are in fact justified by faith alone?

Question: In verse 25-26 James uses another example to teach this same point – that faith, if it is real, will result in life of obedience. Is he saying that Rahab was declared righteous because of her obedience, or that she was shown to be righteous by her obedience?

Question: Is there any way to demonstrate true faith other than by deeds of obedience to God?

Reflection

Question: Is your faith in Christ apparent to others? What do your actions say to those who don't know you?