

Saving Faith Works James 2:14-26

Main Truth: The presence of saving faith is marked by real changes (works) in a person's life.

Question (vs. 14): What use is a faith that does not work? Can that faith save a person?

- 1. Illustration #1 (vs. 15-17): Faith that only talks isn't saving faith.**
 - A. Compassion in word without compassion in action is not real compassion at all.
 - B. The application: faith in word without faith in action ("by itself") is not real faith at all – vs. 17.
- 2. Illustration #2 (vs. 18-20): Faith that only exists in the intellect (mind) isn't saving faith.**
 - A. Faith is unseen except by God, so it must be shown by works – vs. 18.
 - B. It is possible to believe the correct information about the Bible and the gospel without having saving faith (example: the demons) – vs. 19
- 3. Illustration #3 (vs. 21-24): Abraham's faith was proven (justified) by his actions showing that it was truly saving faith.**
 - A. By faith, Abraham was declared to be righteous (justified) by God – Genesis 15:6.
 - B. By Abraham's works, his faith was shown to be genuine. In this way, his works justified (vindicated) God's declaration that he was righteous.
- 4. Illustration #4 (vs. 25): Rahab's faith was proven (justified) by her actions showing that it was truly saving faith.**
 - A. By faith Rahab believed God – Joshua 2:9-11, Hebrews 11:31.
 - B. Rahab's faith in God was evidenced in her action (works) toward the messengers, which showed that her faith was genuine saving faith.

Conclusion (vs. 26): Saving faith proves that it is alive by its deeds, but faith that has no deeds is dead and will never save.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Why do we dislike talking about works when we are discussing the topic of genuine salvation?
2. How is a person saved? What Bible verses can you use to defend your answer?
3. If we are saved by faith alone, why does James tell us that there is a faith that does not save?
4. What part do a person's works play in their salvation?
5. Explain what James means when he says that Abraham was justified by works (vs. 21), Rahab was justified by works (vs. 25), and a man is justified by works and not by faith alone (vs. 24).
6. Is James teaching us anything new or different about salvation that conflicts with the rest of the Bible?
7. What wrong type of thinking is James trying to correct with this instruction about faith and works?
8. What audience might James have in mind? A) Un-churched pagans trying to earn their way to heaven by good deeds, or B) Churched people who believe themselves to be Christians and on their way to heaven?
9. Which of the diagrams below most accurately represents the truth that the Bible teaches? Explain why.
 - A. Works produces salvation
 - B. Faith + works produces salvation
 - C. Faith produces salvation
 - D. Faith produces salvation + works
10. What is the best way to apply what we have learned in James 2:14-26?

Thoughts for prayer:

- Pray that we would take God's word seriously, and consider whether our own faith is saving faith or dead faith.
- Pray that God would save people by His Word, and by His grace.