

(7) "Faith with legs attached!"

The story is told of a woman who invited all her friends over for a special dinner. Desiring to impress them, she hired a maid, a butler, and a chef. She purchased the best steaks she could find and a top brand of mushrooms to accompany them. "When the chef noticed that the mushrooms seemed a bit discoloured, the lady suggested he feed a few to the dog, since the hour was late and there was no time to purchase more mushrooms. If the dog eats them and doesn't get sick, they're probably alright!" The dog eagerly consumed the mushrooms and showed no signs of ill-effects; therefore the chef completed the meal and served the guests.

Later, as the desert was being served, the maid hurried in and whispered to the lady of the house, 'Ma'am, the dog is dead!' Not waiting to hear any more, she leaped to her feet and told the guests they had no time to lose! They had eaten tainted mushrooms and must rush immediately to the hospital! Later that evening, after the lady and her guests had returned from having their stomachs pumped, she asked the maid, 'Where is the dog now?' 'Out in the front yard, ma'am,' replied the maid, 'where he crawled after the car hit him!'

And I guess the moral of the story is that it's good to investigate a matter thoroughly before leaping to hasty conclusions which may result in harsh consequences. And when the Bible talks about faith we need to do the same, we need investigate what kind of faith it is talking about.

For example **Hebrews 11:6** tells us that **without faith it is impossible to please God**. In **Ephesians 2:8** Paul tells us that **we are saved by faith**. Paul also tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:7** that are to **live by faith and not by sight**. **Romans 14:23** tells us that **whatever we do apart from faith is described as sin**.

Now we all know the importance of faith in the life of the Christian but today James is going to talk about **three different types of faith**. In our sermon today James is going to talk about **three different types of faiths** but he is going to emphasise that only **one of these faiths can actually save your soul**. And as we go through this sermon this morning loved ones I would like each of us to take a close look at ourselves and ask ourselves which one of these faiths do we possess.

The first kind of faith which James is going to talk about is found in **James 2:14-17** and he calls it a **dead faith**. **James 2:14-17** "My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? Can that faith save you? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!"---if you don't give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead."

James says that there are some Christians who just love to say the right things but never do anything about it. These are the Christians who sound great and know the proper words to use when they are praying. They know the Scriptures and when you're talking with them you can tell they can quote the right Scripture. But there's a problem, they have faith with **no legs attached**.

In other words they don't practice what they preach, their **walk** doesn't match up to their **talk**. And loved ones, if that's you this morning then James tells us that this type of faith is lifeless, it's **dead**. **And why is it dead?** Well simply because it's what we might call an **intellectual** faith.

Oh in their mind they know the doctrine of salvation but they have never really submitted themselves to God and trusted in Jesus for salvation. They know the right **"words"**, but they do not back up their words with their **"works."** Their faith isn't doing anything else, they possess a faith which hasn't got any legs attached.

And if that's you this morning you need to ask yourself, **can this kind of faith save you?** According to James the answer to that question is **No**. Three times in this passage, James emphasizes that **"faith without legs attached is dead."** **James 2:17** "So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead". **James 2:20** "You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless?" **James 2:26** "So then, as the body without the spirit is dead, also faith without actions is dead".

In other words don't tell me you have faith in God if your life hasn't been changed by the gospel. Don't tell me you have faith in God if your faith doesn't lead you to do good works for God. Because let me tell you loved ones this type of faith is a **counterfeit faith** and leads people into a false confidence of eternal life.

What good is it to say the homeless person, 'I'll be praying for you' when they have to spend another night out in the freezing cold? What good it is to say to someone who hasn't eaten in two days, 'I pray that God will provide food for you?'

If your faith had legs attached you would take that homeless person to the shops and buy them some clothes. If your faith had legs attached you would take that hungry person to a restaurant, buy them a meal and then you would take them to a supermarket and buy them some food to keep them going. My point is this, some Christians are very good at saying the right things but they never take the action themselves to do something about it.

Let me ask you, if you were to touch an electricity cable which had 440 volts of electricity running through it, would that have an effect on you? Of course it would and what James is telling us this morning is that if our walk does not measure up to our talk or if our works do not measure up to our words. It could be because our faith is dead because the truth of the matter is loved ones, no-one can come to Christ by faith and remain the same, anymore than they can come into contact with a 440-volt wire and remain the same.

Now the next type of faith which James describes is an interesting faith to say the least, he calls it a demonic faith. James 2:18+19 "But someone will say, "One person has faith, another has actions." My answer is, "Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions." Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe---and tremble with fear."

James reminds us that even "demons" have a kind of faith, the kind that believes. They believe in God and they even believe in the deity of Christ. Mark 3:11+12 "And whenever the people who had evil spirits in them saw him, they would fall down before him and scream, "You are the Son of God!" Jesus sternly ordered the evil spirits not to tell anyone who he was." Now not only do they believe in the deity of Christ they also believe in the existence of a place of condemnation. Luke 8:31 "The demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss."

And not only do they believe in the deity of Christ and the existence of a place of condemnation they also believe that Jesus will be the Judge. Matthew 8:28+29 "When Jesus came to the territory of Gadara on the other side of the lake, he was met by two men who came out of the burial caves there. These men had demons in them and were so fierce that no one dared travel on that road. At once they screamed, "What do you want with us, you Son of God? Have you come to punish us before the right time?"

So what kind of faith do "demons" have? We just saw that the Christian with a "dead faith" is a Christian who has been "touched only in his intellect." But the demons are "touched also in their emotions." Notice that James says that the demons "believe and tremble." Now this faith which James is describing is one step above a "dead faith" because it involves both intellect and emotions.

And if that's you this morning then again let me ask you, can this kind of faith save you? According to James the answer to this question is No. But why James? I believe the Scriptures; I'm moved in my heart by the Scriptures, why can't this faith save me James? Well simply because people can be enlightened in their mind and even moved in their heart but they can still be lost forever.

You see loved ones, true saving faith involves something more, something that can be seen and recognised. True saving faith can be seen and recognised in a changed life. James 2:18 "But someone will say, "One person has faith, another has actions." My answer is, "Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions."

James is telling us that being a Christian involves trusting Christ and living for Christ. In other words as someone once said, you first receive the life, then you reveal the life. So let me ask you this morning, do we have this kind of faith? The kind of faith that just believes the right things and feels the right things but doesn't go any further.

Listen loved ones I meet people almost every day who tell me they are Christians but their lifestyles are reflecting something different. And that's one of the many dangers which some Christians face, their service to God doesn't go beyond intellectually sticking to the right doctrines and emotional experiences while attending services.

You see loved ones true saving faith does more than that, it goes beyond words and feelings and believing the right things. Let me share with you some thoughts on this type of faith, they are questions which I want you to answer in your own mind.

Does your faith in God have **legs attached** which shows people Jesus Christ through your actions? Does your faith in God have **legs attached** which can't be bothered to walk you to worship your God every week? Does your faith in God have **legs attached** which only lead you to night clubs and bars and other ungodly places? Does your faith in God have **legs attached** which refuse to walk you to special meetings to support your brethren? Does your faith have any **legs attached**?

Now only you can answer those questions loved ones. And what James is warning us all this morning is that if our faith only involves **intellect** then it's a **dead faith**, it won't save us. If our faith only involves **intellect** and **emotions**, then our faith is only a **demonic faith**, it won't save us.

But if you want a real faith with real legs attached, a faith which is going to save you then listen closely to how James describes it in **James 2:20-26**. If you want a real saving faith, your faith needs to be an **active faith**. **So what's so special about this faith? What makes this faith different from all the others?** Well we know from the Bible that this kind of faith is based upon the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 "So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ." In other words this faith is an **active faith** because it involves our whole being. You see in our **mind** we understand the truth, in our **heart** we desire and rejoice in the truth and the **will** acts upon the truth. And so what James is saying is that this faith is different from the others because this faith has **legs attached**.

This faith leads us to do something with our faith, it **leads to action**. It's not intellectual contemplation, it's not emotionalism, it's a faith which leads to obedience in doing good works. In fact to elaborate this point James gives us two examples from the Old Testament.

James 2:20-26 "You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless? How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions. And the scripture came true that said, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." And so Abraham was called God's friend. You see, then, that it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and not by our faith alone. It was the same with the prostitute Rahab. She was put right with God through her actions, by welcoming the Israelite spies and helping them to escape by a different road. So then, as the body without the spirit is dead, also faith without actions is dead".

Now those who are of the **faith only** persuasion really need to take the time to study James' letter. Because James is clearly teaching us that faith without actions won't save us. And so James begins his illustration by taking about **Abraham** and **Rahab**. Now I don't know about you but you couldn't find two more different people.

Abraham was the father of the Jews; Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham was a godly man; Rahab had been a sinful woman, a harlot. Abraham was the friend of God; Rahab had belonged to the enemies of God. **So why did James use these two people to illustrate his point about faith and actions?**

Well the answer is found in what they both had in common, they both exercised saving faith in God. In other words Abraham demonstrated his saving faith by his works. **Hebrews 11:17** "It was faith that made Abraham offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God put Abraham to the test. Abraham was the one to whom God had made the promise, yet he was ready to offer his only son as a sacrifice". Abraham's faith had **legs attached**.

Now let's look at Rahab because she too demonstrated her saving faith by her works. **Hebrews 11:31** "It was faith that kept the prostitute Rahab from being killed with those who disobeyed God, for she gave the Israelite spies a friendly welcome." Rahab's faith also had **legs attached**.

Two times in this passage James tells us that faith without works is a **dead faith**. He says in **James 2:20** "You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless?" And he says in **James 2:26** "So then, as the body without the spirit is dead, also faith without actions is dead."

Now I'm no scholar but clearly he is teaching us that '**faith only**' can never justify a person before God. In fact he does mention **faith alone** but it's not the faith that saves. He says in **James 2:24** "You see, then, that it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and not by our faith alone."

If you want that saving faith with **legs attached**, then listen to what James tells us in **James 2:22**, “**Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions.**” Do you see what James is telling us today? He’s telling us that people can know the Scriptures; they may even be moved in their hearts by the Scriptures. But if their faith doesn’t work together with actions then it’s all a waste of time.

An old boatman painted the word **"faith"** on one oar of his boat and **"works"** on the other. He was asked his reason for this. In answer, he slipped the oar with **"faith"** into the water and rowed. The boat, of course, made a very tight circle. Returning to the dock, the boatman then said, **"Now, let's try 'works' without 'faith' and see what happens."** The oar marked **"works"** was put in place and the boatman began rowing with just the **"works"** oar. Again the boat went into a tight circle but in the opposite direction. When the boatman again returned to the dock, he interpreted his experiment in these strong and convincing words, **"You see, to make a passage across the lake, one needs both oars working simultaneously in order to keep the boat in a straight and narrow way."**

You see loved ones that sailor understood that if you don’t use both oars, you won’t make any progress across the lake. And what James is telling us today is that if you don’t use both **faith and works** you won’t make any progress as a Christian.

Now you might be thinking, wait a minute, doesn’t Paul tell us in **Ephesians 2:5-8** that were saved by grace alone? Isn’t this a contradiction? First of all we need to remember that Paul is writing to Christians who thought they could **merit their way** to heaven by good works. James is writing to Christians who thought that their **faith alone** would merit their way to heaven.

Allow me to try and explain this by using the most quoted Bible passage in the world. **John 3:16** says, **“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life”**.

You see loved ones for us to understand these passages we really need to understand the relationship between **grace and faith**. This passage talks about **grace** which is God’s gift and this passage also talks about **faith** which is man’s response. In fact a few verses later in **John 3:36** Jesus goes on to explain this even more, he says, **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God's punishment.”**

In both sentences, **believing** is the positive action, while its opposite is **disobedience**, the negative action. And what Jesus is telling us is that salvation is God's gift but the gift must be taken hold of by man's response in obedient faith. In other words **grace** makes salvation **possible** but **obedient faith** makes salvation **actual**.

And so when a person responds in Biblical faith to God's offer of salvation, they are neither earning nor deserving the gift, but only accepting it on the condition on which the Lord has promised to give it. We do not earn salvation and we can never earn our salvation, but we must comply with the conditions laid down by the Lord in order to receive the free gift of eternal salvation.

Listen loved ones; are we going to say that because we have faith we don’t have to confess Jesus as Lord? Are we going to say that because we have faith we don’t need to repent? Are we going to say that because we have faith we don’t need to be baptised? Are we going to say that because we have faith in God we can just go out and live our lives however we please?

It’s interesting isn’t it? When people say that all these requirements are **works**. Because I don’t know about you but **believing** is something I have to do, it’s not something someone does for me. **Confessing** is something I have to do; it’s not something someone does for me. **Repenting** is something I have to do; it’s not something someone does for me. And yet **baptism** is something you can’t do on your own because you need someone to baptise you.

Loved ones **which faith do you possess today?** Well in all honesty only you can answer that question. But I do hope and pray that if your faith hasn’t got any legs attached; a faith which only involves your **intellect**. Or if your faith hasn’t got any legs attached where it only involves **intellect** and **emotions**.

I hope and pray that you understand that a **dead faith** won’t save you; a **demonic faith** won’t save you. The only faith which counts is the faith which works hand in hand with good works. A faith which has **legs attached**; a faith which proves itself through actions.

Let me leave you by asking you to read a passage of Scripture with me which I hope and pray we can all honestly ask God to do in our lives. **Psalm 139:23+24** “Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.”