“Show Your Faith by Your Works”

James 2:14-26 February 16, 2014

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Introduction:

Remember the days of “Show and Tell” at school? It was an opportunity for one to not just talk about what they do or have, but to display visible evidence before their classmates of a possession or skill.

Jesus was a “Show and Tell” Savior. He drew many crowds to Himself through the many miracles that He performed: feeding 5,000, healing the sick, raising the dead and so on. People often marveled at what He could do. He did more than just talk the talk or preach and lecture, He demonstrated the power of the Kingdom of God through Himself.

While you and I may not be multiplying a boy’s lunch to feed 5,000, we can through our actions and service toward one another, volunteer to feed some. We may not be raising the dead or healing the sick (although, miracles really do still happen😊), we can volunteer to comfort and help those around us in need. What this does is it shows that we are more than just talk; rather our faith is manifested in what we do.

James knew that people need to see the church displaying tangible evidence of what they say they believe, especially when it comes down to loving one another. Jesus, along with many others in the Bible, let their works speak for them. And, how they worked showed what the real measure of their faith was on the inside of them.
James 2:14 “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?”

In my personal opinion, right at the beginning James seems to be questioning the validity of someone’s faith without works; without evidence. He said, “What doth it profit?” What does it profit you? What does it profit for others around you?

For a man or woman to say they have faith or are in the faith without evidence to back it up is like saying one is a doctor without a degree to prove it. When I go into a doctor’s office I am actually one of those people who will read the accreditations on the wall. This is the proof that they can take care of me. What I see before is speaking up on behalf of the individual to whom I am submitting myself for care. Those papers hanging on the walls are little, personal testimonies.

Faith that is worked out operates in the same manner. Faith is not silent. Faith is full of action. Faith is alive. Faith is shared through works to testify of its genuineness and sincerity. Faith does more than move mountains. If it is lived out in the lives of the men and women of God, it can move hearts toward salvation!

When one is living a life of faith people should be able to look at their life, their actions, as signs of accreditation that we belong to God. They should be able to tell by how we operate and carry ourselves through our display of service, that we live what we talk.

Where is the profit if there is no proof? What can you and I show to a hurting world that we have their best interest in mind; that we genuinely care about them as a person?

James 2:15-16 “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”
Words without supplying to the physical, emotional or spiritual comfort of another in distress are what these two verses speak of. But, all too often, how many times have we heard or spoken of what should be done to help others without putting in some work to help society move toward that goal?

It all becomes rhetoric like the broken promises of many political platforms. Dr. Suess said, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” (Quotegarden.com). Unless someone like you and I care enough to put some backbone and muscle behind our mouths, the world will never see the true love of Jesus Christ in action.

That’s what’s it’s all about, isn’t it? It’s going beyond pulpits to work to meet the needs of the communities that we are in, to put the love of Christ on display through our actions and not just our talk.

James saw emptiness in just words alone. Speaking “peace” without lifting a finger to physically help satisfy the present need, to him it was not true faith. True faith believes, and then allows that belief to be put to work. True faith has heavenly aspirations that work out to show good on earth. So, he asked, “What doth it profit” without it? What are each of us doing now that is benefiting his fellow man and the kingdom of heaven?

James 2:17-18 “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”

What you profess and what you do together should match up to display a well-rounded Christian. People can’t claim they are heaven bound and yet show no heavenly fruit in their lives. Such claims to faith are “dead,” meaning there is no life in it to prove it’s alive.

Anne Frank said, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world,” (Quotegarden.com). What are you waiting for? Show the world that God is alive in you! Put some action behind those words you speak!
The challenge was written: "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." This is something akin to one of our previous lessons: "Hear and Do the Word," (Wordforlifesays.com). Our faith, which comes through hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) should compel us to actively participate in the things that are written or spoken through that Word; it should get us involved in the things that God is concerned about. The faith that shows that the Word is working is the faith that can do more. Show me yours without it and I’ll show you mine with it – BAM!

This in turn shines a light to the world reflecting Him. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” (emphasis mine). This light shines by what it is doing. This kind of faith can make a bigger impact in this world and draw more men to God.

James 2:19-20 “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

One’s claim to faith goes beyond just believing in the very real fact that there is a one and only true living God. James opened up our perspective in saying that’s good; that’s a start, that’s right, “thou doest well.” But, he goes on to say, “The devils also believe, and tremble,” but they’re still “devils.”

Faith without fruit is not an operational faith. It’s stale. It’s stagnating. It does no good. Real faith has to act out what it is experiencing on the inside. Real, genuine faith will not just be content in a life of mediocrity – never accomplishing or making a difference for His kingdom. Real faith wants to see better in and for people’s lives. Real faith shows itself and overflows to those around him or her.

Therefore, if faith is meant to be alive and active and shown to the world throughout works, then “faith without works is dead.” The one who claims they believe without any evidence to support that proclamation is “vain,” useless, empty, in other words, no good.
Rather, Jesus wants to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord,” (Mt. 25:23, emphasis mine). Those who have put their faith into action and “done” something with what He has given them can make a difference. God can use people like this in the world. But, He can’t do that unless you work what He has given you.

If it ain’t working – it’s “dead.” It’s lifeless with no functioning activities. It’s useless!

James 2:21-24 “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

Genesis 15:6 declares, “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” This was after God told him to count the stars and see if he could number them. God then told him, “So shall thy seed be,” (Gen. 15:5).

One day Abraham’s faith was tested to see if he still believed in the promise that God had spoken to him; to see if the faith that was attributed to him was true on the inside. By taking action to obey God in going on with the procedure to offer “Isaac his son upon the altar,” he manifested through his works the very realness of his faith. His faith, in turn, became a testimony before the whole world. Abraham didn’t just talk of faith, he showed it.

James put the two together as in a great summation: “You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Check out this great inspirational video I came across showcasing some awesome quotes on faith in action along with some dynamic music. Very inspiring (Youtube.com).

One of the quotes shown is by Pam Farrel which really sums all this up. In it she asks, “What good is a faith if you can’t live it out?” This is exactly what James was calling his readers to do; live out your faith!
James 2:25 “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”

What you do matters! Rahab could have lost her life if she had been found out for helping the enemy of her people. But she heard about all that God had done in delivering her people and she believed for more. She said, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us,” (Jos. 2:9). Not only did she believe, she went as far as taking these men in her home and personally sought their safety. To make a long story short, those in her house lives were spared in the fall Jericho.

James 2:26 “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

The body is a physical shell, so to speak, that houses the spirit. At the time of death, the spirit departs leaving behind the lifeless shell that remains. When we attend funerals and view our dearly departed all we see is what is left, the outer man; the shell. “So faith without works is dead also.” Faith, without the outward workings of tangible evidences is just as dead as a body without a spirit. There is no life there.

Conclusion:

Last week’s lesson was focused on how we treat people. This week’s lesson is a continuation of that in showing that the actions we have toward others, our works, matter also.