

BELOW THE SURFACE

Week 4: Faith and Action

“For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” – Romans 3:28

“A person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.” – James 2:24

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?” – James 2:14

Paul – aggressively going after legalism, the idea that we can work our way in order to earn favor with God.

James – aggressively going after a casual form of Christianity, where you simply say, “oh, yeah. Well I believe in God,” but that is where it stops.

“... a living faith has power to save us.” – James 2:14

James is talking about having a faith that is so firm, so deeply rooted beneath the surface that it spills out of your heart into every aspect of your life.

Three Observations:

1. Faith truly works when _____.

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” – James 2:14-17

James’ first example of a living faith that results in action is of a believer coming across someone who is in desperate need.

“What kind of faith is that? That’s no faith at all.” – James 2:14, 17 (Paraphrased)

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God, Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.” – James 2:18-19

2. Faith truly works when _____.

Obedience is a step that shows our faith is firm, and without obedience then we are just playing church.

“You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend.” – James 2:20-23

James’ second example of a living faith that results in action, a living and firm faith is of Abraham.

Abraham was obedient because of his faithfulness that was in his heart. Since faith had taken root, we are able to see the fruit of his commitment.

A firm faith can sometimes be quite painful and test our patience.

“Our righteous acts are like filthy rags compared to God.” – Isaiah 64:6

3. Faith truly works when _____.

“You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” – James 2:24-26

We need to stand our ground and make certain that we do so with love.

Nothing erodes your witness for Christ more so than a condescending spirit, a hateful tone, a “holier than thou” attitude.

We have been called and commissioned to be salt and light. (Matthew 5:13-14)

We can practice compassion without giving our approval, and we must speak the truth in love.
