

**James 11 – Wisdom about Faith and Works**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 8/6/23**

What kind of faith do you have? Did you know you can have faith in God and still not be saved? It all depends on what kind of faith you have.

You may not know there are different kinds of faith. But it's important to know. We are saved by faith, but not all faith will save you. Do you have the kind of faith that will save you?

Some people think that no one can really know if they are saved or not. That's not Bible! 1 John 5:13 says:

*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

You can know that you have eternal life.

We are continuing to preach through James in a series called Wisdom for Everyday Life. Today I'm preaching a message called Wisdom about Faith and Works. My text is James 2:14-26 and in these verses James shows us 3 different kinds of faith.

*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

*But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this — and they tremble in terror. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor 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. You see that a person is justified by what he does 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 works is dead.*

That's the first kind of faith – dead faith. Faith with no life in it. Faith with no works. People with dead faith say they are believers, but they've never changed. Their lives are no different now than they were before they started believing.

That kind of faith will not save you! The kind of faith that gives life for eternity also works on your life in the here and now. The kind of faith that prepares you for heaven changes you on earth.

James says that saving faith will move you to action – like Rahab. Your faith will be observable through your works – like Abraham. Then James says in verses 19-20:

*You believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this and they tremble in terror. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without works is dead?*

That's the second kind of faith – demon faith. I'm not saying this is faith in demons, but it's the same kind of faith that demons have. That kind of faith is faith without repentance. This kind of faith is just an intellectual agreement with facts.

A lot of people say they believe in God. So what? Demons believe in God. Demons know the Bible is the word of God. Demons know that Jesus Christ is the son of God. In fact, a demon said to Jesus in Mark 1:24

*We know who you are, you're the Holy One of God.*

Demons believe Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world.  
Demons believe Jesus rose from the dead.

They know all of that is true. They saw it with their own eyes. But they will never repent of sin and rebellion and they will never submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And this world is full of people – and churches are full of people – who are 'believers' in name only. They say they believe in God, but they live like the devil.

Listen – if your faith is only in your head – it will not save you. Faith must impact your heart and your life. Romans 10:8-10 says:

*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

We need more than head faith – we need heart faith.

We need more than dead faith – faith without works.

We need more than demon faith – faith without repentance.

We need delivering faith – saving faith – faith that results in true change.

James tells us what this third kind of faith looks like in verses 21-24.

*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by*

*works faith was made perfect?*

I like that – true faith works *with* works! Made perfect means to be made complete. Faith without works is incomplete. James gives us a couple of examples of faith working with works.

*And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

I know these verses seem confusing to people because we are taught – rightly so – that we are saved by faith, not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Is James contradicting this? Does the Bible contradict itself? No!  
You see the passage in Ephesians goes on to say in verse 10:

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

We are not saved by works, but true saving faith will result in works, it will be accompanied by works. In other words, true faith will change your life.

Works are evidence of genuine faith. What we do does not save us but what we do shows whether or not we have saving faith.

Don't tell me you've come to Jesus and you're still the same. When you come to Him you're a new creation. When you're born again, you're brand new.

What kind of faith do you have? Intellectual belief with no life change? Or faith that leads you to trust God and obey Him? A faith that acts? I hope so, or else your faith is dead.

Faith without works is dead. Also, works without faith is dead. Faith and works go hand-in-hand. Hebrews 6:1 tells us that the foundation of the Christian faith is *the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.*

What are dead works? Works with no life in them. Works without faith. Works where we are trying to be righteous on our own apart from the finished work of Jesus Christ. We must repent of those dead works. But that is not enough; we must also place our faith in God. The result will be a changed life.

We've talked about faith without works regarding salvation – I also want to talk about how Faith Without Works is also dead in our daily lives. This kind of dead faith will not get results.

If we have it we will say, “I believe God, but I’m not seeing anything happen. I’m praying, but God is not answering.” I want to be really clear here. Prayer is an expression of faith. Prayer is the greatest work we can do. Sometimes prayer is the only thing we can do in certain situations. But not all the time. Sometimes there is other work to do.

In Exodus 14:15-16 Israel was trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. Moses began to pray.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.”*

God said, “Stop praying and start moving.” In other words, there’s a time for prayer and there’s a time for action. There’s a time to seek God and there’s a time to do what He says. There’s a time to hear God’s word and there’s a time to be a doer of the word.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says *we are God's fellow workers*.

We work with God, which means there is work for us to do.  
A farmer is one of the best examples of working with God.  
Do farmers pray for good weather, rain when it’s needed, etc.? Of course.  
Do they trust God for a big crop? Yes.

But are praying and believing enough? NO!  
What if they prayed and believed but never planted any seeds?  
What if they prayed and believed and planted seeds but never watered?  
What if they prayed and believed and planted seed and watered it, but never harvested their crop?  
The farmer must pray and believe – that’s faith.  
But he must combine it with works – planting, watering, weeding and harvesting.  
But he still needs faith, because he knows he can’t give life to the crop, that’s God’s part.

In all of life, God has a part and we have a part. We cannot do God’s part and He will not do our part. If the farmer says, “I’m tired of all this farm work, so I’m going to stop doing any work. I’m just going to trust God with my future and whatever crops He grows in my fields will be enough,” what’s going to grow? Nothing or weeds. So, in your life, if you are reaping a bunch of nothing or a bunch of weeds, I would say - look at your faith AND your works.

Let’s look at some practical examples of how faith without works is dead in our daily lives.

- Dead faith wants a harvest without planting any seed.
- Dead faith wants people to get saved but never shares the gospel with them.

Yes, we should pray and believe for people to get saved. But they won't get saved if no one ever shares the gospel with them. Faith without works is dead!

- Dead faith wants financial blessing without having to tithe or give or handling money biblically.
- Dead faith wants a good marriage without having to communicate, resolve conflicts or forgive.

I hate it when people tell me their marriage is not working. I say to them – marriages do no work! You must make marriage work! If it's not working, that means one or both of you have death faith – faith without works.

- Dead faith wants to have friends without initiating relationships.
- Dead faith wants a job where you don't have to work
- Dead faith wants to be the boss without doing what it takes to get that position
- Dead faith wants good grades without having to study
- Dead faith wants to overcome without doing any spiritual warfare

The point is – true faith is always expressed with works. I'm not saying there aren't times to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. But you only stand still when God says stand still!

I've known Christians in tough situations – marriage problems or financial problems or out of work or something else – and they're just sitting at home waiting for something to happen. I ask them, "What so you think is going to happen by just sitting at home waiting for something to happen?"

I can tell you what is going to happen – NOTHING!  
 No money is going to magically appear  
 No job is going to magically appear  
 No happy marriage is going to magically appear  
 In fact, left to themselves things will only get worse!

When God gave Joseph the revelation that famine was coming to Egypt, Joseph didn't just dream about it or pray about it – he went to work! He planned and organized and saved, and when the famine hit, everyone looked to Joseph for food. Genesis 42:1-2 says:

*When Jacob learned that there was food in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you sit around here and look at one another? I've heard that there is food in Egypt. Go down there and buy some so that we can survive and not starve to death."*

There are many Christians who sit around looking at each other, never doing anything and wondering why they are starving to death. Please hear me – there is a place for praying and waiting – but waiting on God is not doing nothing.

Isaiah 40:31 says:

*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

Sometimes people take this verse as an excuse to do nothing. But the word here for wait does not mean doing nothing. What does a waiter in a restaurant do? They serve you. This verse is saying that our hope is in God - our faith is in God - but unless we have a word from God to do nothing, we continue to work.

There are many biblical examples of passivity. In the story of David and Goliath, the giant ridiculed the army of Israel for 40 days and no one did anything about it. And along comes a shepherd boy named David. When he saw Goliath ridiculing the army of Israel, he wondered why no one was doing anything about it. The passive army of Israel accomplished nothing.

That's the same thing many of us accomplish when we are up against huge obstacles - nothing. We get paralyzed with fear and do nothing. When we do nothing we reap a great big harvest of nothing.

But one man with faith in action accomplished a miracle in the power of God. I believe that if any of the men sitting there doing nothing would have stepped out with faith in God, they could have defeated Goliath. God blesses faith in action - not faith without works, which is dead.

Today we must choose to believe and choose to put our faith into action. You need to put it into action in your home, your finances, your work, everything you do. But it starts with your heart - your spiritual life.

Do you have saving faith?

Saving faith changes your life.

Saving faith results in good works.

Saving faith is active.

Have you put it into action by trusting God with every area of your life? I want to close with a true story about a man who put his faith to work.

Charles Blondin was a 19th century French tightrope walker who did incredible feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at very scary heights. He would go across the tightrope blindfolded, or pushing a wheelbarrow, then he would turn somersaults.

An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker asking him to do his act over Niagara Falls. Blondin agreed and in 1859 he strung a tightrope 1,100 ft. long, 160 ft. above Niagara Falls. 10,000 people came out to see him.

Blondin started on the Canadian side and walked over to the American side. He

came across the rope suspended over the treacherous part of the falls – blindfolded!! And he made it across easily. Then he pushed a wheelbarrow across. Then he sat down and made and ate an omelet.

The crowds went wild, and Blondin said, "Do you believe I can do walk back to the other side?" WE BELIEVE!

"Do you really believe I can do it carrying a man on my back?" WE BELIEVE!

Then he asked, "Who will be that man?"

There was absolute silence.

Finally, one man came out of the crowd and volunteered to get on Blondin's back and be carried over.

There were 9,999 believers that day – only one had faith.

9,999 people had faith without works.

Only one put his faith into action.

Only one entrusted his life into the hands of another.

All the others had dead faith. Faith without works.

Now - what kind of faith do you have?

Do you just believe that God exists like demons do – or do you have true faith in God?

Is your faith just a head faith, or has it impacted your heart and life?

Is your faith dead or have you put it to work by trusting God with every area of your life?

We must be people of radical faith!

Let's be done with tiny trust.

Let's be done with brief belief.

Let's not be weak and wimpy in the Word!

Let's not have dead faith or demon faith – let's have true saving faith!

Faith that believes and trusts!

Faith that works in your life, your home, your finances, your work, and in everything you do.

Faith that changes you from the inside out!

Faith that serves God and praises God no matter what!

Faith that can be seen by the life that you live.

I ask you again - what kind of faith do you have?

Do you have a saving faith?

You need to be sure before you leave today.

Are you trusting in Christ and Christ alone?

Saving faith takes believing in the heart and confessing with your mouth.

It will radically change your life and it begins by believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord!