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Series- Putting Feet To Faith:

Becoming a Matthew 25 Church

Part 6- Faith in Action

Text: James 2:14-26

According to Mark 6:3, James was the half-brother of Jesus. James’ aim is to show the diaspora, the scattered believers, what practical Christianity looks like. These Jewish Christians had heard the good news that we cannot earn our way into God’s forgiveness. We are saved by grace through faith. James wants these believers to *show* their faith. James’ writing complements, rather than contradicts, Paul’s teaching of salvation by grace, through faith. James would say we cannot *see* faith, but we *can* see your actions that are faith-based.

The section at which we look today, begins with a piercing rhetorical question.

What good is it, if.....?

That is, what does it profit? (v. 14, 16)

First hypothetical:

A naked, hungry person comes across your path (v. 15)

**Option**: apply rhetoric (v. 16). This is as far as some people get. They talk!!!!

**Result**: No benefit whatsoever!

**Principle**: Rhetoric/declaration/proclamation without demonstration is dead (lifeless). V.17. Genuine faith is evidenced by observable action.

1 John 3:17-18

***17****But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

***18****My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

Second hypothetical:

The wedding of faith and action (v.18-20)

**Option**: Blend both word and deed (Greek=*ergon; work, action, deed, accomplishment)*

**Result**: Our rhetoric is then seen as having substance. The action gives credibility to the words. Faith is absolutely critical. We are saved by it (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are to walk by it (2 Corinthians 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). However, in the ideal world, faith has a partner.

In this text, two historical figures are used as an illustration of this one principle: faith *demonstrated* is to be preferred over a faith merely *articulated*.

1. Abraham in his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac (v. 21-24). As much as Abraham might have talked about his love for Yahweh or his willingness to obey God or his desire to have people know that he was a man of faith, it was not until he was willing to bring the knife down on the neck of his son that God *saw* his faith (Genesis 22:10,12; James 2:23-24). Someone has said,

 *Abraham was not saved by faith* ***plus*** *works, but by a faith* ***that*** *works.*

1. Rahab ran a guesthouse which was possibly also a brothel. At great personal risk, she hid two Israelite spies from Acacia Grove (Joshua 2:1-6) and arranged their safe escape from those that wanted them detained and probably killed (Joshua 2:14-16). Warren Wiersbe says Rahab could have had *dead* faith or *demonic* faith. Instead, she exercised *dynamic* faith.

**Principle:** The maturing believers search out ways and opportunities to show the wedding (of word and deed). I suggested earlier that genuine faith is evidenced by observable action. Let me push this and suggest that we search out ways to put feet on our faith. We must make the phone calls and visit the web sites and ask questions of friends and associates.

Abraham was considered righteousness because of a deed ( v. 21).

Rahab was considered righteousness because of a deed (v. 25)

**Summary**

* Faith, by itself, is dead (v. 17). Cannot give life.
* Faith, without accompanying deeds, is useless (v. 20) Cannot give purpose.
* James is not saying that we must *add deeds* to our faith. James would say it is not genuine faith at all, unless it has deeds/works as part of its fabric, its DNA.
* James is not saying that there is no value in words. James *is* saying that the greater theological and social impact is made when we have a wedding: of word and deed. We dare not simply worship God. We find ways to, through our service, our works, introduce others to Jesus.

**Illus.**

On July 2, 1982, Larry Walters (April 19, 1949 – October 6, 1993) made a 45-minute flight in a homemade airship made of an ordinary patio chair and 45 [helium](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helium)-filled [weather balloons](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_balloons). The aircraft rose to an altitude of over 15,000 feet (4,600 m) and floated from the point of takeoff in [San Pedro, California](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Pedro%2C_Los_Angeles%2C_California), into and violating [controlled airspace](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controlled_airspace) near [Long Beach Airport](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Beach_Airport). During the landing, the aircraft became entangled in power lines, but Walters was able to safely climb down. The flight attracted worldwide media attention and inspired a later movie and many imitators. One account says that after Larry Walters was safely on the ground, he was asked three questions.

“Were you scared?” YES

“Would you do it again?” NO

“What did you do it?” BECAUSE YOU CAN’T JUST SIT THERE.

Beloved, if we are to be a Matthew 25 church, putting feet to our faith and hands to our holiness, we cannot just sit there!!!!!!!!!!

Let us serve in word AND in deed.

Amen