

Series: Just Do It; Sermon: Faith without Works
delivered by Josh Moody, senior pastor, on September 20, 2020

Bible text explored: James 2:14–26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. What’s the main idea of the passage?
2. Up to this point in the book James has taught Christians to put their faith into action. Like a good teacher, James is now anticipating objections to what he has said. What are the two objections that James answers in this passage? (2:14-17, 18-26)
3. How would you describe the type of ‘faith’ that James is objecting to?
4. How would you describe the type of faith that James is advocating for?
5. Is it possible for someone to believe in God, but not be saved?
6. Protestants have long believed that a person is justified by faith alone, but James uses the phrase, ‘you see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.’ When they are both understood properly the phrases are not actually in contradiction with each other. Why might some people be confused when they’re trying to reconcile James’ and Paul’s language regarding justification, and how would you help them through that?
7. James is calling us to put our faith into practice. In the context of the book, he’s taught Christians to count it all joy when they face trials, to love their brother and sister, and to care for the poor. How can you put those things into practice this week?
8. Are there any areas of your life that are particularly difficult for you to put your faith into practice?