

May 9, 2021

Am I a Servant of God

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?...In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead."
James 2:14-24

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
Ephesians 2:8-10

Faith is not just a word. True faith must change the way we live in very real and measurable ways or it is not faith. For centuries believers have been challenged to understand the roles that faith and works have in our salvation. Many believers still hold to the idea that doing enough good works will somehow offset the **"law of sin and death"**. Hopefully we have come to understand the futility of that belief. I cannot work my way to heaven, because sin kills absolutely.

So, what is James trying to tell us in our context for today? First, let me state quite plainly that I do not believe, as many have for centuries, that James and Paul hold conflicting theologies. I am, in fact, convinced that they are saying exactly the same thing.

James wants believers to understand that true faith, saving faith, is demonstrable. True faith shows up in the lives of the saved through their deeds; in the way they live before the world. Paul wants believers to understand that those saved by God's grace through faith, were saved to do good deeds.

The point, I believe, that both of these New Testament authors are making, is that saving faith will be obvious in the lives of the saved; in how they treat others; in the deeds they do less than in the words they say. The saved are obvious, or should be, because of what they do day by day.

Jesus commanded his followers, **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** (John 13:34-35) Both James and Paul teach us the necessity of living our faith before the world. If we don't we are, in fact, faithless.

My faith is reflected in everything I say and in everything I do. My faith must shine out in the darkness of this world and it can only shine through my deeds. As a believer I cannot be like the rest of those in the world; I cannot talk like the worldly, I cannot judge like the worldly, and I cannot act like the worldly.



So, the challenge for those of us who believe is to live our faith before the world. Our Lord tells us, **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 5:14-16)

My faith, if it is true faith, if it is saving faith, cannot be hidden. My deeds, every one of them, will ultimately bring praise to God if I am a true believer. So, what are you and I known for?

What do those who know us, or follow us, or read us think about us? Is our light shining or is it hidden? Does it bring light to everyone around us or does it add to the darkness?

We are either living out our faith by bringing light or we are part of the darkness. We cannot be both. Our faith is either obvious in our lives; in what we say and do, or we have no faith.

