

'FAITH THAT REALLY WORKS'

(Christian Faith – 'Walk the Talk')

James 2:14-26

'Life-likeness'

If you have ever walked through a wax museum you surely agree that the artists who make those life-like figures of famous people are creative geniuses. But if you try to strike up a conversation with one of their life-like images it will become instantly obvious that you are talking to a dummy. No sane person would do that unless he or she is being facetious – you can't have a relationship with something that is merely life-like but lacking genuine liveliness. It's the same with many religious people – like wax figures that may even have an audible feature, they seemingly have true spiritual life, but just can't get into motion somehow and prove it. Today it is even possible to give robotic animation to a life-like replica of someone – but as amazing as it may seem there is no real human likelihood to it upon closer examination. The movements are stiff; the speech is mechanical; the eyes are dead and there is no emotion to it; it's just full of fuses, wiring and computer chips fabricating the mere illusion of life.

There are a lot of professing Christians who are simply programmed, robotic facsimiles of spiritually alive, born-again, regenerated believers. It is clear from Scripture that in these last days life-like but lifeless religious automatons will abound (*Matthew 23:27-28, 2 Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:16, Jude 12-13 & 16-19*). The Lord's intention was/is to "...build His Church..." out of spiritually alive and vibrant people, not to run a religious 'wax museum' of cold, stiff, spiritually insensitive people claiming to have faith in Christ but never showing it in action.

James' concern for the troubled Christians of the early Church Age era was that perhaps their inability to show grace under trial was due to a superficial belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt many of them claimed to have come to trust in the saving work of Christ on the cross, but now that that profession of faith was being tested for legitimacy. It was becoming clear that the belief of their minds may not have migrated to their hearts and souls. True faith when tested is made purer and holier and godlier through the fiery tests of life (*1 Peter 1:6-9*). Inferior faith wilts, melts or becomes combustible under testing. In contrast faith from above that has been engrafted into the soul at salvation is able to flourish in loving and serving the Lord in the midst of any trials that may come – artificial faith that is merely a mental or emotional acquiescence to some sentimental historic facts about Jesus will be debilitated, disenchanted, dysfunctional and compromised when adversities come.

While God-given faith is able to see trials as opportunities for growth in grace and sharing of the faith with others (even persecutors), faith that is merely human positivity will falter and fail proving its inferior composition to that which is a gift of God (*Proverbs 24:10*). Watching true faith under duress is inspiring (*Hebrews 13:7*), but watching fake faith under testing is befuddling (*Proverbs 25:26*). Wax figures and robots look great and may amaze people with their life-likeness, but when inclement conditions come changing their environmental conditions, ruined cosmetics, and defective mechanics exhibit their superficiality. So it is with the Christian's faith fiery trials prove and perfect them. For people whose faith is merely spiritual emotion, trials reveal their need of true saving faith from God instead of their life-like but lifeless religious imitation.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, but that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Ephesians 2:8-10

"...know that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, Who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 5:9-11

"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving (the day of deliverance) of the soul."

Hebrews 10:38-39

Faith & Works: ‘2 Sides of 1 Coin’
(One Without the Other - ‘A Counterfeit Christian’)
James 2:14-26

‘God’s Faith Inspection’
(The ‘Needy Brother or Sister’ Test)
2:14-20

*“What does it profit, my brethren, if **someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?** If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” **but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?**”*

Thus also faith, by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

*But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.***

*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that **faith without works is dead?**”*

Other than the example given by James, what are some other examples of people who say they are followers of Christ but by their words, actions or lifestyles say something else?

What are the various problems caused by people who don’t ‘walk the talk’ of being saved?

Why did James include the statement about the inadequate belief of demons?

Discuss how faith and good works are both necessary in a true Christian? (If either is missing what is the result?)

‘God’s Obedience Test’
(The ‘Abraham’ & ‘Rahab’ Exams)
2:21-26

*“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?** 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.

*Likewise, was not **Rahab the harlot, also justified by works,** when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

***For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**”*

Why does James select the incident of Abraham and Isaac to teach about faith and works? (Genesis 22)

Why does James select the incident of Rahab in Jericho to teach about faith and works? (Joshua 2)

What are some practical lessons for all Christians to learn from this?