

*Beulah Baptist Church*  
*Rev. Jerry D. Black, Pastor*

*Sunday School Lesson*  
*August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020*  
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**Lesson: Faith Without Works Is Dead**

**Text: James 2:14-26**

**I. Aim for Change / Learning Objectives**

By the end of the lesson, we will...

**Learning Objectives:**

- A. Understand the difference between faith spoken and faith accomplished by actions
- B. Learn from the examples of Abraham and Rahab how to enact ones faith
- C. Ask, answer and act on the question for oneself, “How can I demonstrate faith in what I do?”

**Unifying Principle— Just Do It.** Some people make bold claims about the standards by which they live, but their actions deny those claims. How can we tell when someone is genuine? James says the one who has faith will demonstrate that faith by his or her works, as did Abraham and Rahab.

**Key Verse—** “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*”  
(James 2:26, KJV).

**People Places and Times**

**Rahab.** When the Israelites sent spies to get a feel of Jericho and the surrounding land of Canaan, Rahab hid the two Israelite spies from local authorities. She recognized the God of Israel as the one true God (Joshua 2:11) and begged the spies to spare the lives of her and her family. The spies instructed Rahab to hang a scarlet rope from her window and then their lives would be spared. This happened, and everyone under Rahab’s roof was saved. Later, Rahab became the mother of Boaz, whom we read about in the book of Ruth

**II. Background**

The passage for today seems to contradict Paul’s teaching that salvation is by faith alone. It was a stumbling block to Martin Luther, who could not reconcile Paul and James on the issue of faith and works. James’ letter is not about salvation, however, but argues against a faith that is alone—a faith stripped of practical responses of gratitude to God for salvation. While Paul’s argument is that justification is by faith alone, it is clear from the rest of his teaching that this faith is not alone. It needs to be “worked out with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

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**The Lesson At-A-Glance...**

1. Work: Evidence of Faith (James 2:14–19)
2. Those Who Accompanied Their Faith with Works (vv. 20–26)

**III. In Depth with More Light on the Text**

**1. Work: Evidence of Faith (James 2:14-19)**

The little parable (vv. 15–17) about sending a needy brother or sister away without assistance parallels John’s question: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). Evidence of authentic faith is seen in the work of obedience accompanying it.

“A man may say” (James 2:18) indicates that James understands the well-known argument present in his time. He does not argue for the superiority of works over faith; rather, he argues that there is no authentic Christian faith without works of righteousness. Such faith is worthless, like that of demons that believe in God and shudder (v. 19) but fail to back it up with obedience to God.

**2. Those Who Accompanied Their Faith with Works (vv. 20-26)**

James in this section proves his point by alluding to their ancestors Abraham and Rahab the prostitute as examples of those who backed their faith with work. Both Paul and James support their position with Genesis 15:6 but in different events and context. Paul’s reference to Abraham’s faith was at a time between when Abraham had been promised a child and when Isaac finally arrived. James, on the other hand, refers to Abraham’s faith when he offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar (Genesis 22:1–19). This kind of faith was accompanied by action—offering his son on the altar for sacrifice. Abraham was not justified by this action but by the faith that produced it. Rahab, the second proof, was also mentioned in Hebrews as a heroine of the faith (11:31). According to James, her actions were proof of her faith. By faith, she risked her life to save the lives of the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:1–21).

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**Liberating Lesson & Application for Activation—see Sunday School book...**

**Vocabulary Words You Should Know...**

**Philanthropy / Philanthropic (an adjective)**

*Philanthropy refers to charitable acts or other good works that help others or society as a whole. Philanthropy can include donating money to a worthy cause, or volunteering time, effort, or other forms of altruism.*

**Scripture Memory Verse...** John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.