

**OUR SAVIOUR'S CHAPEL DELSU ABRKA**  
**MIDWEEK TEACHING AND PRAYER SERVICE**  
**December 2, 2020**  
**SERIES ON BOOK STUDY: THE BOOK OF JAMES**

**AN AUTHENTIC FAITH**

**James 2:14-26**

This is one of the passages in James that has caused great stir among some theologians of old. Paul taught in Romans 3:21-31 and Ephesians 2:1-10 that salvation comes not by works of the law, but by the grace through faith. In our passage, James states that faith that produces no works is dead. James is more concerned about the ethical dimension of faith, while Paul argues vehemently against those who think faith plus other religious rituals outside of Christ can save.

Acts 15 is the main passage that serves as background for Paul's argument against those who were teaching that faith alone in Christ was not sufficient. James actually presided over the meeting where Paul, Barnabas and Peter submitted reports of their preaching among non-Jews. James and Paul could not disagree over the question of salvation which is through faith alone by the grace of God! Paul's argument has to do with what happens before conversion, while James is more particular about what happens after conversion. James also is more concerned about the consequences, the practical evidence of one's faith that is of one's belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, we have to understand that James and Paul addressed two different groups. Paul wrote to attack those who were destabilizing new believers on their new found faith. He directed his attack on Judaizers, who insisted and argued that it was through the works of the law that every person would be saved and by works of the law, they meant temple rituals, circumcision, Sabbath-keeping and alms-giving among others. James audience, the Christians scattered around the then known world, possibly had their own hangover on the issue of faith. Some of them held to the notion that only inner conviction was all that mattered in religion. And faith has nothing to do with the needs around them. James countered this by reminding them that intellectual accent or mere belief in the Lord Jesus is not enough, as their faith must show itself in good deeds or outward deeds – meeting needs around them. There is therefore no contradiction between the two church leaders. A careful contextual study of their two positions should clear any misunderstanding on the part of their readers and students. From our passage, the following are some practical lessons on the topic, "An Authentic Faith."

**An Authentic Faith Performs (vv. 14-17)**

A believer in Christ shows by his actions and performances within and outside the fellowship that he or she acts on the basis of information or teachings received from the Lord. In other words, profession without performance is meaningless. Sounding pious is not the issue, but going the extra mile to express our piety is the issue at stake. Until the Christian begins to bear fruits of righteousness and kindly acts toward others, such a faith cannot be said to be authentic or productive. James makes use of vivid illustrations in verse 15-17. There are brothers and sisters in the churches without basic necessities of life due to poverty or other circumstances beyond their control. In the same churches are many who are rich or can afford to take care of such necessities. It would be a shame if such fortunate members simply look the other way and avoid the needy brothers and sisters.

### **An Authentic Faith Goes Beyond Confession (vv. 18-19)**

There is no professional person who does not take pride in his or her trade or profession. No medical doctor or engineer or accountant would be given enough recognition by people without evidence of good practice. So is a Christian. What we do, the activities we engage in will show others and God that we are what we claim or profess to be. There are so many confessors of faith in the Lord, but who are simply blemishes on Christianity. James says faith without deeds of righteousness or kindness is simply good for nothing. How can one claim to believe in the Lord Jesus, and not do those things He commands His followers to do? The Lord Jesus taught the following lessons in Matthew 7:17-21.

The Lord also made a very strong statement during His extensive Sermon that, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

It would appear that James in verse 19 identifies with the demonic forces those who profess to be Christians but don't practice their faith accordingly. If anyone says he believes in God, but fails to do what God wants him or her to do, he or she is not different from the demons who believe in God but are disobedient and rebellious against His perfect will. The demons then shudder or their knees knock against each other, or begin to shake at the thought of the judgment awaiting them! In essence, severe judgment awaits those who besmear faith confession of faith in the Lord by doing the opposite of what He instructs them to do. So many church folks may not realize they are within the camp of Satan when they are disobedient, rebellious and acts as if they have never professed faith in the Lord.

### **An Authentic Faith Obeys God (vv. 20-26)**

The words of our Lord come to mind here again that it is not everyone who claims to know the Lord that is obedient. He said such people will not be permitted to enter heaven to fellowship with the heavenly hosts (Matt. 7:21). James uses two people with active faith as examples of obedience to God. He first used Abraham, "the Father of faith" as an example of authentic faith that obeys. Hebrews 11:8 states it thus: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." James is saying here that our faith and obedience go together because it takes obedience to act our faith in the Lord. A Christian must thus develop a complete obedience to the Word of God, thus bearing fruits for God's glory. The other example is Rahab, a prostitute who shielded the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. A woman of such character usually hears a lot about what is going around, and must have heard of the almighty hand of God on behalf of the Israelite. She must have been waiting for an opportunity to meet some of them, and when the opportunity came, she decided to side with the people of God against her own people.

In summary, there are many other practical things you can do to show that faith and deeds go together. When you are open to the Holy Spirit, you will be able to let people see that your faith is authentic and productive indeed, and not mere profession. The Lord can help your unbelief and empower you to act out your faith. May the Lord help you to carry around an authentic faith for His own glory and for your own blessing.