

Faith That Works

by Chuck Smith

True faith works and will be evidenced by the works that we do, and genuine faith is essential for being a Christian.

Duration: 36:10

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of aligning our words with our actions in our relationship with God. He uses the example of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac to demonstrate true belief in God's promises. The preacher also references the parable of the two sons, highlighting the significance of actually doing the will of the Father rather than just saying the right words. He urges the congregation to seek consistency in their lives and to make sure their relationship with God is genuine by keeping His commandments and loving others. The sermon concludes with a reminder that our opinion of ourselves is not as important as Jesus' opinion of us.

Transcript

In James chapter 2, James talks to us about faith and works, and he there in talking to us about faith and works, uses Abraham as an example of a man whose works actually caused him to be justified before God. It is interesting that Paul also talks about faith and works, and Paul uses the story of Abraham to justify his argument that we are actually justified by faith apart from works. Now, are Paul and James telling us different things? For our scripture reading, let's turn back to Genesis chapter 22 and read about this man's Abraham and his faith, and we will read the first 14 verses, and I'll read the first, the odd-numbered.

We encourage you to follow Pastor Brian as he leads you in the reading of the event. Shall we stand as we read the word of God? And it came to pass that after these things that God did test Abraham, and he said unto him, Abraham, and he said, behold, here I am. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him therefore a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and he took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son. And he claimed the wood for the burnt offering and rose up, and he went to the place which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said unto his young men, abide ye here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac, his son, and he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham, his father, and he said, My father.

And he said, Here I am, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built an altar and laid the wood in order, and he bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.

For now I know that thou fearest God. See, thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.

And Abraham went, and he took the ram and offered him as a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place, Jehovah-Jireh, as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this classic example of faith. A man so convinced of the truth of your word that when tested he was willing to offer his only son, knowing, Lord, that you had promised that through this son would the Messiah come. And knowing that his son had not yet had any children, and knowing that through him the promise was made, was so convinced of the truth of your promises that he believed that if necessary you would raise him from the dead because your word cannot fail.

Father, we pray that you would help us. And as the disciples said, Lord, increase our faith. May we have that kind of confidence, Father, in your word, that we know that your word will stand, your word will not fail.

And so, Lord, help us to have that kind of faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Shall we sit? Okay, standing already. Very good. There are many who imagine that there is a kind of divergent views between Paul and James in regards to faith and works.

They both use Abraham as the example to prove their point. James tells us that actually Abraham, by his works, was justified. Reading there in chapter 2 of James, as he refers to this particular incident, verse 17, he said, even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.

Yes, a man may say, you have faith and I have works, but you show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. Well, that's great.

The devils also believe and they tremble. But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Can't you see that how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God. So you see then, how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.

So Paul, looking at it, said Abraham was justified by faith. Are they telling us different things? Actually, they are telling us the same thing. One is emphasizing the faith of Abraham and the other emphasizes the fact that if it is a true faith, it will be demonstrated by the works that faith without works is dead.

But in the same token, you could say that works without faith is useless. Paul, looking at that same event, said, for if Abraham were justified by his works, he has whereof to glory, but not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that works is the reward, not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. James, looking at this said, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Can you see how faith wrought with his works and by works his faith was made complete? And the scripture was fulfilled, which said Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God.

Seemingly there is a conflict. Paul declared that Abraham was justified by faith, whereas James tells us he was justified by his works. Which one is right? And in reality, they're both right.

This example shows us that faith and works are not opposites. They are in fact inseparable. No man will ever be moved to action without faith.

And no man's faith is genuine unless he is moved to action. True faith is manifested when it works. There are many people who can talk a good talk.

They can say the right things. They have the Christian vocabulary down pat. To listen to them talk, they sound like the most spiritual, the most righteous, the most godly person you have ever met.

But as you look at their lives, so often you find that their talk and their walk are not in agreement. They may say the right things, but they don't do the right things. Jesus said, not all who say unto me, Lord, Lord, are going to enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of the father.

It is true that a man is not going to get to heaven unless he calls Jesus Lord. If thou will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. So no man is going to enter the kingdom of heaven without acknowledging that Jesus is Lord.

But it also follows, not everyone who acknowledges him as Lord is going to enter the kingdom of heaven either. So that it is faith and works or the faith that works that brings justification. And that's what both Paul and James are saying.

Jesus said, why do you call me Lord? And yet you do not do the things which I command you. James is saying your actions actually speak louder than your words. There are many who are doing the right things, but often they are doing them with wrong motivations.

You can do things that look very spiritual and very righteous, but as you are doing them in your heart, you are doing them in order to impress people. You're hoping that people will see you doing it. In fact, they will oftentimes sort of announce what they're doing in order that people might look and say, did you see what he did? Isn't that wonderful? Oh, what a righteous person he is.

And that was their whole desire and motive in doing what they did. It wasn't really motivated by the desire to just please God, but the desire to be known by others as a spiritual person. My motive is often in destroying the value of the work that I have done.

Jesus said, take heed, be careful about this, that you don't do your righteousness before men with the motive of being seen by men. For if you do, then you have your reward. But then he talked about how that I should pray not in an ostentatious way in order to draw attention to myself and people say, my, what a man of prayer.

But when I pray, I should go in the closet, shut the door, pray to the father who sees in secret, and the father that sees in secret will reward me. When I give, I'm not to make a big display over my giving, but again, just to not even let my right hand know what my left hand is doing. I dare you to do that.

Just reach in your pocket and don't look at the bill that you're pulling out when the offering plate goes by. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. And so he's pointing out the importance of the motive of what I am doing.

Because I can be doing a good thing, I can be doing a right thing, but I can have the wrong motive, and thus the value of doing it is not there. James may say that faith without works is dead, but in the same token, you can say that works without faith are meaningless. Faith and works are like two oars in a rowboat.

The one faith, the other works. Now, if you only use the one oar, works, and you're just using just the one oar, you're just going to go in circles. You're not going to get anywhere.

If you just use the other oar, again, you're just going to go in circles and not get anywhere. If you want to really get somewhere, you've got to use both oars, faith and works. They complement each other.

True faith can be manifested and will be manifested by its works. I may declare that I believe a certain thing, but if I truly believe it, my actions must correspond with what I say I believe. I could tell you this morning, I believe that a terrorist has planted a bomb in this pulpit, and it's going to go off in 30 seconds.

And if I just continued here to calmly talk to you and go on and quote scriptures and so forth, the 30 seconds go by and you say, he didn't believe that. But if I say, I believe a terrorist has planted a bomb in this pulpit, it's going to go off in 30 seconds, and I race to the door, you'll say, let's get out of here. You see, what I am saying is being matched by what I am doing.

That's basically what James is saying. If you really believe it, it will be manifested in what you do. And so my actions must be in agreement with what I state.

If I am trusting God, and if I say, I'm just trusting the Lord to take care of me, to take care of all of my bills, and I know that the Lord is going to supply my needs. But then if I go around begging people and saying, can you help me out? I've got this bill coming up and I really need, can you really help me here? And I'm coming around begging for money, and yet I say, well, I'm trusting the Lord. You see, there's an inconsistency there.

If I'm truly trusting the Lord, I'm not going to be going around looking for a handout from others. I had a fellow come to me one day and he was telling me about his great faith. He was telling me that he had all of the faith in the world.

He just believed the promises of God and was going on and on and on telling me of his great faith. I thought that maybe I was standing before Abraham, the way the guy testified of the great faith he had. But after 30 minutes of telling me how great his faith was, he said, could you give me five bucks so I could get enough gas to go home? I said, fellow, if you've got all of the faith that you say that you have, why would you ask me for money? I was getting ready to ask you because of all of the faith that you've got.

But there's inconsistency, and this is the problem. So oftentimes, we can say what sounds good, but when it comes right down to it, by the way we are living, by our actions, we are actually disproving what we are saying. There's an inconsistency so often, and throughout the scriptures, there is that emphasis that we need to make certain that our words and our actions are consistent.

John says, if we say that we have fellowship with God and we are walking in darkness, we lie. We don't do the truth. To say that you have fellowship in God is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but if you're walking in darkness, what you say is meaningless because your actions are not in agreement with what you say.

That's basically what James is telling us. Faith works. Faith is manifested by its works, and faith without works is dead.

John goes on to say, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. The truth isn't in us. There are some people today who claim that they have attained sinless perfection.

They have risen to a spiritual status where they never sin, and when I meet these people, I love to have a little sport with them. I love to antagonize them until they blow up, and then I say, well, you know, too bad. Sinless perfection.

You can say it, but our actions prove different. We haven't yet attained to sinless perfection, but as John said, if we say we have no sin, we're only deceiving ourselves. The truth isn't in us.

John went on to say that if a person says that he knows God and he doesn't keep his commandments, that he is a liar, the truth isn't in him. John goes on to say, if he says that he is in the light and he hates his brother, he is in darkness even until now. In other words, John is saying, look, what you say has to match with what you are or what you say is meaningless.

You're just a liar. You're deceived. You don't know the truth.

There's got to be that harmony between my profession and my actions and my activities. Jesus, in writing to the church of Laodicea, there in Revelation 317, said, because you say I am rich, I'm increased with goods, I have need of nothing. That's what they were saying about themselves.

But Jesus said, you don't know that you are wretched, you are miserable, you are blind, and you are naked. They had one opinion of themselves. Jesus had another.

I believe that the opinion of Jesus about me is far more important than my opinion of myself. I really don't know myself. David said, Lord, you know me completely.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. I can't attain it. What knowledge? Self-knowledge.

So, search me, O God. Know my heart. Put me through the test.

Know my thoughts and see if there is a way of wickedness in me. Now, as we read of Abraham and the incident with his son Isaac, it said, the Lord put Abraham to the test. This is a test, Abraham.

Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. Offer him unto me as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you. God had promised, through Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Isaac was not married, did not have any children, but God had promised, through Isaac shall thy seed be called. He had the Word of God. He had the promise of God.

And now God is asking him to do something that is totally inconsistent with what God said. Take now thy son, Isaac, thine only son, whom you love. Offer him as a sacrifice, burnt offering unto me on a mountain that I will show you.

And so, Abraham went on his way to fulfill the promise. How could he do that? People say, how could God ask him to do that? How could he do that? Well, we are told that he had faith in the promise of God, the promise that through Isaac shall your seed be called. Now God, you've got a problem.

You've told me that through Isaac the seed is going to be called. Now you're telling me to sacrifice. God, you got a problem.

But it said Abraham believed the promise of God so completely that he believed that God would even raise Isaac from the dead to complete and to fulfill this promise. That's how strong his faith was. I don't understand how this is going to work out.

But God, you've promised through Isaac the seed's going to be called. And so he was willing to go ahead in this testing. And of course, as he raised the knife, the Lord said, okay, Abraham, you've proved that you really believe my promise.

Jesus said, what do you think about this? There was a certain man who had two sons. He came to the first and said, son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and he said, no way, I won't do it.

But afterwards he repented and he went out and worked in the vineyard. He came to his second son and he said, son, go today and work in my vineyard. And he said, yes, sir, dad, I'll be glad to go.

But he didn't go. Jesus said, which of the two sons did the will of his father? And they answered him, well, obviously the first, he was the one who went out into the field. You see, it isn't what I say that really matters so much as what I do.

I can affirm a great faith. I can affirm a positive faith in God. But yet if I'm going around just saying, oh, I don't know what I'm going to do.

Well, there's problems in this. Oh, you know, I just, I don't know. I'm just so torn up and all.

You don't have faith in God. You're not really trusting God. You see, your actions are disproving what your words were saying.

James said, you say that you believe in God, big deal. That doesn't mean that you're saved. All it means is you're not a fool because the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

So saying that you believe in God really is meaningless. It doesn't buy you anything. It doesn't prove that you are saved.

People oftentimes believe that because they can say things like that. Well, I believe in God. I believe that Jesus is the son of God, that that saves them.

No, you can say things that aren't true. And John points that out. You say these certain things, they're good to say, but unless your actions are in harmony with what you are saying, what you say is meaningless.

So it's not believing in God or submitting yourself to God or serving God that is necessary for salvation. Someone has asked, if being a Christian was a crime and you were arrested for being a Christian, when you came in court, could they find enough evidence to convict you? Something to think about. Is it worked out in your life? Faith without works is dead standing alone.

A true faith works and it will be evidenced by the works that I do. Genuine faith is essential for being a Christian. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

But genuine faith works and genuine faith is manifested by its works. It's not just saying that God is first in your life or that God has the top priority in your life or that your relationship with God is the most important thing in your life. These are just words.

Anybody can just say those words. The issue is, are they true? Are they borne out by the way you live? They are not true just by the fact that you said them. They can only be manifested by the way you live.

For faith without works is dead standing alone. Father, we pray that you will, first of all, give us that kind of faith that works. And Lord, may we examine ourselves to see if we be in the faith as the scriptures tell us to do.

As we look at our lives, do they reflect that we walk by faith, that you are first, that we have forsaken our own ambitions and desires, that we might do your will. And Lord, as we examine ourselves and as we judge ourselves, we pray that you will reveal to us that which you know about ourselves. And Lord, help us that it won't be just talk, but that the talk will be backed up by our lives and by the way we live, knowing that faith without works is dead.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today.

As James said in chapter one, that the word of God is like a mirror. A person looks into it, sees his real self, and then immediately goes away and forgets what he saw. It may be that the spirit has sort of held up the mirror to you today as far as works and faith, professions versus actual possession.

And it may be that you've seen that there is sort of an inconsistency here. You are saying one thing but doing another, and perhaps the spirit has convicted you. These men are down here to pray with you and to pray for you today.

And so as soon as we're dismissed, we would encourage you to come on forward and just ask them to pray for you, that the Lord will give you a consistency in your life, that the things that you do will harmonize with what you say you believe. The Bible tells us to make certain of our relationship with God, not to just

really make sure you're not deceived, that because you can say the right things, you know, that you're all right just by saying them. They say that if you tell a lie often enough, you'll begin to believe it yourself.

And I think that there are many people in that condition. They've told the lie long enough that they're in good shape with God that they actually believe it. In reality, their lives do not demonstrate it or manifest it.

And so I would encourage you to come on down and make certain of your relationship with God, that it isn't just something that is a profession, but something that is a reality in your life. It's proved by the way you're living. May the Lord be with you.

Watch over and keep you. And in as much as true faith is manifested, if God is first, it'll be manifested. I'll be looking forward to seeing you tonight as we have this marvelous speaker with us who's going to be talking to us about the inerrancy of God's Word.

May the Lord be with you, bless you, keep you, go before you, and guide you in His ways. In Jesus' name. The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. God bless you.

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