

Wednesdays in the Word
Digging Deeper
July 22, 2020
James 2:14--27
Faith Without Works?

If you only had three years to share the most important concepts of your life with the most important people in your life what would you say? Would you be able to truly convey the meaning of life and the teachings of your soul to those you truly love? Jesus was keenly aware of the limited time he had to share His message. John 7:5-7. He was also sharp enough to plan His words and actions so that they would have the greatest impact on not only those around him but the world at large and future generations, including ourselves. Today we will see that He strikes at the matters most affecting mankind. And as important as all this was 2000 years ago, society today, has proven that we have never been in greater need of hearing, understanding and applying these very teachings. Let's begin today with two scriptures which will carry us through our lesson. Matthew 12:33-35 and Luke 6:43-49. Luke's account gives us a bit more clarity. Matthew 7:16-27 (I know, that's three) embellishes a bit more but only read it if you dare! These and other references detail how Jesus is concerned not only with our words and actions but the very motives and intentions of our heart. It is obvious that what we truly believe, that we will speak and that we will do. Let us caution ourselves to check our thoughts and actions. Do they line up? Have you thought to do a good thing and then for some excuse you reasoned away doing such? Did you see or hear about a person who needed help and then found that it was too much trouble or effort to actually assist them in their need? Did you look the other way and hope to be distracted or that someone else would take up the cause? This does not mean you're not a Christian or that your intentions are not pure but it does take us back to James where he offers up some very clear examples of how procrastination, laziness, second thoughts, or lame excuses cause us to fail at doing the good we know we ought to do. James 4:17. Let's take time to read through our passage for today and get the full understanding of what James and our True Author, Jesus are telling us about what we truly believe.

Starting with verse 14, James asks us if faith alone save us? As a church, we here at FRBC have many times sung the song Faith Alone. The Word of God supports this concept and our answer is clearly yes. Faith alone saves us. As Jesus pointed out earlier, fruit is still required and James goes on to explain this to us. An apple tree can be genetically proven to be an apple tree but if it produces no fruit then what good is it? Jesus mentioned tearing it down and throwing it into the fire. We know we will not lose our salvation but we do understand that we will suffer loss. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. We have a fine group of Christians around us. Many of whom are doing very Godly and good things for the right reasons and we certainly should not attack them or cause them to think that they are of no value. That is not what we're trying to do here. Our lesson tonight focuses on self examination. Are you satisfied with what you are doing for the Lord? By answering that in the affirmative, can we infer that the Lord is satisfied with us as well? Let's dig deeper. Verses 15-16 take it right to the street. We are confronted by an individual who has an honest and immediate need. We can respond with a caring heart, maybe a serious prayer and then a loving 'God bless you' after which we go on our way having done

nothing to meet the physical need. Imagine a meeting between Jesus and Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. Jesus asks him exactly what he would have him do. When the blind man states his need we can imagine if Jesus had said, "Oh, I know how hard it must be to be blind. I'll keep you in prayer." Bartimaeus would thank him and stumble away in blindness. What if Jesus spoke with the 5000 hungry people in Matthew 14:14-21 and said, "Oh well, nice to see you all. Stay well. I have to get going. It's dinner time. Bye for now." Can any of you give sight to the blind or feed 5000 people? Can you feed one or offer clothing or money for a doctor visit? Matthew 10:42. He's not looking for much. Jesus wants results. Not numbers. When he puts someone directly in your sphere he has a reason. Matthew 25:31-46. Is this condemning you? Fear not. It condemns me too. Faith, if it hath not works is dead! James 2:17. Scary? You bet. We don't have to prove anything to God. He knows all. We don't have to prove anything to others. Their judgements are unrighteous. John 7:24 It is up to us to recognize whether or not we are properly responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit. 1 John 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 11:31. So faith alone cannot stand in our daily lives. Apple trees must bear fruit and by the way, they don't need to try. It is the natural result of simply being a tree. We, simply because we truly believe, should produce fruit unto righteousness. Philippians 1:11 and Mark 4:20. Verse 19 causes us to look into the Greek. Let's look at the difference between the word believe and the word faith. The root word for 'believe' in verse 19 and also for 'faith' in verse 17 is the word pitho. It means to convince or persuade. 'Faith' in verse 17 is an extension of that word which speaks of a persuasion that is credible and becomes a moral conviction. 'Believe' in verse 19 comes from the same root word but it has more to do with giving credit for something being true. We know from this that the demons in this verse know that Jesus is the Truth. But they have not had a moral conviction to trust Him. Nor can they, by the way. Their fate was sealed when they were kicked out of heaven after rejecting him. We looked at that a few weeks ago. It's the same for a man who has had his fate sealed when he has been kicked out of life after constantly rejecting Jesus. Please pray and share the Gospel with your loved ones. Their salvation will be your greatest fruit. These few verses now reveal to us that although faith without works is dead, the very first work that faith must produce in us is one of moral conviction and a receiving or accepting of the truth of Jesus Christ, which changes our heart, which changes our lives.

The remainder of this passage in speaking of Abraham and Rahab gives us examples of faith in action. Both of them truly believed and fully proved it by the choices they made and the obedience they displayed. What they believed, they lived out. That's all this boils down to. Do you believe the message of the Holy Spirit and the good work He is telling you to do? Go do it. Both of these folks along with scores of others throughout the Word of God we're justified by their works. What does that mean? The Greek word for 'justified' is dikaiou. It simply means to be regarded as just or innocent. God sees us innocent of sin, when through our works we prove that our faith in him is real. Again He knows all, so we don't have to play games with Him and people judge us erroneously from their own sinful vantage point, so why do we constantly play games with them? Settle the matter between yourself in the Lord. You have a confident faith, if you are living it out in your everyday life. Verse 26. We've all been to funerals. It is basic and easy to see that the body lying in the casket, no longer has the spirit of life within it. If we claim to have faith but have not works then our faith is also lying in a casket. With no works it is like a body without a spirit and therefore dead. Faith alone saves us. That's all Jesus requires for our

entrance into Eternal Life. But as we read in today's passage, works perfect or complete us. Please be complete in Christ by listening to Him and responding to His guidance. Serve Him. Serve others and learn to respond as in Luke 17:10.