

“Steadfast Part 4: A Living Faith” (2-12-23)

Review: 1) Steadfast produces Maturity 2) Hearing & Doing 3) Law of Love and Today . . .

Introduction: A Living Faith

1) Beyond Belief

James 2:14 (ESV)

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

Note: Save (Greek is Sozo): To save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction.

The basic meaning of the verb “sozo” is to rescue from peril, to protect, keep alive. It involves the preservation of life, spirit, soul, and body . . .

- This word occurs 54 times in the Gospels:
- 14 relate to **deliverance and healing** from disease or demonic possession
- 20 instances, related to **the rescue of physical life** from some impending peril or instant death
- The remaining 20 times, the reference is to **spiritual salvation**

“Saving Faith” is meant to touch the whole person, and our works (labor, activity, participation) play a key role!

James 2:15-17 (ESV)

(15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Note: Moving beyond “good intentions” to something that has a real impact

James 2:18-20 (ESV)

(18) But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (19) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (20) Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Note: Don’t settle for just belief (mental acknowledgment or agreement) - remember hearing & agreeing vs. hearing & doing from Part 2.

- That kind of faith will never address our emptiness! (“foolish” means “vain” which means “empty”)

Important Note: This isn’t about “proving” your faith, or “earning” your salvation. It is about realizing the power that comes with a real, living, active Faith!

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Note: Paul makes it clear that we don’t work to earn salvation, but we surely have work to do!

We are called to an active, vibrant, and often laborious life of faith . . .

2) A Living Faith

James now gives us 2 examples: Abraham & Rahab . . .

- **Abraham**

James 2:21-23 (ESV)

(21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? (22) You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; (23) and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

Note: This is one of the later stories from Abraham’s life (See: Genesis chapters 12-25)

His life is marked by an active trust in God - move to a land I’ll show you, wait for the son of promise, a vast legacy is coming through your offspring (number the stars - blessing all the families of the earth).

It’s also marked by imperfection & failure, moments of complete lack of trust . . .

- Lied about Sarah being his wife - twice!
- Took Hagar to fulfill the promise of God for an heir (through Sarah)

Now James points to a time after the son of promise is born, and he is asked to sacrifice him. Notice some insight we get from Hebrews on this moment in his life . . .

Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV)

(17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, (18) of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” (19) He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Note: He didn’t understand how God was going to work this out, but He did trust that he would.

After a lifetime of faith and ups and downs - he still didn’t have all the answers, but he trusted God!

James 2:22 (ESV)

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

Remember back to week one . . .

James 1:3-4 (ESV)

(3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- **Perfect** - fully developed, come of age, mature
- **Complete** - complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, complete, entire, whole
- **Lacking Nothing** - You have what you need

Abraham - a father who deeply loves his son, willing to sacrifice him - believing in the hope of resurrection!

Who is he starting to sound like?

- **Rahab**

James 2:24-25 (ESV)

(24) You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (25) And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

Rahab's story - Joshua chapters 2 and 6

Hebrews 11:30-31 (ESV)

(30) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. (31) By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Note: Her act of faith was to serve someone in great need - whose very lives were at stake! It led to the rescue and salvation of her and her family.

We are greatly impacted ourselves when we sacrificially lay down our lives for others!

Compare these stories Abraham & Rahab

- Father of Jewish people vs. a Gentile
- Man vs Woman
- His sacrificial faith leading to growth & maturity - her faith to serve & save strangers, risking her own peril

This is what Steadfast Maturity looks like - this is what a Living Faith produces!

For all of the differences between Abraham & Rahab - they have 1 similarity . . .

Matthew 1:1-2, 5-6a (ESV)

(1) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers . . . (5) and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

Note: Abraham & Rahab - in the line of Christ! And therefore in James' family line as well.

Conclusion: Life and Faith go hand in hand - don't just "agree" or "believe" - instead live by faith!

James 2:26 (ESV)

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.