

## CCC HOW TO HAVE REAL FAITH P7A

### Developing a Faith That Works - Part 7

#### James 2:14-26

It seems if you put the word "real" in front of anything it sells more -- real coffee or real fun. We're interested in the genuine article. There's a book out Real Men Don't Eat Quiche. Coke used to be the "real thing".

Today, I want to talk to you about what God's word, the bible says to us about how to have a real faith. See we need to understand, there are a lot of phony religions out there -- people who think they are Christians and really aren't and in this passage James talks about the difference between real and the counterfeit Christians, he talks to us about authentic believers and fake believers. And then he talks about how you have a real faith. **James 2: 14-26 says**

*Dear brothers and sisters, what the use in saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can't save anyone. Suppose you see a brother or a sister who needs food or clothing, and you say, "We'll good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well" – But then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?*

*So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all – it is dead and useless.*

*Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; other have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds.*

*Do you still think that it's enough just to believe that there is one God? We'll, even the demons believe this, and*

*they tremble in terror! Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless?*

*Don't you remember when our ancestor Abraham was declared **right** with God because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to do, His faith was made complete by what he did – by his actions. And so it happened just as Scripture says: "Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous." He was even called "The Friend of God." So you see, we are made right with God by what we do, not by faith alone. ... Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so also faith is dead without good deeds.*

This is the most controversial and misunderstood passage in the book of James. Every cult misunderstands it and they try to use this passage to prove you have to work

your way to heaven. It's important that you get what I'm going to talk about today so that when those guys come to your door, you'll know what to say to them. The entire New Testament teaches that we are saved by faith alone. Paul teaches us that "*By grace, through faith, we are saved.*" James comes along and says, "It's not just faith but faith and works." What is James talking about? Who is right here, James or Paul. And the answer is... they are both right. They are talking about different things.

Paul was fighting the problem of legalism -- the problem of "I've got to keep all the Jewish laws and regulations to be a Christian." Paul is talking to that group.

James is not fighting legalism but just the opposite - laxity -- those that say "It doesn't matter what you do just as long as you believe."

They are fighting against two different enemies and they both use the word "works" in different ways. When Paul uses the word "works" he's talking about Jewish laws like circumcision and things like that. When James uses it, he's talking about the lifestyle of a Christian -- acts of love. It's totally different. Paul focuses on the root of salvation -- what happens to me internally. James focuses on the fruit of salvation -- what happens on the outside. Jesus said, *"By their fruits you will know them."*

**Paul is talking about, "How to know you're a Christian."**

**James is talking about, "How to show you're a Christian."**

**Paul is talking about faith alone, how to become a believer and**

**James talks about, how to behave like a believer.**

It is not a contradiction and actually it is summed up to us in Ephesians 2:8-10 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, for a life of good works that God has already prepared for us to do."* There are three prepositions in this passage – they are, "by grace", "through faith", "for good works". You could almost make this a mathematical equation. "by grace", "through faith", "for good works"  $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ ... so "by grace", "through faith", "for good works" = being born again, becoming a Christian. If you get those out of order, you're in trouble. If you think you're saved by works, for faith you're in trouble. But he's saying we're saved by grace through faith. We're saved by accepting God's gift.

But how do you show you're a believer? How do I show I am a believer? James says there's five ways you can know

you've got the real deal, that you're the real thing. He gives us five steps or principles here in this passage.

## **1. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU**

**SAY.** Real faith is not just something you say, something you talk about. In verse 14 he says, *"What good is it my brother if a man claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such 'faith' save him?"* It doesn't say he, actually has faith, he just claims to have it. He talks about it. He knows all the right phrases. There are a lot of people who claim to be Christians. George Gallup says that 50 million Americans say "I'm born again believer in Jesus Christ," but you don't see anything in their lifestyle. Today we tend to label people as Christians if they make the slightest sound of being a believer. It's more than just talk that is involved in real faith. Jesus said, *"Not everybody who says to me 'Lord, Lord' is going to enter into the kingdom of*

*heaven."* Not everybody with a Christian bumper sticker is a believer. Not everybody who is a professor of Christianity is a possessor of Christianity. *"Can such faith save him? What value is this kind of faith?"* Nothing. Talk is cheap. Remember when Larry Flint, the publisher of Hustler, said he was born again? But you never saw any change in his life. He kept right on printing pornography. No difference. No change in his life.

James is saying that real faith is not just something you say. Think about it we probably all know somebody who claims to be a Christian but you don't see any evidence in their life, in their actions? That's a phony faith. Real faith is not just something you say.

## **2. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU**

**FEEL.** It's more than emotions. A lot of people confuse emotions and sentiment with faith. You can be

emotionally moved and never act on it. You can go to church and get a quiver in your liver, goose bumps all over, leave here being totally intellectually stimulated... but it never makes any difference. Then he gives an illustration. v. 15 *"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him 'Go, I wish you well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"* I'd like to show you a clip here of what I am talking about... Here at Calvary we love to use Charlie Brown...

Let's play the clip...

I saw a Peanuts cartoon. Charlie Brown and Linus are inside all bundled up and Snoopy's out in the cold shivering in front of an empty dog food bowl. Charlie and Linus are having a discussion on how sad it is that Snoopy is hungry and cold. "He's cold and hungry. We ought to do something about it." They walk outside and say to Snoopy,

"Be of good cheer, Snoopy." Do you know where Charles Schultz got that idea? From this verse. What good is it if you see someone in need and you say, "I feel for you!" He's saying, "It's more than just words. It's more than just feelings." If, after church, you're getting into your car and you happen to slam eight fingers in your car door, and you're standing there in agony with blood on your fingers, and I walk up and say, "I really feel for you and walk away!" -- is that any help?

Real faith is more than just sympathy and feeling and emotions. You get assistance. You do something about it. You act on it. Real faith takes the initiative. A real believer has real faith and it's practical. It gets involved with people who have needs. He's talking about Christians here. When you become a part of God's family you have some family responsibilities. A real believer will care about other

believers. 1 John 3:17 *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"* Real faith is generous. It wants to give, it's not selfish. 1 John 3:14 says that one of the proofs of salvation is that we love other Christians. Do you have fellowship with believers? Real faith wants to be around other believers. You love them, we are Christians, and we are to be known by our love.

Here in the United States we are great at verbalizing our faith... but not much practicing it, that's because were all about ourselves and our own convenience and our own comfort. James is saying that if my faith doesn't lead me to share with others it's wrong. v. 17 *"In the same way, faith by itself if it's not accompanied by actions is dead."* If I don't feel like helping other Christians, I don't have a sick faith, I have a dead faith. James is laying it on the line.

He says, "Do you want real faith? It's more than just something you say and it's more than just something you feel."

### **3. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU**

**THINK** For some people, faith is an intellectual trip -- a matter to be studied, a matter to be debated, talked over and discussed. James imagines this intellectual objector in v. 18 *"Someone will say `You have faith, I have deeds'"* He's imagining some intellectual guy who says, "You're into faith, I'm into works. That's cool. Different strokes for different folks. Let's debate it. You've got your thing, I've got mine. To each his own way. Stimulate me mentally but don't ask me to make any commitment, just stimulate me." *"Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do."* Circle "show me". Real faith is visible. You can see it. It's apparent. If you

claim to be a Christian, people will be able to see it. It's visible. In many churches today we have a lot of Lady Clairol Christians -- nobody knows for sure. Only God knows for sure. Faith is odorless, weightless, invisible so anybody can claim to have it. How do you know for sure? James says, "Show me." If you claim to be a Christian I have a right to ask you to prove it by looking at your lifestyle. Somebody said, "Faith is like calories. You can't see them but you can sure see the results." You can't see faith but you can see the results.

James would have made a good Missourian. The theme of the state of Missouri is "Show me". James is saying, "You say you're a Christian? Prove it. Let me see your actions back up your words." Real faith is more than just something you think. You can point it out and see it in people's lives. My grand daughter sings a chorus: "If

you're saved and you know it then your life will surely show it." That's what James is saying. Show me. You claim to have real faith. It's something more than something you say, something you feel, and something you think about. If it's real... You can prove it. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Any time a person becomes a Christian he becomes a new person inside, the old things have passed away. All things become new."* Not overnight, it's a process. But they start becoming new.

If you grab onto a 220 volt wire you're going to know it. I don't see how somebody as big as God can enter your life and it not change you. And listen if you not a change person this has eternal consequences don't play around thinking you are... James says, flat out that, if it doesn't change you there's a question whether He's really in your life. Ask your self this question, What can I see in my life

that proves it? If you say to your self, "I know it!" Show it! How do you know you're a believer? You'll see changes in your life. Real faith always produces change. Real faith is not just something you say. It's not just something you feel. It's not just something you think.

**A couple of questions:**

Am I really a Christian after all? In the light of what James says, am I really a Christian?

What changes can I point to in my life? Is my lifestyle any different at all from unbelievers? So many people think it doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe. James says if you believe that you're believing a lie, that's not true. He's not saying you work your way to heaven. He's not saying works deliver salvation. He's saying they demonstrate salvation has happened. He's saying, that if your faith doesn't work, what good is it?

How do I know for sure? You settle it in your mind. Maybe some of you have had doubts whether you're really a believer or not. You're a good person, you've gone to church, and maybe you've known about Christ, and you've read the Bible, and you've had religion and you've gone to classes. But are you absolutely sure that if you died tonight you'd go to heaven? The fact is you can be sure. You don't have to leave here and have the shadow of a doubt. You can settle it right here.

How do you do that? Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, for a life of good works God has already prepared for us to do."* God's grace. God reaches down. He says, "I want you to know Me. I want to have a relationship with you." That's grace. And you look up and say "I want to know You, Lord. I want to have a relationship with You." When God's hand

of grace comes down and your hand of faith goes up, that's called salvation. That's what it means to be a believer.

Saved by grace, through faith to do exactly what God made you to do in the first place. He has a plan for your life.

You are not here by accident.

**Prayer:**

In the closing moments of this time together, some of you have been struggling with doubts about whether you have really been a believer or not. You say, "I don't really remember a time when I specifically asked the Lord to take over my life. I've believed about Christ. Maybe I've never really believed in Him. I want to settle it today." If you're not sure, if you've got those doubts, settle it this morning.

Pray this, "Lord, I want to have a real faith, not a phony faith." What does it mean to believe? It means to commit yourself to His ways. It's more than just intellectual

knowledge. The devil believes in God. It means commitment. Would you say in your heart right now, "Jesus Christ, I give every area of my life to you as best as I know how. I want to give as much of me as I understand to as much of You as I understand and I want to learn more about You. God, I give You my past, all the things that have happened, the good and bad, achievements, the faults, the sins, the mistakes. I ask You to take it all. I admit that I've gone my own way many times. I haven't consulted You. I've made my own decisions without talking to you about them. I ask You to forgive me. Lord, I not only give You my past, I want to give You my future. I don't know what it holds but I know You know it. I want to follow You as best as I know how. I want to be a real believer. Jesus Christ, I want to give You my present, right now. Take my life and make me the person You want me to be.

Help me to grow. Help me to know that I'm a Christian and help me to show it in my life by obeying Your word. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for dying for me on the cross. Help me to understand it more. Lord, I want to get into the wheelbarrow this morning. I want to commit all of it to You, the problems and the possibilities of my life."

If you prayed that prayer in your heart and meant it I believe God heard you. The Bible says, "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" He says, "You do your part and I'll do my part."

Father, I want to thank You for those who've made this decision this morning in their hearts. Today they're settling it. I pray that Your Holy Spirit will put a confirmation in their heart that today they're giving themselves to You. I know this isn't a promise to be perfect but it is a promise to

let You take control. You have said that You will come into our lives and make us new people. Thank You that it wipes out all the things we've done wrong in the past and gives us a new look on life. Thank You that we can become new people when we come and give our lives to You in faith. Lord, thank You for this word. Thank You that it's so clear. We can understand that real faith is not something we say or feel or believe but it is something we do. We commit ourselves to you today. In Jesus' name, Amen.