

CCC HOW TO HAVE REAL FAITH P7B

Developing a Faith That Works

James 2:14-26

Last week I said it seems if you put the word "real" in front of anything it sells more -- real coffee or real fun, there's a book out Real Men Don't Eat Quiche. Coke the "real thing".

Today, I want to continue 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 counterfeit religions out there -- people who think they are Christians and really aren't and in God's word, the bible, in the book of James he talks about the difference between real and the counterfeit Christians, he talks to us about authentic believers and counterfeit believers. **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.*

What is real faith? 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, that you're a real believer. He gives us five steps or principles here in this passage. First he says,

1. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU SAY. Real faith is not just something you say, it's not just 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 this man has faith, he just claims to have faith. He talks about it.

The example I gave last week was Larry Flint, publisher of Hustler Magazine, he said he was a born again Christian? 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?"* It's like the 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, Linus said, We ought to do something about it." So they walk outside and said to Snoopy, "Be of good cheer, Snoopy."

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.

3. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU

THINK For some people, faith is an intellectual trip – it's a matter to be studied, it's a matter to be debated, it's something to be talked over and discussed and that is okay in itself but James says be careful not to fool yourself with that, because thinking you have real faith... ask for no commitment. James tells us in verse 18 he imagines this intellectual objector in v. 18 *"Someone will say 'You have faith, I have deeds'"* James here is imagining some intellectual person who says, "You're into faith, I'm into

works. But, that's cool. Different strokes for different folks. Let's debate it. It's all good says the person; because, you've got your thing and I've got mine, to each his own way. Stimulate me mentally but don't ask me to make any commitment, just stimulate me." James says, *"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. See, faith is odorless, weightless, and invisible so anybody can claim to have it. How do you know for sure? James says, "Show me." Faith is like calories. You can't see them but you can sure see the results from them." You can't see faith but you can see the results. Real faith is more than just something you think. You can point it out and see it in people's lives. My grand daughter, Kayla sings a chorus: If you're saved and you know it then your life will surely show 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 Christian start by becoming new. If you grab a 220 volt electric 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. 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**.

4. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU BELIEVE *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder!"* There are a lot of people who have **strong beliefs** in God, the Bible, about Christ. Now I want you to catch this, they can recite creeds to you, catechisms and talk about doctrines of the

Trinity and they can quote bible verses. Listen to what, James says, "big deal!" Just saying I believe in God is not enough to get you to heaven. Even the devil believes that. The devil believes in God! The devil is also a great theologian. He knows a lot more about the Bible than you do. He's been around Christianity a whole lot longer than you. He knows theology and he knows the bible... backwards and forwards. The Devil believes and his demons believe and they shudder. That word shudder in the Greek means, "their hair stands up on end. Why, because the devils understand the majesty and awesomeness of God. They believe in God and they tremble. I have said many times, a lot of people are going to miss heaven by 18 inches. They've got it in their head but not in their heart. James says, "Big deal.

Real faith is not just saying "I believe". When I started this message last week I said that any people in America believe, they but don't practice what they believe. In that survey that was done they also asked people all who said they were Christians... Do you attend church? "No." "Do you donate your time to the church to serve?" "No." "Do you tithe as God word, the bibles commands?" "No." James would say that's a phony belief. You're just fooling yourself and a lot of people are doing that. If it's not just something you say or think or feel or believe, what is real faith?

5. REAL FAITH IS SOMETHING YOU DO

In the next couple of verses James gives two illustrations that say real faith is something you do. Faith is active. It's not passive. Faith is a commitment. Listen to those verse again... 21-26. *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. ...*

Rahab the prostitute is another example of this. She was made right with God by her actions – when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so also faith is dead without good deeds.

We see, two illustrations of two very different people, Abraham and Rahab -- exact opposite extremes. Abraham

is a man. Rahab is a woman. Abraham is Jewish. Rahab is a Gentile. Abraham is a patriarch. Rahab is a prostitute. Abraham is a somebody. Rahab is a nobody. Abraham is a major character in the Bible. Rahab is a minor character. God’s word, the bible uses these illustrations to say, it doesn't matter who you are as long as you've got the important thing, they only had one thing in common -- their faith in God. Their faith in God led them to action. Real faith is something you do. Something your lead to do.

v. 20 "You foolish men. Do you want evidence that faith without deed... is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. His faith and his actions were working together. His faith was made complete by what he did. Scripture was fulfilled when it said, ‘Abraham believed God.’” How do we know it? We saw it. He

behaved in a way that his belief came out visibly. He believed and trusted in God and his actions showed that he followed what God told him to do... *"Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as righteousness and he was called God's friend."* What did God ask Abraham to do... It was the ultimate test where God asked Abraham to give up his own son. Abraham obeyed God. He followed Him. He took his son up to the mountain. He did all those faith steps. He cut the wood, built the altar and was ready to sacrifice his own son. Something we read past sometime in this story... Abraham says to his son while walking up the mountain, "We [not I] will return". He had faith, he knew that God would provide somehow even if it meant raising his son from the dead. The fact is God did raise him from the dead, figuratively speaking, His name was Jesus Christ. Abraham was about to sacrifice him and

God says, "You're a heck of a godly man, Abraham... I was just testing you to see what's most important to you in your life, you or Me and you showed yourself and me what was... in your actions. His works proved his faith. He held nothing back from God. Abraham proved his faith.

In this book of James, God's word, the bible also talks about Rahab. Rahab is a woman, she is a Gentile, she is a prostitute, and to most people she is a nobody. Rahab's story is how about a prostitute who helped a couple of spies for the Lord's, when they came into Jericho. What she did she does for the Lord, She sacrificed her own life and the life of her family because God desired for her too and that act did not make her right with God her faith that God desired this of her did... Just an interesting note: Rahab was Jesus great, great, great grand mother. See has faith and works.

Our faith is not determined by what we know; it is demonstrated by what we do. About 35 years ago there was a famous tightrope walker named George Blondin who, for a publicity stunt, decided he would walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. On the appointed day they stretched a tightrope from one side of Niagara Falls to the other. He got out there and there were crowds lining both the Canadian and American side. Thousands of people showed up to see this unbelievable feat. Blondin walked up to the edge of the tightrope, put one foot on the tightrope and put another foot out and began to walk across -- inch-by-inch, step-by-step. He got out in the middle and everybody knew that if he'd make one mistake in balance he'd fall off the rope and into the Falls and obviously be killed. Blondin got to the other side and the crowd went wild, shouting and cheering. Blondin said, "I'm going to

do it again." He got to the other side and the crowds went crazy. Blondin said, "I'm going to do it again but this time I'm going to push a wheel barrow full of dirt." He pushes the wheelbarrow across. He got to the other side. He did this nine or ten times. On about the tenth time, he pushed the wheelbarrow right in front of a tourist who said, "I believe you could do that all day." Blondin said you believe that... he dumped out the dirt and said to the tourist, "Get into the wheelbarrow."

In a very real sense that's what God says to you and me. God says, do you believe in me, Okay then get into the wheelbarrow. You say, "I believe in Jesus!" That's great prove it, show it. Why, because our faith is demonstrated by our actions. 2 Corinthians 13:5 *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith."* Test it out.

Check it out. See if you're really a believer or not. I can't tell you... only you can know for sure... by your works... I want to end with asking you a few questions... Ask yourself... Am I really a Christian? In the light of what God's word, the bible says, am I really a Christian? Ask yourself, "What changes can I point to in my life that those actions show me I am?"

So many people think it doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe. James says that's not true. Now remember, he's not saying you work your way to heaven. He's saying they demonstrate it. Following God's ways shows what has already happened inside.

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 over your mind. 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. God says, "I want you to know Me. I want to have a relationship with you and I made it possible through Jesus Christ." **That's grace.**

And you look up and say "I want to know You, Lord. I want to have a relationship with You." I want to surrender my will for Your will in my life. I want to follow your ways for my life, the best I know how to right now.... When God's hand of grace comes down and your hand of

faith goes up and they come together, **that's called** **salvation**. That's what it means to be a believer. Saved by grace, through faith, but it doesn't stop there. He has a plan for your life. He has a purpose for your life. You are not here by accident. His purpose is for you to produce good works, His works through you...

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. To be the manager of my life, which means He calls all the shots... Maybe I've never really believed in Him that way. I want to settle it today." If you're not sure, if you've got those doubts, settle it right now. 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

something. 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 and as I see more and more of your will for my life, I will surrender those areas as Your Holy Spirit and Your word, the bibles shows me. 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 just did my way. 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."* God 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.