

God's Got This #4
How to Complete Your Faith
James 2:14-26

We have talked about the phrase “God’s got this” is simply a statement of faith. In this study, our goal is to understand what faith really is according to God’s Word.

A story was told about an incident that happened years ago as a crippled boy was once hurrying to catch a train. Carrying gifts under his arm, he was struggling with his crutches. Suddenly, a man bumped into him, knocking his parcels in all directions. **The man then paused and scolded the boy for getting in his way.** Another man, seeing the youngster’s distress, quickly picked up the scattered gifts and slipped a dollar bill into his pocket, saying, "I’m sorry! I hope this makes up for your trouble." The youngster who couldn’t remember being shown such kindness, called after him, "Mister, thank you! And sir, are you Jesus?" "No," replied the man, "but I am one of His followers."

If our faith in Jesus were put to the test like this, which person would we be? I’m sure we would all immediately align ourselves with the kinder person, and say we would help the boy. But, maybe the first man was hurrying to catch his train also. **Maybe the boy wasn’t paying enough attention to where he was going.** In today’s world, these would both pass as valid excuses for most people to simply cuss out the poor youngster and be on their way. However, the Lord holds Christians to a much higher standard than that. And James very boldly and directly teaches us that our faith in Christ is to be abundantly more than mere words.

The Bible tells us in John 13 that, “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.” **As Jesus lived on this earth, He constantly lived a life of renunciation, where He denied himself.** He constantly lived a life where He literally had *one* desire, and that was to please the Father, as seen in John 8:29, “I always do those things that please Him.” Let me, therefore, remind you once more of Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” **In other words, Jesus lived a life of faith.** If you will look into the life of Christ, you will find him having “all power” given to Him, and yet He said, “Of myself I can do nothing.” He constantly rejected that ability that he had within himself to rely on an ability that was in another, which was the Father.

To put it another way, all the inexhaustible supplies of God are available to the man who is available to all the inexhaustible supplies of God; and Jesus Christ was that Man. He was Man in perfection, totally, unrelentingly,

unquestioningly available, and that is why there was available to him all that to which he was available – all things.

But what does that have to do with us today, as we study this series on *faith*? Simply this, faith is developed with exercise. *David* was able to face Goliath because he had already conquered wild beasts that attacked his father's sheep. By the time *Moses* lifted his rod and parted the Red Sea, he had witnessed the power of God in bringing the plagues on Egypt. You will remember that the falling of the walls of Jericho came after *Joshua* had led his people through the river Jordan.

And that brings us to the truth of how complete your faith, as seen in verse 22 of our text, “You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete.” The Greek word translated “perfect” in the King James Version actually means, “complete, or having reached its end.”

For years there have been a great deal of discussion, even controversy, in this area of “faith” and “works.” And there are two errors that we must avoid if we are going to have a proper understanding of the Scriptures: (1) The first error says that faith excludes works; (2) and the other error says that works excludes faith. But those statements bring us face-to-face with Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” Now we need to be careful not to misunderstand what Paul is saying, for we are *not* talking about *salvation*, for salvation is all of “grace” by “faith,” as seen in Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” But – we have been told in verse 10 of that same chapter, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for *good works*, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

If we take the emphasis in the Christian life off the *individual*, off the *self*, and put it where it belongs, that is, on Christ, then we begin to recognize that the Christian life is not a *striving*, and the Christian life is not a *work* in itself, the Christian life is an *act of trust* in Jesus Christ, and then *allowing Him to live His life through us*.

What then, is the difference between the teaching of Paul and the teaching of James? Paul was speaking of being justified in the *sight of God*; and in the sight of God we are justified, or saved, by faith only. James is speaking of our being justified in the *sight of men*, or showing the world that Christ truly has made a difference in our daily walk of life.

The Bible is simply teaching us that *works* is an *outward expression of an inward faith*. In fact, James put it this way in verse 14, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save

him?” In the Greek there is a definite article in front of the word “faith” here, and the literal translation should read, “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?” **But what kind of faith is he talking about? He is talking about the kind of faith that says, “I have faith, but that faith is dead; but that faith doesn’t act; that faith doesn’t operate; that faith doesn’t work; that faith doesn’t cause any changes in my life-style.”** And so, James asks the question, “Can that kind of faith save anyone?” **And the construction of that sentence implies a negative answer.** The faith that does not cause a person to love Jesus and to change his ways is useless, and is not a saving faith.

And that is the very same thing that Paul has told us in Romans 6:17-18, “But God be thanked that though *you were* slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, *you became* slaves of righteousness.” **Paul is saying that before you were saved “you were” one thing, and after you were saved “you became” something else.** And the truth of the matter is simply this – **if you are what you have always been, then you are not saved, and your faith is dead and useless.**

Look once more at verse 22, “You see, his *faith* and his *actions* worked together. His actions made his faith complete.” **It is highly significant that James uses the language that indicates to us that there is such a thing as an incomplete faith.** And the indication is that there is something that many times must be added to our faith if it is to reach its desired end, and that something is *works*.

Faith is never passive, but faith is acting on the will and Word of God. Therefore, it is a scriptural fact that faith *always* expresses itself in *obedience* to the *known will and Word of God*. This truth is seen in the lives of those “heroes of the faith” in Hebrews 11, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice...By faith Enoch walked with God...By faith Noah...prepared an ark for the saving of his family...By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac...” **Every one of those people believed God, and their faith caused them to do something.** In other words, their faith caused them to be *obedient* to the commands of God.

This same truth is seen in Hebrews 3:18-19, as the writer tells us why the children of Israel could not enter into the Promised Land, “And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” The Greek word that has been translated “believed not” literally means “disobedient.” And the Greek reads like this, “And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn’t it the people who disobeyed him? So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.” **Now watch this – in verse 18 we are told that they could not enter in because of “disobedience,” and in verse 19 we are told that they could not enter in because of “unbelief.”** So

which one is right? The answer is that they are *both* right, because “disobedience” is “unbelief.” **Why?** Because *faith* always expresses itself in obedience to the known *Word* and *will* of God.

It is a scriptural fact that you and I only believe as much of the Bible as we are obeying. *Belief* is never simply intellectual assent; belief always issues itself in *obedience*. And what you do not *obey* is what you do not *believe*. And that is why James says, “that faith without works is dead.”

Let me try to explain what I am saying by sharing with you this illustration. Suppose we were driving out here in the farming community, and passed by a fellow setting out under a tree. So you stop and ask him what he is doing, and he says, “I’m planting my fields.” And you look around, and there are not tractors, and nor farming equipment, so you ask, “How are you planting your fields?” And he answers, “I’m doing everything by faith. I’m just believing God for the victory. Brother, I’m really learning how to live by faith. Glory to God, I can hardly wait for harvest time.” **Do you know what?** He is going to starve to death. That is not *faith*, that is *foolishness*.

Now listen to me, for we have that same kind of foolishness going on in our churches day after day, and week after week. We say, “Well, praise God, we are believing God for souls this Sunday.” But, we have not invited any lost people to meet us here, and we have not made any phone calls to those folks God has placed on our heart. You see, there is a great difference between faith and foolishness, because faith *always* expresses itself in works.

Look at how he uses the example of Abraham to make his point in verse 21, “Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?” **When was Abraham justified?** Was it when he said “Ok” when God came to him and said, “I want you to take Isaac, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as a sacrifice”? No it wasn’t then. **Was it when he had made the trip all the way to the mountain and to the place of sacrifice?** No it wasn’t then. **Was it when he had built an altar and furnished it with wood?** No it wasn’t then either. **Abraham was justified when he obeyed in his heart to offer Isaac to God for an offering.** The point of justification came at the moment of *obedience*.

As one studies the Bible, it becomes abundantly clear with every act of faith has a corresponding act of work. Let me give you a couple of examples. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” **That is a great promise, but how many of us really believe that it is true?** Why, then, are we griping and complaining and worrying about what is happening in our world and in our lives? **If we believe that promise by faith, what, then, is the corresponding act of faith?** It is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything

give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Look at the promise of Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Jesus promised, “Give, and it shall be given to you...” **If we claim that promise by faith, then what is the corresponding act of work?** It is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” **If you want God to bless you, you are to be a blessing to others.** If you want God to meet your financial needs, then you must be willing to commit your financial properties to Christ. Look at this promise found in Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” **If we claim that promise by faith, then what is the corresponding act of work?** The answer is found in Romans 10:8-10, “But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart that is, the word of faith that we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Look at the promise found in Proverbs 14:34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” **If we believe that promise by faith, then what is the corresponding act of work?** The answer is found in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Faith always expresses itself in obedience to the known will and Word of God. There may be some of you today that truly want to start living a life of victory through your faith, but it cannot be done apart from the Word of God. Jesus said this in John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you have eternal life...” **Why would He make such a statement?** The answer is found in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” **Child of God, please listen to this statement – if you do not know the Word of God, you have nothing on which to build your faith.** And the Bible makes it very clear, “Without faith it is impossible to please (God).”

If you have never been saved, why not come today?
Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Give me the faith to stand on your Word and claim every promise and my very own, but also give me the courage and determination to be obedient to your will for my life in my every day living. In Jesus’ name. Amen.