**I Will Show You My Faith by My Actions**

**The Word**

Read together James 2:14-26

**The Big Idea**

James calls us into a living faith in God that expresses itself in all kinds of trusting actions. True faith will always express itself in action.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Imagine a friend started a conversation with you this way: “I believe obedience must be present in a person’s life for them to be saved.” How would you respond to them?

2. Rahab demonstrated a living faith that banked everything on Yahweh being the one true God. Can you share a time when you experienced someone making a decision or taking an action that could only be explained by their deep trust in God?

3. Do you think God’s approval of and delight in us can vary depending on the nature of our faith and obedience towards him? Why or why not?

4. Consider the question posed at the end of Sunday’s message: Imagine you magically started to trust God more fully than you currently do. How specifically would you live differently than you are right now?

**Neighboring Question of the Week**

We have almost concluded our first month-long challenge of going on prayer walks in our neighborhood. How has that been for you? As you’ve prayer walked, what has God been showing you? Who or what has he called to mind?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. This passage is the theological heart of the book of James

 = Faith in Action (see James 1:22 and 2:17)

B. This passage confronts us with an apparent tension

 1. Paul’s message of justification by faith alone (see Romans 3:28)

2. James’ message of justification by faith and works (see James 2:24)

C. This passage raises some important questions

1. Is the Bible coherent? Are the authors consistent? Is this really God’s word?

a. James and Paul are speaking to different audiences and using their words in their own ways

b. Paul, writing primarily to Gentiles who came to Christ out of the paganism of their past, is burdened to show that they don’t need to become good Jews to be part of the family of God. Faith alone justifies them in God’s sight

c. James, writing primarily to Jews who would presume on their ethnicity, heritage, and knowledge of the ways of God, is burdened to show that their faith must, in fact, be living and active (= express itself in deeds) in order to be true faith and therefore justifying faith.

 2. What does God desire from us? Faith? Obedience? Both?

a. Consider Paul’s phrase “the obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5 and 16:26

b. The obedience of faith is not two things but one = how you live when you actually trust God. Living faith expressing itself in action.

c. Consider the analogy of a seed and a plant.

1) They are not two separate things but one organic thing. The plant is not something added on top of the seed but is the natural life of the seed developing and expressing itself.

2) Likewise, our faith is the heart of the matter, and if it is truly living, it will produce “the obedience of faith” as an organic reality.

II. James offers two negative examples of counterfeit faith

 A. Dead faith (v. 14-17)

1. This is faith in words and sentiment only

2. Imagine being destitute and coming to a friend for help and receiving nothing but a trite blessing (“God in peace”) and advice you don’t need (“be warm and well fed.”)

3. Counterfeit faith does this to God. It speaks sentiments

“Let go and let God, I surrender all, God’s got it under control, God works all things for good,” etc, but there is nothing in their lived life that demonstrates they actually believe those things.

B. Demon Faith (v. 19)

1. This is intellectual assent to orthodox belief (God is one)

2. But that accurate understanding of the faith is not paired with trust and surrender

3. Demons are theologically orthodox in many ways, but their understanding is not paired with trust (rather they “shudder” at these truths)

 4. Paul is explicit: Believing doctrinal truth in your head does not save you

III. James offers two positive examples of living faith

 A. Abraham: The great patriarch of Israel

 We’ll look at him next week

 B. Rahab: An obscure foreign prostitute!

1. Rahab here’s the news about Yahweh’s actions in rescuing Israel from Egypt and leading them into the promise land. She becomes convinced in her heart that Yahweh is the truth God of heaven and earth, more powerful than any of her ancestral gods. (See especially Joshua 2:9-11)

2. So she banks everything on her belief in Yahweh and risks your life to be associated with Yahweh’s people. It’s a great risk, but she also thinks it’s the most reasonable thing to do if Yahweh really is the one true God.

IV. Conclusion

A. Consider v. 18: “I will show you my faith by my actions”

B. What would it look like to be able to say this to God: “Lord, I will show you my faith by my actions. How I live will be the visible manifestation of how much I trust you.”

C. What if you woke up one day and totally trusted God in every way. You fully trusted who he is, what he’s done for you, and his promises to you. How would that change how you actually live your daily life?

D. That kind of life = the obedience of faith