



## How to Put Courageous Faith in Action (James 2:14-26)

December 30, 2018

### Introduction:

A Conversation with a Prisoner: After preaching in a county jail, I was approached by an inmate with a concern that surprised me. After greeting a long line of inmates, he sparked me with an amazing thought after our brief conversation. He said, “You need to work on the content of your sermons. Your topic, “Building a Better You,” sounds like a self-help gospel, and it is not your effort that saves you, or makes you better. It is the work of a crucified Christ who died on the cross.” He then walked off and left me standing there waiting to greet the next person. This brief conversation sparked several thoughts I have pondered since the encounter. He obviously was sincere but misguided, because the gospel teaches two important truths about our relationship with God that he missed.

First, it is true that we cannot save ourselves from eternal judgment by works alone (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:8-9, John 1:8-9). However, we have a personal responsibility to build better life habits that will help us grow properly. One of the goals of a Christian is to show others that they can have a better life if they make better choices, which was the focus of my message to the inmates. We are responsible to have more than faith in Christ and his work on the cross, once we receive Him. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, we should lay aside hindering behaviors,

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,” (NIV).

Secondly, it is our job to take this advice and trust him to help us build a better life. It is an error to assume that a better life will just appear without you being involved in the hard work to build it. Having faith James says, “without works,” is a misunderstanding of how God builds lives (**James 2:14-26**). The focus of the message I shared with the inmates was centered around the word habits. This one inmate got distracted by a theological big point he valued, and probably missed thinking about the habits that put him in this unfortunate circumstance he was now facing. I pray down the road he will find a balance between his faith in Christ and building a better life for himself.

### I. How to Put Your Faith In Action? (James 2:14-16, NIV)

#### 1. Do Something: (What you are doing)

- James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**

#### 2. Be Something: (Let your deeds demonstrate your faith)

- **18** But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and **I will show you my faith by my deeds.**

#### 3. Understand Something: (Believing is not enough)

- **19** You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.



**4. Remember Something** (What you believe is seen in your deeds)

- 20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that **his faith and his actions were working together**, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

**II. Two Examples of Faith and Works**

**Abraham** (He moved and waited 24 years and 3 months before his wife became pregnant)

- 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. 24 **You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.**

**Rahab** (She left her past lifestyle, hid the spies, and changed her life; cp. Joshua 2:1-24)

- 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

**Closing:**

**III. How Do We Improve Our Faith and Works**

**1. Do Something** (Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 4:11-14)

- Evangelize (We need to continue reaching people)
- Educate (We need to continue teaching people)
- Elevate (We need to continue growing people)
- Embrace (We need to continue serving people)

**Next Time:** We will talk about **Building Something**

**January Series:** How Do You **Build a Better You?**