

READ

James 2:14-24, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 7:21-23

CONSIDER

I woke up this morning learning that an old school friend has passed on. Such news is no longer new to me because old friends around me had started to pass on one after another as I get older. Not only old age, but covid has hit the whole world with the reality that life is unpredictable and fleeting. For us followers of Jesus, we know that life on earth is but a journey and one day our journeys will end and we will meet our Lord and Saviour in heaven.

But Jesus warns us, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!’ (Matt 7:21-23) So can we get to heaven? Where do we stand in our faith?

This Sunday we come to James 2:14-24 where we are asked to examine our faith. “What good is it if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” We need to reflect and make sure that our faith can save us.

What is genuine faith? Three scenarios are mentioned: faith without deeds, deeds without faith, and faith accompanied by actions. Faith and action, can we have one and not the other? Abraham’s faith is cited for our example, “You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did.” Faith and actions need to go hand-in-hand. The two work together. Faith without deeds is dead. Faith must be authenticated by deeds. So first and foremost, faith is attested by actions. Actions speak louder than words. Neither mere God-talks and knowledge without deeds nor good works and activities without faith can save us. To make sure that our faith in Jesus is genuine, we must examine if our everyday deeds and actions align with what we think we believe.

James goes further, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called **God’s friend**.”(v.23) Genuine faith sets off a personal relation with God as we become children of God. Likewise in his warning to us, Jesus flatly rebukes those who call him ‘Lord, Lord’ saying “I never **knew** you”. Jesus knows his genuine followers, “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” (Jn 10:14) A living relationship abiding in the Lord is an intrinsic part of a genuine faith. As a sheep in the Lord’s fold and God’s beloved, we talk with him, walk with him, and seek to follow his will and way in what we do.

Eugene Peterson paraphrased Matt 7:21-23 saying, “Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is **serious obedience—doing what my Father wills**. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the

demons, our super-spiritual projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’ (MSG)

We are saved by grace through faith. Our words and deeds will never be perfect, but our faith in Christ can be honest and true. May we strive to live a life of faith that produces fruits of good deeds that testify the goodness of God and bring glory and honor to our Lord.

“And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.” (Deut 10:12)

Deaconess Josephine Chow

P R A Y

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me that I can be saved by grace through faith. Thank you for your amazing love and your ever-presence in my life. I acknowledge your Lordship and want to trust you with my whole heart. Help me to have a pure heart and firm faith in you. Help me to walk and follow you closely that I can see and hear you clearly. Guard my thoughts, feelings, behaviors and actions that they can be pleasing to you. Help me that in all that I do, my faith and actions work together to honor you and glorify your name. Restore me when I falter and forgive me when I stumble in sin. Speak to me, Lord, that I may know how you want me to change and what you want me to do. “Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me, and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Ps 139:23-24) Thank you Lord for loving me, and for the promise of your peace that transcends all understanding.

D I V I N G D E E P E R

- Reflect on how you make plans or decisions and set priorities in your everyday life. Do you exercise your faith in Jesus and seek to do what pleases him?
- Examine your daily activities, involvement, behaviors, cares and emotions, can they testify your faith in Jesus?
- How can you cultivate a deeper faith relationship with Jesus? Do you set aside a daily quiet time to pray and reflect on God’s word?
- Can your non-Christian friends see Jesus through you? Reflect on how you can be a better witness for Jesus in word and in deed.