

Faith Must Act



Faith (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today as I continue to share with you on the rich and exciting theme of faith. I've been speaking about the three great musts of faith, three things that must go together with faith. I summed these up as follows: first, faith must be confessed; second, faith must act; third, faith must be tested. Yesterday I dealt with the first must, faith must be confessed. Today I'm going to deal with the second must, faith must act. I'm going to explain the connection between faith and works.

Now "works" is one of those words that is used with a rather special meaning in the New Testament and we need to just pause for a moment and see what it means. When the word "works" (or in some translations "deeds") is related to faith, it means the appropriate actions that go together with the faith that we profess. So you could say that "works" or "deeds" means the actions which are appropriate to the faith that we confess. Keeping this in mind, let's look at what Paul says in Galatians 5:6. He makes a very simple but very profound statement that all of us need always to bear in mind:

> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." (NAS)

I see four successive points there in what Paul is saying. First of all, no external ritual by itself can even commend us to God. If it's merely something external it doesn't matter what the ritual is, the example that Paul chooses is circumcision, but no external ritual unless it is accompanied by faith in the heart, can commend us to God.

Secondly, God's primary requirement in the Christian life is faith in the heart. That's the basis and the source of everything in the Christian life.

Thirdly, and it's very simple, faith works. True faith, inspired by God, is active. It's not passive, it doesn't just make statements and leave it at that; it makes statements and follows them up with appropriate action, with works.

And fourthly (and again, this is vitally important), faith works by love. True faith is always expressed in a way that is loving and kind and gracious. So much religion is harsh and critical and unkind. Whenever you encounter religion of that kind, be

sure that it does not spring from biblical faith, for faith works by love.

Let me just recapitulate those four points, they're so important.

First of all, no external ritual by itself can commend us to God.

Second, God's primary requirement is faith in the heart.

Third, faith works.

Fourth, faith works by love.

Now James deals more fully with the relationship between faith and works in his epistle, chapter 2, verses 14–26, and I'm going to work through these verses with you and see what it is that James is saying here about the connection between faith and works. I'm going to divide this passage of thirteen verses up into six sections. The first section is verses 14-17, and I call it "confession without action." And James shows that it's worthless.

> "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily good, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (NAS)

I would say that James is pointing out here the uselessness of empty religious platitudes. There's a fellow believer who is in need, he needs clothing and food, and one believer says to him, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled." But, he doesn't stretch out a hand to give him food or clothing. James says that kind of faith is dead. It's not the kind of faith that comes from God. A living faith is expressed by what it does.

The second section is just one verse, verse 18. I call this "theology versus life." James says:

> "But someone may well say, "you have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (NAS)

I want to tell you that I always accept that as a personal challenge. I don't want to have a faith that only has to be explained in doctrinal language. If the only way I can communicate my faith is by using doctrinal language and religious speech, it would probably be better if I didn't communicate at all. There's the challenge. Someone says to you as a believer, "You have faith without the works; but I'll show you my faith by my works. I'll show you my faith by what I do. I'll show you my faith by the results it produces." Are you in a position to say that to the people that you live with? "I'll show you what I believe by the way I live, by the results my faith produces"?

The third section, again, is just one verse, verse 19, and I call this "the devil's orthodoxy."

> "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." (NAS)

There's a person that's very orthodox in his view of God. He's quite convinced that there's only one true God and he asserts this creed of his. James says it's a good creed, but it doesn't prove you're right with God. The devil's very orthodox in that respect. He knows there's only one God and his demons know it. But they're afraid of God. They tremble every time they think of God. Why? Because although they believe, they don't obey. So the lesson there is that true faith in God will lead you to obey God and faith without obedience is self-deception.

We're analyzing what James says about the relationship between faith and works. We've come to the fourth section of the passage that we're looking at, that's verses 20–24. I entitle this, "the example of Abraham." James says:

> "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." (NAS)

We need to look briefly at the career of Abraham. God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and brought him into the land of Canaan and promised to give it to him as his inheritance. And when God made this promise, it says in Genesis 15:6:

> "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness."

So Abraham's faith in God without anything else he did was counted to him as righteousness. But that faith resulted in Abraham obeying God and step by step, one step of obedience and faith after another, God led Abraham to the great climax of his faith where he was willing even to offer his beloved son Isaac up on the altar of the Lord at Mount Moriah. So by that we see that faith and works went together. It began with faith but faith expressed itself in works, in actions; and each act strengthened faith and prepared faith for the next act. And so Abraham's life of faith was a progressive life, step by step. We're told in Romans 4 that we ought to follow the steps of Abraham's faith. The very word "steps" indicate that faith is not static, it's not just a doctrine that we hold, it's not just some tenets that we believe; but it's a walk with God in which our faith expresses itself in acts of obedience. The acts of obedience strengthen our faith and enable us to perform further acts of obedience until we come to the climax of total submission and surrender to the will of God which happened to Abraham and which earned him the title "the friend of God."

Now we'll look on to the fifth section of what James has to say. Again, it's just one verse, verse 25. I entitle this "the example of Rahab."

> "And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" (NAS)

I've always loved the story of Rahab. To me it proves that with God there's hope for the hopeless. Most religious people would have written Rahab off right away. She was a harlot, she was not from the children of Israel. She was living in a city that was doomed to destruction under God's wrath, and yet her faith got her out of that situation, got her to be a member of God's people and ultimately she's cited in the New Testament as an ancestress of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. What was the nature of Rahab's faith? Well, she believed that Israel's God was the true God and that He would do what He said. So when the spies came into Jericho to spy out the city sent by Joshua, she sided with them. She received them, she risked her life by hiding them and then she risked her life again by letting them down through her window. And where she had let them down through the window, she put a scarlet thread in the window to remind them that they were not to destroy her house when the city was destroyed. Well, that's a beautiful picture of faith, confession and works. Rahab believed in her heart, her confession was the scarlet thread in the window which really corresponds to our confession of faith in the blood of Jesus. But that scarlet thread in the window would never have saved her if she hadn't used that window to let the spies out by, to risk her life, she had to lay her own life on the line to prove her faith. That's faith and works.

Now let's listen quickly to the conclusion of what James says in verse 26:

> "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (NAS)

Faith that does not express itself in action is just a kind of religious mummy. It may be at home in a church building but it has no life. True faith is always expressed in corresponding action.

Well, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with the third great must of faith, "Faith Must be Tested."

Radio Program

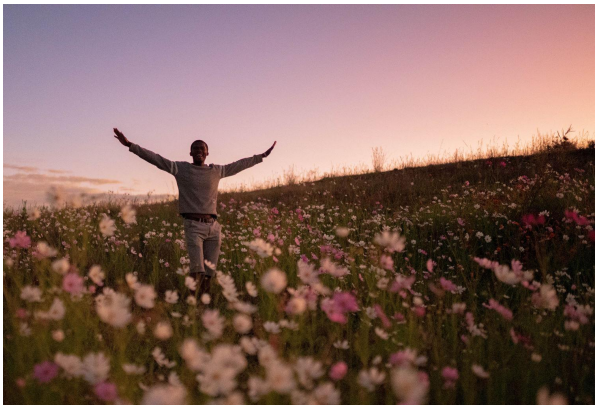
Transcript: TS-R029-103-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



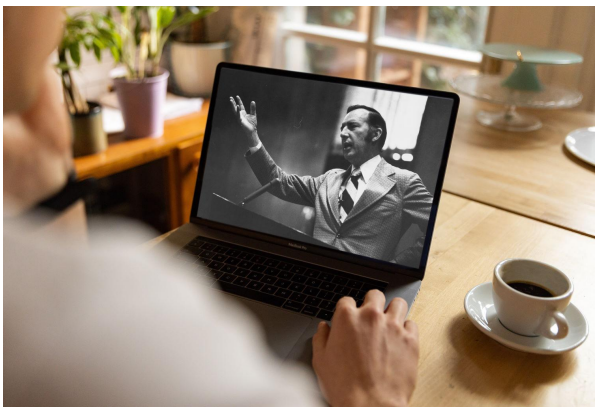
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries