

Cadet Shannon Rogers

“To Love and Serve a Great God”

Scripture Reference: James 2:14-26

Background Information: James wrote about practical ways to live as a Christian. This book shows that it is possible to believe the right things, yet live the wrong way. This book was written to “warn believers of some habits they had developed that under-mined the essence of what they believed: things such as favoritism, slander, pride, the misuse of wealth and lack of patience. This letter takes a no-nonsense approach to hypocrisy.” (Quest Study Bible) In this book we find practical instructions to help live an authentic Christian life.

Introduction: In this portion of James we read about faith and deeds. In my own life I have had a struggle with the connectivity of these two things. I have found it very easy to simply go through life and do the things that need to be done, sometimes with the best of intentions, but oftentimes leaving my faith in the dust. Likewise, I have seen through my faith something that needed to be done and neglected to do it. Faith and deeds are not two separate things, but parts of a whole. Faith and deeds are parallel to loving and serving God.

I. Division Statement – Faith and deeds

(Sub Points)

(A) Explanation

- a. I’m sure no one would disagree that these are two very important parts of the Christian life. James argues that faith is accompanied by works and they should not stand alone. He reinforces his argument with stories of Abraham and Rahab for support. It is completely possible for someone to have faith and rest on that alone and do no good deeds as a result of that faith. It is also possible for a person to do good deeds without any basis of faith in the matter. James shows that these two should be interconnected.

(B) Argument

- a. The Officer’s Covenant says that we are “to love and serve God.” It is possible for someone to love God, and to be content with that and go on living their lives. There are also times where we, myself as an example, can serve God with vigor until we wear ourselves out, and forget that the true motivation for that service is the love relationship shared with God.

(C) Application

- a. It is important to remember that these two things are connected, and to avoid the danger of relying on too much of one or the other.

(D) Illustration

- a. Martin Luther said, “The question is asked: how can justification take place without the works of the law, even though James says: "Faith without works is dead"? In answer, the apostle distinguishes between the law and faith, the letter and grace. The 'works of the law' are works done without faith and grace, by the law, which forces them to be done through fear or the enticing promise of temporal advantages. But 'works of faith' are those done in the spirit of liberty, purely out of love to God. And they can be done only by those who are justified by faith. An ape can cleverly imitate the actions of humans. But he is not therefore a human. If he became a human, it would undoubtedly be not by virtue of the works by which he imitated man but by virtue of something else; namely, by an act of God. Then, having been made a human, he would perform the works of humans in proper fashion. Paul does not say that faith is without its characteristic works, but that it justifies without the works of the law. Therefore justification does not require the works of the law; but it does require a living faith, which performs its works.”

(E) Transition Statement

- a. Love and service to God, like faith and deeds, should not be stand-alone practices. It is important that we guard ourselves against tipping the scale in one direction or the other, but to maintain the proper balance under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

II. Division Statement – Our response

(Sub Points)

(A) Explanation

- a. We have a great God. His goodness is undeniable. Our faith in Him and our love relationship with Him should produce the service to others in His name. The Salvation Army mission statement says this, “The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.”

(B) Argument

- a. As a result of this, our response should be that of a working together of faith and deeds. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and action that shows His love to the people of this dark and dying world.

(C) Application

- a. Our message is based on the Bible, the love story of God to His people. Our ministry is motivated by the love of God, by our faith in Him. Our mission is to preach, to serve, to do good deeds.

(D) Illustration

- a. Verse 1 of song 488 says, “How can I better serve thee, Lord, Thou who has done so much for me? Faltering and weak my labor has been; O that my life may tell for thee!”

(E) Transition Statement

- a. I urge you to consider where you are. Consider if you are more on the faith side of the scale, content with where you are and thinking that is enough. Or are you walking dangerously on the other side, serving and serving and forgetting the motivation, the purpose which is the love of God?

Summation:

James said in chapter 2 verse 26, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” Is your faith lacking deeds, is your love lacking service? Or perhaps the other way around. Are you too busy service the Lord to remember why you started doing so in the first place. Verse 3 of this song says, “Strength for my weakness, Lord, impart; Sight for my blindness give to me; Faith for my doubtings, Lord, I would crave, that I may serve thee worthily.” Come to the cross this morning, and as the chorus says plead for the Lord to fit you for His service.