

## Midweek ministry @ Ballyloughan

worshipping, growing, caring, serving, engaging

James: A down-to-earth faith  
3 - *How to have a life of faith (2:14-26)*  
Notes for 21<sup>st</sup> November (Pre-Communion)

Why does James use 'demons' (v19) as an example of this kind of bogus ticket?

What are some of the other 'bogus tickets' people hold that give them a false sense of security?

- James is not teaching that anyone will be saved by good works. He is saying that when a person has true faith in Jesus, he or she will experience transformation that will be seen by others. What are some of the changes that happen in a person's life when he or she becomes a wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ?
- What are some of the 'signs of life' in Abraham and in Rahab that give witness to the fact that they had a genuine faith? (see notes)
- What lessons can we learn about the living faith of both Abraham and Rahab?

SERVING and CARING. Don't forget the Bible Society Alternative Gift idea from last time – this needs to be finalised tonight.



James talks in vs 15,16 about the person who claims to have faith but neglects a fellow Christian in some kind of need. Perhaps you could identify in your group or in the church someone who has a practical need – how can you meet that need as we are challenged to do in vs 15,16? (don't forget about current ministries such as the Care Committee, flower distribution, meals for mums, CD ministry to the housebound... is there any way you would like to get involved in any of these ministries?)



ENGAGING. A big thanks to you all for your help and support with the table quiz – what a night!!! Our next venture is our Christmas Celebration for all the family including Ceilidh with 'the McStockers.' This will be for all the church family but we also aim for it to be another bridge building event. So think and pray now about who you could invite – someone from your 'circles of life' diagram? We will also be asking for help once again to provide food. On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> December we will have an all-age service in the morning and our Carol Service in the evening. Perhaps there's someone you could bring along? Alpha will be commencing on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008. Pray for all of these events. Plan to bring people...



Intro: Darrell Pace illustration. One of the key emphasis of James is that faith is something that will be seen in action. In this passage James issues us with a direct challenge: is your faith dead or alive? Are you authentic or phoney? He wants us to be sure that we're on the right track.

v24: "*You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*" Is James contradicting Paul? e.g. Romans 3v28 "*a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*" No, they each have a different emphasis for different situations. Paul is writing against legalism. James is writing against laxity.

James teaches us important lessons about true faith. v26, "*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*" He says something about dead faith and something about living faith.

**1. Dead faith is all \_\_\_\_\_ but no action.** (vs 14-17). v14ff "*what good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'go I wish you well, keep warm and well fed' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*" In the world of faith, it's very dangerous to be an armchair Christian. James illustration is talking about people in the church who are in great trouble. The armchair Christian doesn't have a hint of willingness to get involved.

James is not saying that if we fail to help others from time to time, we have a dead faith. None of us can help everyone. But if all we ever do is mouth platitudes and never get stuck in with fellow Christians in need, then you are all mouth and no action according to James.

**2. Dead faith is all \_\_\_\_\_ but no action** (vs 18,19). v 18, "*someone will say, 'You have faith. I have deeds'...*" This person butts into James argument claiming that he's more of a deeds man. He's a good person, but he doesn't go in for all of this belief business – but a Christian is someone who believes certain things. But says James, belief in itself is not enough.

v19, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder!” The devil and his demons are very orthodox in their beliefs - but they don’t have a saving faith. And James says that if we believe all the right things but there is no evidence in our lives to back it up, if our faith is not seen in actions, then we’re deceiving ourselves.

**3. Living faith is about \_\_\_\_\_** (vs 20-24). The example of Abraham. God, out of sheer grace, appeared to Abraham and made him a promise that he would have a son and that through this son God would build Abraham into a great nation. So Genesis 15v6 (quoted by James v23), “*Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.*” Abraham had faith. But after that point, Abraham’s life was a life of faith shown in his deeds. James reminds us in v21 of the story of the ultimate test of Abraham’s faith told in Gen 22 – the command to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was prepared not to hold anything back. Faith in action, faith that was willing to make costly sacrifice – that’s living faith. Are we willing to show the quality of our faith in costly sacrifice? David Garland: “*Unlike some contemporary peddlers of the gospel, Jesus does not offer his disciples varieties of self-fulfilment, intoxicating spiritual experiences, or intellectual stimulation. He presents them with a cross. This particular demand separates the disciples from the admirers. Disciples must do more than survey the wondrous cross, glory in the cross of Christ, and love the old rugged cross, as beloved hymns have it. They must become like Jesus in obedience and live the cross...*” Living faith is about costly sacrifice. Do you have a sense of sacrifice in your life for Jesus?

**4. Living faith is about \_\_\_\_\_** (vs 25,26). v 25, “*In the same way, was not the prostitute Rahab considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?*” (see Joshua 2). James chooses Rahab because she wasn’t some kind of spiritual giant, she was just an ordinary girl in an ordinary town living a fairly ordinary 15<sup>th</sup> C BC life. If she can have faith in God which is seen in action, then anybody can. Her story... she takes a huge risk, puts her life on the line because she had heard what God had done for the Israelites and she now too believed in God. Rahab showed her faith by courageous service. Would we describe our faith as being courageous? Someone who is willing to put reputation, money, comfort, safety, even life on the line for the sake of the faith we profess to believe in. Would we describe our faith as being courageous? Are we as a church courageous?

## Follow-on Material for 28<sup>th</sup> November

Please do not feel that you have to stick rigidly to this material!



**WORSHIPPING.** Feel free to use your own ideas to worship God together as a group as I know you all do!



**GROWING**

Read James 2: 14-26

- Read James’ words in James 2:14-26 and those of Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10 and Galatians 2:16. Discuss the key thoughts taught by Paul and James. How do you see their views concerning works fitting together?
- James clearly teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Give an example of what a person’s life might look like in one of these situations:
  - § A person who has faith but no works
  - § A person who has works but no faith
  - § A person who has faith in God and works that grow naturally out of this faith
  - § A person who has no faith and no works.
- Which of these four scenarios best describes where you are in your life right now?

Imagine standing at the gate of a concert or sporting event waiting to get into the stadium. You have bought your ticket well in advance. You have it in your hand and are just waiting for the stewards to open the gates so you can enter the stadium. Eventually, it’s time to go in. Each person in front of you steps up to the turnstiles, hands over their ticket, and proceeds. As you step up to the steward and hand her your ticket, she asks you to wait. You are puzzled, but you stay right where you are. She makes a quick call and you wait as others continue to hand their tickets and enter the stadium. Finally, a security officer approaches the flight attendant, talks quietly with her, and comes toward you. “I’m sorry, your ticket is counterfeit. You can’t enter the event.” All this time you thought you had the real thing, but you had a false security. Your ticket was ‘bogus’! James is clear that there are many people who think they have a ‘ticket to heaven’ but they may be holding a bogus one. He is calling us to be absolutely sure that we have a genuine, saving faith.