

EXTREME MAKEOVER: DIRTY HANDS

James 2:14-26

Introduction:

During the stretch drive of the 1978 Canadian Football League season, the Toronto Argos had hastily flown in what appeared to be a potential "franchise" player and signed him to a ten day trial. The team set him up in luxury accommodation and catered to all his lavish needs.

In a short manner of time though, the Argos had discovered that this player was actually a con man. His specialty was in fooling franchises across the continent into providing him with all expense paid trips. This con man both looked like a football player and talked like a football player but he was no football player. The moment that he set foot on the field, it became embarrassingly apparent to Argo management that his only true skill was "talking the talk" and not "walking the walk".

The moral of this story boils down to this: talk backed by inaction amounts to nothing, whether it be on the football field or more importantly, on the field of life. This player claimed to be a star talent but could not verify it on the field. You claim to be a Christian. Can you verify it on the playing field of life?

You who claim to have faith in God - let me see your hands.

1. BELIEF without BENEVOLENCE.

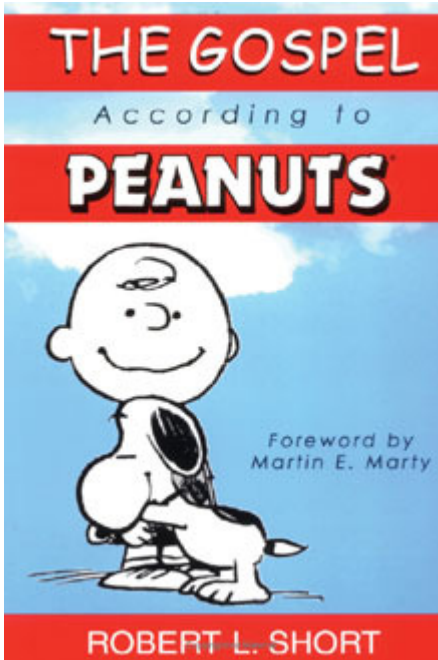
What is the nature of authentic saving faith? Is it a mental or intellectual assent of correct doctrines or is it belief evidencing itself through behavior? James

clearing teaches the latter and today's scripture passage is his defense of his understanding of faith.

James 2:14-17

14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 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? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

NIV



There was a Peanuts cartoon in which Charlie Brown and Linus are inside all bundled up and Snoopy's out in the cold shivering in front of an empty dog food bowl. Charlie and Linus are having a discussion on how sad it is that Snoopy is hungry and cold. "He's cold and hungry. We ought to do something about it." They walk outside and say to Snoopy, "Be of good cheer, Snoopy."

Real belief leads to benevolence. Genuine faith causes us to get involved in the lives of others when we see

their needs and are presented with opportunities to minister.

Has your belief led to benevolence? Do you get our hands dirty reaching out to others? Show me your hands.

2. CREED without CONDUCT.

James 2:18-19

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 what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder.

NIV

"Show me your faith without deeds." The Greek for "show" is literally "prove." James is in effect saying, "If you claim to have faith without deeds, then prove it." This is a challenge that cannot be answered by his opponent for faith can not be demonstrated apart from our actions. Faith is an inner attitude and can only be seen as it influences outer actions. Your creed must influence your conduct.

Mere profession proves nothing.

A.W. Tozer said it this way, "An intelligent observer of our human scene who heard the Sunday morning sermon and later watched the Sunday afternoon conduct of those who heard it would conclude that he had been examining two distinct and contrary religions!"

Does your creed match your conduct? Show me your hands.

3. ASSENT with ACTION.

James 2:20-24

20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor 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. 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 justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

NIV

At this point James says that only a "foolish man" or, as the literal Greek says, an empty headed person would still think that works are unnecessary.

Several years ago Rich Mullins wrote a song that contained this line: "Faith without works is like a song you can't sing, it's about as useless as a screen door on a submarine."

Billy Graham had this to say about faith and works: "There really is no conflict between faith and works. In the Christian life they go together like inhaling and exhaling. Faith is taking the Gospel in; works is taking the Gospel out."

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army said: "Faith and works should travel side-by-side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again - until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other."

Has your assent led to action. Show me your hands.

4. TRUTH with TRANSFORMATION.

James 2:25-26

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.

NIV

First she was transformed by the truth and then through her the truth transformed her environment.

“A father and son were raking leaves when they noticed something darting in and out of the piles. After careful effort they uncovered a chameleon . It was difficult to see among the brown leaves. It had blended with them by turning brown, too. After catching the little creature, they put it in a jar of green grass, where it immediately turned green. When they added some red berries, the chameleon began to take on that color. Some people are chameleons in character; wherever you put them, they turn that color. Their thinking and their behavior depend on their environment”

Are you more like Rahab or more like the chameleon? Are you transforming your environment or are you being transformed by your environment? How has the truth transformed your life? In what ways have you changed since you came to faith in Christ? In what ways has the truth of God been transforming you in

the last six months? How are you different that you were one year ago?

Show me your hands?

Conclusion: After a careful consideration of these truths James concludes: As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Check Points:

- ✓ What is the evidence that you believe?
- ✓ What good has your faith led you to do?
- ✓ How has your faith changed your actions?
- ✓ How has your environment been transformed by your knowledge of the truth?

Prayer: Father God help me never to lose sight of that others will know the sincerity of my trust in you by the actions of my life. Might I truly become a transformer of my environment through the truth that has transformed me. May I have dirty hands. Amen