

Faith in Action: A Study of James

Faith Produces Action

James 1:19-26

A Real Faith for A Real Life

1:1-8

Our trust in Christ is not developed absent of challenge but by applying trust in the midst of challenge.

The Perspective Faith Provides

1:9-18

Trust in Christ provides perspective to help us live God oriented lives.

Faith's Fuel

1:19-21

James echoes a theme sounded often in Proverbs (see 10:19; 15:1; 17:27-28): the righteous person will listen well and consider carefully before he speaks, and will restrain his anger lest it lead to hasty, nasty, irretrievable words (1:19). James does not prohibit all anger, but exhorts his readers to be slow and careful about allowing anger to develop. Anger, James reminds us, “does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (the NIV translation brings out the sense well here).

Evangelical Commentary on the Bible

Learning requires slowness; action requires quickness. In this case the requiring quickness is that which is to be learned by hearing. The required learning is in speaking, in which case wisdom is easily abandoned in favor of self-interest. Anger may not be fully controllable, but it can be checked by avoiding impetuous speech.

James

However much evil practices are rooted in the memory and structure of desire within the human soul, they are effectively dealt with as activities distinct from believers themselves. All immoral and moral behaviors are practices that are acquired rather than reflective of an “orientation.” Being moral is necessary, but it always involves intentional acts. This is even more the case with Christian action, for it is closely interwoven with personal faith, prayer, worship, fellowship, and the evangelistic mandate of Christ. Christian obedience is never fully habitual. It requires a daily “putting on Christ” for its realization. Even with a strong doctrine of the new life in Christ, believers are always putting on and putting off ways of living according to the will of God.

James

Faith's Fruit

1:22-25

The best mirrors were of Corinthian bronze, but no mirrors of that period produced the accurate images available today (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). Those with enough resources to own mirrors used them when fixing their hair; if James alludes to such people, he portrays the forgetful hearer as stupid. More likely, he refers to many people who had no mirrors and saw themselves rarely, who might more naturally forget their own appearance. In this case the reference is to the ease with which one loses the memory of the word, if one does not work hard to put it into practice.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

Faith's Heart

1:26-27

This is not a definition of religion but rather a contrast to mere acts of worship and ritualistic observances that are commonly called "religion." Again, the goal is a mature Christian walk and practical holiness. What does it take to achieve that goal? The first step is to stand with confidence. Trials or temptations will not topple one who is anchored in God's truth and is applying that truth to his life.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Orphans and widows had neither direct means of support nor automatic legal defenders in that society. In Judaism, charity distributors made sure that widows and orphans were cared for if they had no relatives to help them; such charity is also part of the visiting envisioned here. Greek society did look out for freeborn orphans, but not other ones. Jewish people visited the bereaved especially during the first week of their bereavement but also afterward, and they likewise visited the sick. Many Greco-Roman writers also valued visiting the sick and bereaved.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

Faith in Christ will produce Christlikeness.

Questions for Application

- Q1. Why do Christians tend to equate knowledge with faith rather than action?
- Q2. How can we practically evaluate the impact of our words?
- Q3. What is one step you can take this week to move knowledge into action?