

4 Sep 2022	James 2:14-26	Faith and Works	Galatians 3:7-9, 11
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This Sunday we begin a series of sermons on the Letter of James. If this Letter was an essay, James would get a weak mark for structure: he raises all kinds of subjects in no particular order. I will deal with themes from the letter and follow it completely.

This week we begin with 2:14-26 because this passage deals with a key question: how to be a friend of God? When does God accept you?

- Paul is the one who emphasizes 'justification by faith', esp. in Romans and Galatians; being put right with God only because of your trust in him. In history this has led to one-sided emphasis on intellectual assent.
- James meets too many people who don't live in line with what they say. They say they follow Jesus – but you can't see it. And that is very wrong. If we belong to Jesus, it needs to affect what we do on Monday morning and on Friday evening. Faith is not about filling a pew, but about a new lifestyle.

Paul emphasizes that God accepts you because of your trust in Him and in the Lord Jesus. James stressed that God expects to see concrete results of your trust in Him. These things are not contradictory. Jesus himself says the same in Matthew 7:21: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.'

James is a very practical letter. You might think it's all about doing, earning your place with God. But the presupposition of all guidelines is: faith in Jesus. As it is in Paul. Genuine faith always results in obedience to the teaching of Jesus.

We can illustrate this from the biblical language Hebrew, which has the word דבר *dabar*. It means both 'word' and 'deed'. To put it simply: what you say and what you do is one in Hebrew.

So there is no either/or: our faith/trust in God and our actions on Monday morning are equally important. We need to follow Jesus with our hands as well as our head.

If you are a citizen of God's kingdom, behave as one! If you are not sure if you are, talk to one of us.