

# THE MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: A FUNCTIONAL FAITH James 2:14-26

The J-B Weld Company was founded in 1969 by Sam and Mary Bonham. Sam had discovered a need for a “cold weld” product to use in his truck service garage, instead of traditional torch welding. Working with a Texas A&M chemist, he formulated an original “tougher than steel” two-part epoxy and named it J-B Weld. Sam and Mary soon went from selling the product out of their car to auto parts jobbers across Texas, to selling it in stores throughout the U.S. and internationally. The product is contained in 2 separate tubes: the “hardener” (red tube) and the “steel” (black tube of resin). They must be mixed together in equal portions to get the desired result.

## I. THE FALLACY OF A PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH

A. James continued his assault on the idea of faith without works. <sup>18</sup> *But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* <sup>19</sup> *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.* James carries on a conversation with an imaginary interrupter. There were those who claimed that this faith that James was describing was a particular gift. Works was a gift. They contended that some have one, but not the other. James entertained that idea for a fleeting moment. Can faith be boiled down to a philosophy, a way of thought, or a creed? Can a recitation of a creedal statement suffice in the area of faith? Faithful Jews subscribed to the idea of a

monotheistic God. *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”* Deuteronomy 6:4 (NASB95) James said that the demons, Satan’s minions, share that same belief. Their reaction is to shudder or to have the heebie jeebies. It was the kind of reaction one might give to a magician – David Blaine for instance. These Satanic minions are afraid of God, but nothing more.

- B. This detached belief in one God will cause the demons to remain in their doomed state. This detached belief can also keep men and women from entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ that brings life and light.

## II. THE FOUNDATION OF A FUNCTIONING FAITH

- A. James knew that faith had to move beyond a mental assent, an intellectual understanding. There had to be a change of heart and mind that resulted in a changed life. The shema in Deuteronomy 6 continued: <sup>4</sup> *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”* <sup>5</sup> *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* <sup>6</sup> *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.”* Deuteronomy 6:4–6 (NASB95) Jesus was clear. <sup>8</sup> *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”* <sup>9</sup> *“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”* <sup>10</sup> *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”* <sup>11</sup> *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”* John 15:8–11 (NASB95)

- B. The foundation of a functioning faith is our love for Christ. We do not follow him and obey him to earn his favor. We follow him and obey him because we have his favor. We revel in his love. Therefore, we are prompted to abide in him.

### III. THE FUNCTION OF BIBLICAL FAITH

- A. James used the life of Abraham as an illustration of faith in action. <sup>21</sup> *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?* <sup>22</sup> *You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;* <sup>23</sup> *and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.* <sup>24</sup> *You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*
1. God called Abraham to follow him and to trust him unconditionally. He promised Abraham that he would make his family great and would use it as a missionary vehicle to bless the world. That was a bold promise to a 75 year-old man and his aged wife. It wasn't until 25 years later that the promise was fulfilled. In the meantime, Abraham and Sarah had taken things into their hands and arranged a relationship with Hagar, the maid, that resulted in a pregnancy and a birth. The son, Ishmael, was Abraham's, but he was not the son of the promise. Isaac was the son of the promise.
  2. The account that James referenced is recorded in Genesis 22. <sup>1</sup> *Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him,*

*“Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”<sup>2</sup> He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”<sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.<sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.<sup>5</sup> Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.”<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.<sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”<sup>8</sup> Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.*

Genesis 22:1–8 (NASB95)

- B. Did God need this to know the heart of Abraham? No, but Abraham needed this to reveal his heart. He trusted God. He knew God had the power to raise from the dead. <sup>19</sup> *He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.* Hebrews 11:19 (NASB95)
- C. What are the take-away lessons from these verses?
1. Faith must be coupled with love for God that issues in obedience.
  2. Faith must trust the promises of God.

3. Faith must act.