

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

WORSHIP SERVICE 10.30 AM 13 JULY 2025

Pauline Mbukwa leading and Simon Bird preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk.

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Theme: Becoming like Jesus 4: Putting our faith into action

Prayer Time

A Call to Worship

Oh, let us sing to the Lord

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of my salvation.

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving.

Let us make joyful noise to him with songs of praise for the Lord God is great and a great King above all gods, Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, you desire that I should love others because you, God, are God of love, but I fail so many times to love, and sometimes I show favouritism by loving some and hating others. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, wash me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Create in me a clean heart today. Amen

Shall we stand and sing this song of adoration of how great and awesome our God is

Song: BPW62, MP506

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,

When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think how God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:
When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation,
and take me home, what joy will fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art.

Tr Stuart K Hine (1899-1989)

Family Time: Faith without action is dead

The drama that we have watched shows what happens in our society today we have Christians who claim to be Christians by word but not through actions. We do not serve or help others in need, but genuine faith is that which shows the fruits of the Holy Spirit, acts of love. Faith is also being bold to do the things that on our own we cannot do, but that belief in God enables us to step out; it is that faith that does not rely on our strength but trusts in God.

Song: *During the singing of this hymn, our offering will be taken*

Be bold be strong! MP 49

Be bold! Be strong!
For the Lord your God is with you.
Be bold! Be strong!
For the Lord your God is with you.
I am not afraid,
I am not dismayed,
Because I'm walking in faith and victory,
Come on and walk in faith and victory,
For the Lord, your God is with you.

M Chapman, A Silver © 1983 Word Music

1st Bible Reading James 2:14-26

2nd Bible Reading Hebrews 11:17-19, 31

Song: BPW 593, MP201

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, I will ever give to Thee;

William Williams (1717-91)

Becoming like Jesus 4 : Putting our Faith into Action 4. James 2:14-26

Do you remember the mirror from James chapter 1 (v22)? The characters in the bible show us things about ourselves: David, Sarah, Ruth, Peter. We identify with their weaknesses, but also see their passions and strength. What bible character has most impacted you?

In today's reading James introduces five 'characters' and we will see what they say about ourselves. The point James is making is that the real Christian life shows itself in how we live and what we do. Faith shows itself in action.

To recap, we are looking at the letter of James. It has hard hitting lessons, but it is about growing to maturity in the faith and becoming like Jesus. It may be tough, but the goal is worthwhile. James addresses true religion in three areas: 1. how we control our tongue; 2. how we treat each other; and 3. how we live a holy life (1:26-27). In the central part of the letter he expands on these themes.

Last week, we covered the theme of love and care for others - avoiding favouritism and cliques (2:1), which judges the poor and breaks the Royal Law of love - and loving our neighbour in the way King Jesus taught us (8).

Today, James reinforces this point with another reason to love and care for others. Namely, real faith shows itself in action. What we do is the evidence of our faith, while faith that does not show itself in action is not real faith, it is dead (17, 26). This is also a wider and important theological point.

When we start to talk about faith and action, we must remind ourselves that we do not earn our salvation by doing good things. These are what the Bible calls dead works (Heb 6:1). We can only be saved by faith in Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross. We are born again and then the Spirit gives us power to live the Christian life and to do these good things. As

before, the proof of being saved is the fruit of our lives. So we look at the five characters James calls as his witnesses.

1. 'Armchair Christian!' (2:15-17). It is very easy to sit in comfort and tell others what to do. This is someone who sees a brother in need – without clothes or food. He says nice words, 'Bless you, go in peace, keep warm and well fed, I will pray for you!' but does nothing to help. That is useless; it is not faith. Faith would get up out of the armchair and do something! We need to 'walk the talk.'

2. Some surprising witnesses – demons! (19). The point is that demons have a perfectly good understanding of doctrine – they believe in one God. This shows that bible knowledge alone, say going to lots of bible studies, is not enough. Remember, if we just listen to the word, we are deceiving ourselves, we must **do** what it says (1:22). Faith without action is empty.

3. The foolish person says he has faith without deeds (20). One translation calls him shallow, so I shall call him 'Mr Shallow.' The word in Greek means empty or without success. Do we want our faith to be shallow or fruitless?

4. Abraham (21-24). This would appeal to the Jewish readers of the letter, because he is the Father of their faith, the best witness that James could call. Like Paul, James remembers that Abraham was counted as righteous (justified) by his faith when he believed God's promise of a son (Gen 15:6). James goes on to show that Abraham's faith was made complete (perfected) by his action of being prepared to sacrifice this son, Isaac. Abraham showed his faith like this: he heard God's promise and then acted on it. Stepping out in faith is taking a risk, but it is not a blind, reckless act; it is confidence in what we hear. The result, his reward, is that Abraham was called the friend of God (23) and was counted among the heroes of faith (Heb 11:8-19)

5. Rahab, another surprising witness (25). A woman, a foreigner and, even more, a prostitute. We could draw huge lessons here, but I only need say that there is no one too high or low, worthy or unworthy, far or near, who cannot please God by their actions and be counted as a hero of faith. Unlike Abraham, who showed his faith in stepping out in trust in God's promise, Rahab showed her faith in hospitality – the practical care James has been talking about. She equally had a sense of God's purposes for the people of God, and wanted to be part of that. Her actions were risky, hiding the spies. The result, her reward, was that her life was spared, she joined the people of God, and was counted among the heroes of faith (Heb 11: 31).

Five kinds of people. Armchair Christian who just says good things, but does nothing. The demons: I hope we are not like them! But this points to the person who knows his bible, but does not act on it. Mr Shallow, a fruitless faith. While Abraham and Rahab represent those who put their faith into action, and are rewarded. Abraham is called God's friend. What else could anyone want? Abraham became the father of a nation and all of us who have faith. Rahab took her place in the ancestry of Christ (Matt 1:5). Both were part of God's plan.

Who do we identify with? Mr Shallow or Hero of faith? Am I just getting at you, saying you must work harder? It is easy to be hard on ourselves. Who do we think does God wants us to be? What might we be saying? 'I am not good enough!' 'I can't do this,' 'I must sacrifice too

much.' 'This is just for special Christians, gifted people?' Maybe we need to look at what is holding us back and how we move forward.

It is not as simple as saying we are lazy, or not good enough. I think there is fear. Fear of failing, fear of criticism, fear of not being good enough. God does not expect perfection. A man said to Jesus, 'I believe, help my unbelief!' (Mk 9:24). We move forward knowing God's love for us and asking the Spirit to empower us.

The key, I think, is that Abraham had his faults and weaknesses, but he was called God's friend. I believe this life of faith, trust and adventure is the life God wants for each of us. He is not a criticising schoolmaster, waiting for us to fail and then punishing us, such that we are paralysed and frightened of taking risks. But it is knowing the father heart of God like Jill said last week. We have a loving heavenly Father, who wants the best for us. Jesus promises never to leave us and the Holy Spirit is our Advocate – called alongside to help. Jesus calls us to an abundant, not shallow life (Jn 10:10). We ask the Father for help, for Jesus to be with us, and most importantly to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Because, as Paul wrote to Timothy, 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.' (2 Tim 1:7). Remember our children's song, 'Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you, I am not afraid, No, No.'

This morning, we can choose to trust God, step out and put our faith into action. Not just in caring for one another, but wider acts of faith. The reward is a satisfying, Jesus-shaped, abundant life. We can know the joy of being part of his kingdom, we can be part of God's solution for the world, rather than the problem. We can know we are friends of God, heroes of faith.

Prayer: Father, we feel the challenge this morning to leave shallowness and grow in faith. We sense it is the kind of life you want for us, but we and you know our weakness and fear. We believe, help our unbelief! We ask for your help, we know you will walk with us and especially we ask you to fill us with your Spirit of power. Help us to become heroes of faith, in Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Song: BPW 348, MP 335

In my life, Lord, be glorified, be glorified,
In my life, Lord, be glorified today

In your church, Lord, be glorified, be glorified,
In your church, Lord, be glorified today

In your World Lord, be glorified, be glorified,
In your World, Lord, be glorified today

Bob Kilpatrick © 1978 Bob Kilpatrick Music

Prayers – Eva Suen

Our Heavenly Father, We come before You with humble hearts, seeking Your guidance and strength. We thank You for the gift of life and for the community of faith we share at Abbey Baptist Church.

Lord, bless our congregation with unity, love, and a spirit of service. May we keep our eyes fixed on You, following in the footsteps of our Lord and diligently observing Your commandments and statutes. Help us to walk in Your ways and reflect Your light in all we do.

We lift up our church leaders to You, asking that You grant them wisdom, strength, and discernment as they guide us in faith. May they be filled with Your Spirit and empowered to lead with compassion and integrity.

We also pray for our church's mission work. May our efforts to share the Gospel be fruitful, reaching hearts that are searching for hope and truth. Empower us to be bold witnesses of Your love, and inspire us to serve those in need, both locally and globally.

We lift up the world to You, Father. In these challenging times, we pray for peace, healing, and justice, especially in places torn by conflict. May Your wisdom guide our leaders, and may Your love mend the brokenness in our societies. Help us to be instruments of Your peace, working together to create a world where everyone can thrive.

As we move forward, remind us of our purpose and empower us to live out our faith boldly, walking in Your footsteps. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Response

Today we have been challenged to step out of the armchair, by choosing to act with love, doing good works and it is only when we make a choice to walk with Jesus for the rest of our life that we can be able to live just like Jesus. Who wants to walk with him? I want to walk with Jesus.

Song: MP 302

I want to walk with Jesus Christ,
all the days I live of this life on earth;
to give to Him complete control
of body and of soul.

*Follow Him, follow Him,
yield your life to Him -
He has conquered death,
He is King of kings;
accept the joy which He gives to those
who yield their lives to Him.*

I want to learn to speak to Him,
to pray to Him, confess my sin,
to open my life and let Him in,
for joy will then be mine.

I want to learn to speak of Him
my life must show that He lives in me;
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
all of His love for me.

I want to learn to read His word,
for this is how I know the way
to live my life as pleases Him,
in holiness and joy.

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,
enter now into this heart of mine;
take full control of my selfish will
and make me wholly Thine!

C Simmonds © 1964 C Simmonds

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. May God help us to have genuine faith and may the Holy Spirit who dwells in us empower us to do good works because we are God's workmanship created to do good works.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

This week's notices Today after church we have our church meeting

Wednesday 16 th July	10.30am	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15pm	Bible study
	2pm	Want to know more about Jesus?
Thursday 17 th	10.30am	Toddlers
	10.30am	Bible study
	7.30pm	Men's Bible study
Friday 18 th	10:30am	Prayer meeting
	5.00pm	Table Tennis Club
Sunday 20 th July	6.30	Iranian get together and Bible study
	10.30 am	Baptism service



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