

Kerry quotes Bible; Bush aide cries foul: Faith and works

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On the presidential campaign trail, Senator John Kerry (D., Mass.) is using the New Testament's Letter of James to imply that the Bush administration may be long on expressing faith but lacks compassionate deeds in dealing with hunger and joblessness. Following Kerry's appearance in a St. Louis church, a White House spokesman decried the ploy as "exploitation of scripture."

To shouts of approval on March 28 from worshipers at New Northside Missionary Baptist Church, Kerry cited two verses from James, first 2:14, then 1:22.

"The scriptures say, 'What does it profit my brethren if some say he has faith but does not have works?' When we look at what's happening in America today, where are the works of compassion? Because it's also written, 'Be doers of the word and not hearers only,'" he said, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Likewise, *Time* magazine's Web site reported that Kerry told a Mississippi congregation on March 7 that President Bush does not practice the "compassionate conservatism" he preaches. The Massachusetts senator then cited James 2:14, saying, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" Bush, a United Methodist, has referred to his beliefs while promoting his faith-based initiative and on other occasions.

In speaking at the St. Louis church, Kerry vaguely criticized "our present national leadership." But a spokesman for Bush, Steve Schmidt, said the senator's comments were "beyond the bounds of acceptable discourse and a sad exploitation of scripture for political attack."

Kerry's campaign might hear next from clergy and churchgoers who prefer inclusive translations for James 2:14 such as the New Revised Standard Version's: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?"