

JAMES 2:21-26
EVIDENCE FOR FAITH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 2 as we continue our study through this very practical and yet, very challenging letter. Keep in mind that James is writing to Jewish Christians who were scattered from their homes due to their faith in Christ.

And James is trying to encourage them, and he wants them to grow up, to mature in the faith. Let's face it, children are wonderful, but if your child is 21 years of age and they are doing the same things that a 5-year old does, that is not good. They have not grown up, they have not matured.

And yes, sometimes there are physical problems that keep people back, but that is not what James is dealing with here. He is not speaking of someone who is mentally handicapped here.

He is speaking to those who have the ability to mature in the faith, and they are not doing that and thus, we have this challenging letter to them to grow up!

And here in James chapter 2 the focus is ***THE BELIEVER AND SERVICE!*** Living out our faith is the idea. We don't discriminate or ignore people because of their social status, because of the way they look, because of the jobs they have, because of this or because of that. We are not to discriminate against people! In other words, ***FAITH IS PROVED BY LOVE!***

And last week, as we continued on in James chapter 2, we looked at the idea that ***FAITH IS PROVED BY WORKS!*** And, as I said, works don't save us, but it is the evidence that shows we are saved!

Think about it like this. Let's say that I am going to jump out of a plane with a parachute strapped onto my back! Okay, I would not do this, I don't even like climbing on my roof, but let's just say that I have the faith to do this crazy thing, that is what I tell you!

I have all the equipment, I look very professional! I get into the plane and the plane takes off. It looks like I am a genuine parachute guy, or whatever you would call it. The plane reaches the altitude that is needed for me to jump. The door opens up and the countdown begins, **5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . JUMP!** Now it is time to exercise the faith that I said I had.

The problem here is that I don't jump! I stay in the plane. Do I believe in my parachute? No, I did not jump! But I look like someone who would, I have all the equipment! That does not matter because I showed that my faith was empty, and I remained on the plane. You see, I said I had faith but, in the end, those words were empty because my faith was not proved by my works, I did not parachute out of the plane!

That is what James is saying. True faith, living faith will be lived out in our lives. False faith, dead faith will do nothing!

That is exactly what James said in James 2:17-18, **"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."**

And James drives home that point as he tells us that even the Demons believe that there is one God and they know they will be judged by God, and yet, they are not saved. Why is that? Because their actions, the things that they do show that they may believe that Jesus is God, but it has not changed their lives, they are still out there destroying lives and that is empty faith. Belief will lead to action, at least it should!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

The actualization and maintenance of authentic faith has been a problem for the church from apostolic times onward. In the last century this problem was a main concern of the

philosopher Kierkegaard, who addressed it with his considerable arsenal of literary weapons, variously employing logic, paradox, scorn, humor and parable. In one memorable instance he told a parable about Duckland: It was Sunday morning, and all the ducks dutifully came to church, waddling through the doors and down the aisle into their pews where they comfortably squatted. When all were well-settled, and the hymns were sung, the duck minister waddled to his pulpit, opened the Duck Bible and read: “Ducks! You have wings, and with wings you can fly like eagles. You can soar into the sky! Use your wings!” It was a marvelous, elevating duck scripture, and thus all the ducks quacked their assent with a hearty “Amen!” – and then they plopped down from their pews and *waddled* home.

In the lives of many churchgoers today, there is a yawning chasm between profession and action, professed faith and works – and that chasm gives the lie to people’s loud claims to real faith.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, p. 115

I don’t know about you, but that is heavy upon my heart. And maybe this is just for me, but I don’t think so. I think we all struggle with living out our faith. We are great when we are gathered in this church building, at least we try to be. But what happens when we leave that door of the church and go out into the world? Are we just waddling or are we soaring in our faith?

Is our faith real that we believe in the promises of God found in the Word of God? Do we stand up for what is right? Do we leave here loving people or backbiting, bashing, devouring others?

Remember what we closed with last week in James, **“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”** James 2:20. James is challenging them, wanting them to know but asking them that big question, ***“Do you really want to know, to believe that faith without works is dead, because it is!”***

Make no mistake about it, James is going to challenge us once again in the verses that we will be looking at this morning. And I have broken them down into three main points. They are:

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM – JAMES 2:21-24

THE FAITH OF RAHAB – JAMES 2:25

THE CONCLUSION – JAMES 2:26

As James has been showing us and as we will see this morning, true faith is seen in our lives, it is lived out in the things that we do and the things that we say. Otherwise the world has no idea of the God we serve because we are not living out that faith!

I guess you can say that the Christian is justified by ***FAITH*** before God but is justified before humans through the ***WORKS*** that they can see!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in James chapter 2, beginning in verse 21 as we look at the topic – ***“EVIDENCE FOR FAITH!”*** and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning that we can learn and apply to our lives!

JAMES 2 **VERSES 21-24**

Obviously, what we see here is the faith of Abraham. The big question here, and a very controversial part of the Scriptures, is the faith of Abraham. ***“Was Abraham saved by faith or by works?”***

Here in James 2:21, where James said, **“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?”** was a stumbling block to Martin Luther and it still troubles some, even today!

Keep in mind that Martin Luther was fighting against the Roman Catholic Church and their dogma of a salvation through works. And, of course, Martin Luther believed that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and so do we.

And I think sometimes we can take such a hard stance on something and miss what the writer is really saying. James is not saying that Abraham was saved by his good works, not at all. That would contradict the rest of the Scriptures, even Old Testament Scriptures as James quotes out of Genesis 15:6 here in James 2:23.

Let's take a step back, take a deep breath and let's ask the Holy Spirit to make these things clear to us. I truly believe that you will see that Abraham was saved by faith and that true faith is manifested in the things that Abraham did.

You see, James was not dealing with the means of salvation at all, but rather with its outcome, the evidence that it had genuinely occurred!

First of all, let's look at Genesis 15:6 and see what the Lord says about the faith of Abraham. We are told, **“And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”**

What did Abraham believe? We are told back in Genesis 15:5, **“Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”**

Now, what was Abraham's faith in? Yes, in Abraham's descendants, his seeds filling the earth, but there is more to it than that. You see, the word *“descendants”* can be translated as *“seeds.”*

In Genesis 22:18 we are told, **“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”**

And Paul picks up on this in Galatians 3:16, where he tells us, **“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”**

So, what was Abraham believing in? He was believing in the coming Messiah and his belief was accounted to him for righteousness!

Isn't that how we are all declared righteous by God, we believe in the Messiah, the promise of eternal life that is only found in Jesus as we repent of our sins and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of our lives. And He declares us righteous!

Jesus said in John 6:29, **“... ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”** We have saved the same way as Abraham. You see, the faith Abraham was the same except for the fact that he was looking ahead to the coming Messiah and we look back at the finished work of the Messiah!

And please understand that the word **“believed”** in Genesis 15:6 is the first time in the Scriptures that this word is used. And what is the focus of this word? It is faith on the part of Abraham and not works!

Also keep in mind that the Law was over 400 years in the future from this time that Abraham was living. So, the Law did not justify Abraham, but his faith did, and it was his faith in the coming Messiah that declared him justified or righteous before God, as I have said!

Now, if you are looking at these Scriptures here in James, and I hope you are, you are probably wondering, “Hey, wait a minute here. It says that Abraham was **JUSTIFIED BY WORKS!** It says nothing about being justified by faith here in James!”

Before I answer that question, and it is not one we should ignore or think it is a mistake, let me ask you this. Are we justified by Grace and the Law? No, because if we were justified by Grace and the Law then we would only be justified by the Law because once you add works to Grace it is no longer Grace. Now we don’t deserve heaven and I think we are all in agreement on that. None of us deserve heaven, it is a gift that God has graciously given to us!

Let me give you a few verses on this and then we will look at what James is saying here because this is very important.

First of all, in Romans 3:28 we are told, **“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”**

Paul tells us in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

In Romans 4:2 Paul tells us, **“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”**

And in Galatians 2:16 Paul said, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”**

Now we can go on and on looking at this fact that we are saved by grace and not by the Law, saved by faith and not by good works, there are plenty of Scriptures that deal with this and the whole letter to the Galatians deals with this topic.

Make no mistake about it, as far as salvation is concerned, the Gospel does not replace the Law, because the Law was never a means of salvation.

The Law was given to show men the perfect standards of God’s righteousness and to show that those standards are impossible to meet in man’s own power. The purpose of the Law was to drive men to faith in God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared God’s perfect standards to be higher even than those of the Old Covenant. A person breaks God’s Law, He said, not only by killing but even by hating (Matt. 5:21–22), not only by committing adultery but by having lustful thoughts (5:27–28).

If it is impossible to fulfill perfectly the Mosaic law, how much more impossible is it to keep the standards set forth by Christ in His earthly ministry

But I want you to see that the Scriptures are clear on this. Thus, as I have said before, when you come to a Scripture that seems to contradict other parts of the Scripture, then you need to dig in more because you are not understanding what the Lord is saying. God is not going to contradict Himself!

Now let’s deal with this issue of justification, is it by faith or by works? There are two meanings to this Greek word, DIKAIÖO, (dik-ah-yo’-o) that gives to us our English word, ***“justified.”***

If you remember from our study in James chapter 1, we saw this same idea of one word having two meanings, depending on the context. We saw it with **“trials”** and **“temptation.”**

The words “**trials**” and “**temptations**” come from the same Greek word, PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos’). Thus, when we read of situations that will strengthen us, help us to grow, mature us, they are from God and they are trials to test our faith.

On the other hand, Satan will come along to tempt us, to exploit the trial we are going through so we might sin.

God wants to build us up - and He uses trials to do that. Satan wants to destroy us – and he uses temptations to do that. It can be the same situation, it just depends on how we respond to it!

That is what Spurgeon said, “Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.”

Keep in mind, don’t lose sight of that fact that temptation does not come from God. And yes, God does allow it, but He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith *without* a solicitation to evil (**nor does He Himself tempt anyone**).

So, this is the same idea here in James chapter 2. The context speaks of the meaning of this word.

The first meaning deals with declaring a person as righteous. And, of course, that deals with our salvation, that we have been justified by faith.

Remember what we read in Romans 3:28, “**Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**”

Our justification, our innocence isn’t because we have been good, but because of our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

The other meaning of this Greek word deals with vindication or proof of righteousness. And that is what we see here with James. He is speaking of the proof of Abraham’s faith was seen in what he did.

What did Abraham do that proved his faith? Look at James 2:21 where we are told, “**Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?**”

As you look at what the rest of the Scriptures are teaching us, there is no way you can come to the conclusion that Abraham was saved by faith and works. There is no way that this is possible, like I have said. When you add anything to faith or grace it is no longer grace, it is a works salvation.

And as you look at the religions of the world, they have a works-based faith. You have to do this, you can’t do that to get to heaven or wherever they believe you go when you die!

But Christianity is the only religion, and I hate to put it in those terms, but it is the only faith where the only thing that man has added to his salvation is **SIN!**

It is God who became flesh, dwelt among us, went to the cross of Calvary to die for our sins and rose the third day!

And, as Paul reminds us, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**” II Corinthians 5:21.

Our salvation is based upon our faith in Him and not any work that we have done or will do.

And what James is saying here is that Abraham’s faith, which was coupled with his works in that he obeyed God and was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, that by his works, “**Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works his faith was made perfect [complete].**” James 2:22.

In other words, the faith of Abraham was demonstrated to be real or shown to be genuine by his works. It was not that salvation is attained by both a combination of faith and works but his works showed his faith in the Lord!

In Hebrews 11:17-19 we see the faith of Abraham in action as Paul tells us, **“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”**

In this test of faith, we see that God called Abraham to take his only son, not the son of the flesh, Ishmael, but the son of the promise, Isaac, and offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

And notice, no arguing, no complaining, just faithful obedience to what God had said. In fact, the verb tense of **“offered up”** in Hebrews 11:17 indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned, this was a done deal. Isaac was already offered up the moment God spoke those words to him. Thus, for three days of traveling to Mount Moriah, in Abraham’s mind, Isaac is dead!

Now here is the thing. Abraham did not know how, but he believed in the promises of God that through his seed the nations of the world would be blessed, that through his seed his descendants would be innumerable.

And here is the amazing thing that the Old Testament does not tell us, but Paul does here in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 19. He tells us that if God was going to do this He would have to raise Isaac from the dead.

At this point in history God had not done anything like that. Abraham never witnessed anyone being raised from the dead, but he believed it by faith.

In fact, Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:19, **“concluding that God was able to raise him up”** That word **“concluding”** or **“accounting that God was able to raise him up”** is the Greek word, LOGIZOMAI, (log-id’-zom-ahee) and it was a mathematical word expressing “a decisive and carefully reasoned act.” (Guthrie).

In other words, Abraham calculated God’s promise worthy of confidence and by faith he walked.

Faith and works cooperating together as we see here in the life of Abraham! Now, if there is no evidence of this new life, then there is no genuine saving faith! Spurgeon put it like this, “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.”

And one pastor rightly said, “You know you’re truly born again when you find yourself obeying God. We’re not saved by obedience - but our obedience proves we’re saved, for true faith works.” Yes, genuine faith results in works!

Let me share with you a few verses to show you that we are to walk by faith, obeying the words of the Lord.

In John 10:27-28 Jesus said, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”** We are to follow the Lord!

In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, **“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”** You see, if He is Lord of your life you will obey Him!

And in Matthew 7:21 we are told by Jesus, **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in**

heaven.” The obedience is a sign of our relationship with the Lord, not for salvation, but our identification with Him!

Now let's look at the life of Abraham. Was he a perfect man? Absolutely not! He is just like us or we are like him!

But the overall pattern of his life was one of obeying the Lord and it showed that his faith was real, it was not a dead faith but a living faith!

When a man is justified before God, he will always prove that justification before other men. A man who has been declared and made righteous will live righteously. Imputed righteousness will manifest practical righteousness.

Clarke put it like this, “Here is a proof that faith cannot exist without being active in works of righteousness. His faith in God would have been of no avail to him, had it not been manifested by works.”

And Trapp said, “It is faith that justifieth the man; but they are works that justify faith to be right and real, saving and justifying.”

The bottom line is this. If there is no evidence of a new life, then there was no genuine, saving faith. ***THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM!***

VERSE 25

Once again we have this idea of faith plus works equals salvation in this story of Rahab. But, as we have seen, it is faith alone that saves but saving faith is never alone. It is worked out in our lives.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 2:12-13, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

Now some will read what Paul has said here and come to the conclusion, “See, Jesus saves us but then you must work to keep, to maintain your salvation and if you don't, you will lose it!”

First of all, like I have said, that is not what the Scriptures teach. Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

So that is not right, that you have to work to maintain your salvation because the work was completed by Jesus on the cross of Calvary for us and we are to receive that free gift by faith.

We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through works!

Paul tells us that we are to **“work out”** our salvation not “work to get in,” into heaven. His point is simple, since God has worked in you, now let that flow out into your actions, the things you are doing, bear fruit in your life showing you are abiding in Him!

Now let's look at this story of Rahab and then we will look at how her faith in the Lord was manifested in her life.

In Joshua 2:1-24 we are told, **“Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, ‘Go, view the land, especially Jericho.’ So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, ‘Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.’ So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, ‘Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all**

the country.’ Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.’ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: ‘I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.’ So the men answered her, ‘Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.’ Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. And she said to them, ‘Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.’ So the men said to her: ‘We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home. So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear.’ Then she said, ‘According to your words, so be it.’ And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window. They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them. So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, ‘Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.’” Joshua 2:1-24.

Now here is something to think about. Was Rahab the harlot saved by her good works? Absolutely not!

Keep in mind that she was a harlot and I know that some would say that her actions with the two spies, protecting them, were her good works that saved her, but I disagree.

Her good works didn’t save her, they were the evidence for her faith!

That is what we read in Hebrews chapter 11:31 of Rahab, **“By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”**

In regard to this scarlet cord and the faith of Rahab, Spurgeon wrote,

Rahab depended for her preservation upon the promise of the spies, whom she looked upon as the representatives of the God of Israel. Her faith was simple and firm, but it was very obedient. To tie the scarlet line in the window was a very trivial act in itself, but she dared not run the risk of omitting it.

Come, my soul, is there not here a lesson for thee? Hast thou been attentive to all thy Lord's will, even though some of His commands should seem non-essential? Hast thou observed in his own way the two ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper? These neglected, argue much unloving disobedience in thy heart. Be henceforth in all things blameless, even to the tying of a thread, if that be matter of command.

This act of Rahab sets forth a yet more solemn lesson. Have I implicitly trusted in the precious blood of Jesus? Have I tied the scarlet cord, as with a Gordian knot in my window, so that my trust can never be removed? Or can I look out towards the Dead Sea of my sins, or the Jerusalem of my hopes, without seeing the blood, and seeing all things in connection with its blessed power?

The passer-by can see a cord of so conspicuous a colour, if it hangs from the window: it will be well for me if my life makes the efficacy of the atonement conspicuous to all onlookers. What is there to be ashamed of? Let men or devils gaze if they will, the blood is my boast and my song. My soul, there is One who will see that scarlet line, even when from weakness of faith thou canst not see it thyself; Jehovah, the Avenger, will see it and pass over thee. Jericho's walls fell flat: Rahab's house was on the wall, and yet it stood unmoved; my nature is built into the wall of humanity, and yet when destruction smites the race, I shall be secure. My soul, tie the scarlet thread in the window afresh, and rest in peace.

- C. H. Spurgeon, The Scarlet Line

Thus, her faith causes her to act and place the scarlet line or rope in her window, so the invading army could see it and spare her and those who are in her home. And her love for her family is so strong that she will bring them into her home, under the protection of the blood you might say. And yes, some may have felt it was foolish to place their faith in this scarlet hope, but all who entered in were saved and those that did not died in the judgment!

Think of it like this. She knew who God was. She also knew who she was, a harlot, a sinner. And she placed her life into the hands of the living God to save her!

That is the same for us today. Yes, her faith was not perfect, but she did believe, and she was young in the faith. And notice that she is going to leave that old life behind and follow God, follow God's people, just what God desires of us today!

Dr. W. A. Criswell wrote of the faith of Rahab, "Rahab the harlot is an example of the grace of God at work. Her salvation was not based on her character or merits: she lived in a doomed city, practiced a condemned profession, engaged in subversive activities, and falsified [lied about] her actions. Nevertheless she acted upon faith, and was spared the judgment of God which was executed at the hands of the Israelites."

Keep in mind that Rahab, spoken of in Hebrews 11 as we have seen, in that Hall of Faith chapter, is a hero of faith, not a hero of works! And yes, the works between Abraham and Rahab are different, they both are showing us that living faith is working faith, it is active, it is seen in the things that we do and things that we say! And they are multifaceted, there are many different works that we do because of our love for the Lord. Our love for Him causes us to serve Him, obey Him!

The psychologist, Dr. Alfred Adler, holds an interesting theory of individual psychology. When dealing with people, he says, "Trust only in movement. Life happens at the level of action." In fact, Adler goes on to say, "We are not what we say, but we are what we do. What we do," he says, "is the real key to our intentions. Trust only in movement."

That is exactly what the Word of God is teaching us and specifically what James is teaching us in his letter! Remember what James said in James 1:22, **"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."**

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

All religions without Christ demand works that are added as part of their belief system. They include many of the cults and world religions. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and just about every other faith or belief system you see on the planet except for Christianity says "do, do, do" but with Christ, it is done! Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished" or essentially, "paid in full" (John 19:30). By Jesus saying **"It is finished"** what He is saying is that He does not need your help in the process of salvation. If you try to work for it, then it is not by grace any more but of works and God accepts no works from anyone as part of their salvation.

Paul wrote that salvation is **"by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast"** (Eph 2:8-9).

If it is of works then it is not grace for grace is given freely and cannot be earned. If it were by works then surely we would boast about it but by our boasting we show that we don't understand what grace really is. If we add one drop of works then it is not grace anymore and by adding our works we are robbing God of His glory which He will not share with anyone (Isaiah 42:8). The fact is that we are not saved by works but we were "created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). We are saved for works not by works.

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I think that is very clear. But just one more, just to drive this point home. We are told, People act in line with what they believe. For instance, if we believe a stove top is hot, we will not place our hand on it. If we believe vitamins are essential for good health, we will take them. Good marketers persuade people to believe they need a certain product in order to induce people to buy it. The actions that result from our faith are no different from those that result from other of our beliefs. If we truly believe God is who He says He is and that the Bible means what it says, we will act accordingly.

The New Testament is replete with descriptions of the works that result from our faith. James 2:14-26 is the most well-known passage regarding the lifelessness of claimed faith unsubstantiated by works. In essence, it explains the way that faith is demonstrated by our actions. John 15:1-17 compares the believer's relationship with Christ to that of branches to a vine. A branch that is truly connected to the vine will bear fruit. Those who have true faith will also have works. Philippians 1:9-11 says, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Similarly, Galatians 5:22-25 describes what our lives will look like if we live by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:10 talks about good works for which we have been created.

It is important to note that works follow faith. Works are a good diagnostic barometer of where our truth faith lies. Our good works in no way relate to our salvation. Paul makes very clear in Ephesians 2 that apart from Christ we are dead in sin (Ephesians 2:4-9); we are therefore incapable of truly good works. However, after our salvation, we can perform the “good works, which God prepared beforehand” (Ephesians 2:10). Works are a fruit of our salvation, not a means by which to earn it.

That being said, once we are saved, we are expected to do good works. We are a reflection of Christ. As such, we do good to those around us (Galatians 6:10). We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17), so we act in new ways. The works we do should come from a transformed heart. Jesus said that people would know His followers by their love (John 13:35). In this way we are a light to the world (Matthew 5:14). Good works, then, demonstrate the veracity of our faith and the character of the God in Whom we believe.

Faith without works is dead because true faith transforms a life. It is also true that works without faith are dead. Jesus said that some would call Him “Lord, Lord,” but would not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Some of these people will not have demonstrated the fruit of good works. Others will have done works apart from faith in an effort to save themselves.

All our works are as filthy rags to God apart from Christ (Isaiah 64:6). They are tainted by our sin and not sufficient to take us from being dead in our trespasses (Colossians 2:13) to being alive.

When we have true faith in Christ, we are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our lives are transformed and good works result. Faith is not intellectual assent only; it involves life change. Our faith is evidenced by the way we live.

- <https://goo.gl/a5khuc>

I hope that makes sense to you because if you misunderstand the point that James is making, you will then have a works salvation instead of a salvation in which the work was already completed by Christ. And I will just be blunt on this. If you believe in a works salvation, then you are not saved. You can't be saved by your works because even your righteousness, the good things that you have done are filthy rags before a holy and righteous God.

It is not our righteousness that gets us into heaven, it is the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith that gets us into heaven!

Remember, the whole human race is dead in their trespasses and sins. Thus, attempting to work for your salvation would be just as effective as putting makeup on a corpse or rearranging the chairs on the decks of the Titanic. As a sinner, you must come to Christ with faith ***PLUS NOTHING ELSE. FAITH ALONE SAVES US!***

And I guess you can put the lessons of Abraham and Rahab like this.

The lesson from Abraham is clear: if we believe in God, we will do what He tells us to do. ***THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM!***

The lesson from Rahab is also clear: if we believe in God, we will help His people, even when it costs us something. ***THE FAITH OF RAHAB!***

And now we come to the ***CONCLUSION!***

VERSE 26

As James concludes this section he once again states the fact that faith without works is a dead faith. It can't save you. Calvin put it this way, “Man is not justified by faith alone, that is,

by a bare and empty knowledge of God; he is justified by works, that is, his righteousness is known and proved by its fruits.”

Again, please understand the point that James is making here. We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works, but our saving faith is seen, it is alive because of the things we do, the fruit that is born in our lives!

Think of a fruit tree, like an apple tree. If there is no growth, no leaves, no blossoms, no apples, then the tree is dead. Is it still an apple tree? I guess it is, but if it is dead, it is useless. It is only good for cutting it up and putting it in the fire.

That is the idea here. Dead faith is just that, not living faith and if it is dead, then there is no life in it at all.

As one writer put it, “Therefore, if no deeds are forthcoming, it is proof that the professed faith is dead. Notice that James does not deny that it is faith. He simply indicates that it is not the right kind of faith. It is not living faith, nor can it save.” (Burdick)

Make no mistake about it, you know you’re truly born again when you find yourself obeying God. We’re not saved by obedience. But our obedience proves we’re saved, for true faith works.

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 13:5, “**Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you are disqualified.**” It is a living faith, as seen in the examples of Abraham and Rahab, they passed the test of faith – they have shown their faith is real. How about you?

As I bring this study to a close, remember our story or the parable about Duckland that we opened up with? The ducks were gathered together to hear the sermon from the duck minister. And he told them, “Ducks! You have wings, and with wings you can fly like eagles. You can soar into the sky! Use your wings!”

And what happened to them after hearing this message from the duck minister? We are told,

Those poor ducks waddled in and out of church and never flew as they were created to do, because their “faith” was nothing more than mental assent [acceptance]. Few things are as inglorious as a waddle, and few things are more glorious than a duck on the wing! All God’s people have wings! The first wing is faith, faith alone. The second is works, a faith that works.

The first wing is the source and inspiration for the second. For as authentic faith begins to beat, it occasions the sprouting of a second wing and its corresponding rhythm. And beating together they lift us from our inglorious waddles to the glory of lives on the wing – soaring in God’s service.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, p. 115

I pray as we leave here this morning that you have been infused by the Holy Spirit with a new sense of purpose and you will look for those things that you can do to honor the Lord and bless people by. That your faith will soar, not because of you, but because of the work that God has prepared for you and you are walking by faith, doing those things He has called you to do!

Remember, “**But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. . . . Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**” (James 1:22, James 2:17)