FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-22-15 AM NOTES
"THE FAITH THAT SAVES"
JAMES 2:14-19
#8 in Series, "James: Practical Wisdom"

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) 125
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."

The Bible tells us that the sinner is saved by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), the Christian must walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Matthew 7:16-20 (NKJV) "16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

I. Saving Faith Is More Than Just a Verbal Affirmation (vv. 14-17)

Summary: A profession of faith without a pattern of works that evidence the truth of that profession is dead faith.

A. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Save (v. 14)

James 2:14 (ESV) "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can **that faith** save him?"

Romans 3:28 (ESV) "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV) "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."

James 2:14 (NKJV) "What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"

Paul speaks about the **provision** of our salvation; James speaks about the **proof** of true salvation.

Paul is talking about the **means** of our salvation; James in talking about **marks** of true salvation.

Paul speaks of a **"know-so"** salvation; James speaks of a **"show-so"** salvation.

"A wordy but workless faith is worthless before the judgment bar of God." —Unknown

"At the day of doom, the question will be, 'Were you doers or talkers only?'" —John Bunyan

B. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Serve (vv. 15-16)

1 John 3:17-18 (ESV) "[17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

Acts 4:32-35 (NKJV) "[32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, [35] and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need."

C. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Survive (v. 17)

"The saints fed the hungry and clothed the naked because it gave them much pleasure to do so. They did it because they could not help doing it, their new nature impelled them to do it…They did good for Christ's sake, because it was the sweetest thing in the world to do anything for Jesus." —Charles Spurgeon

II. Saving Faith Is More Than Mental Assent (vv. 18-19)

A. Mental Assent Alone Has No Demonstration of Faith (v. 18)

B. Mental Assent Alone Is Demonic Faith (v. 19)

Matthew 8:29 (NKJV) "And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'"

Mark 1:24b (NKJV) "I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

Luke 4:41a (NKJV) "And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!'"

Luke 8:31 (NKJV) "And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss."

Deuteronomy 6:4 (NKJV) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!"

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NKJV) "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

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How do we know that the faith in Christ we claim to have is real? Let me phrase that same basic question in different words. How do we know that we have truly been born again? Here is another way of asking the same basic question: How do we know that we are saved and that we are headed for heaven as our ultimate destination? Here is another way to ask the same question: How can we know that we have not been deceived about the whole issue of our salvation? There are some who hate questions like these because they say it just causes people inner turmoil and actually fuels doubt. Is Joel Osteen right when he says that people come to church not to be made to feel bad, but to feel good about themselves? I would answer those who say that we should not examine the reality of our faith with one verse. **2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) "**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." Sometimes an examination of ourselves that causes us to ask some hard questions is painful and thus unpleasant. I personally would rather that people go to heaven having been made uncomfortable in dealing with some hard issues than that they spend eternity in hell after having been made to feel good about themselves rather than hearing the truth and dealing with deception in their lives. It is not comfortable studying the little book of James! He asks some really hard questions about a number of topics, but primarily his hard questions deal with the reality of our salvation from sin and its penalty of spiritual death.

When we take a serious look at James and some other books like 1 John that deal with what real Christianity looks like, we cannot help being alarmed as we look around us at how "professing" Christians live. One of the tragedies of the "cultural Christianity" of the Bible Belt is that the majority of people say the right words but their lifestyles, their works are not really different from those who profess to be atheists or agnostics. Many times these people are decent citizens and neighbors. They care about their children and their country, but there is nothing about their pattern of life that is distinctively Christian, nothing that evidences Christ in them. If we had to condense the message of James, it would be this: **<u>What we do as a pattern of life evidences who we are</u>**. Faith and works are mentioned together 10 times in the passage James 2:14-26. One of the main messages of James is that works of obedience are not an optional extra added to faith; they are an essential expression of genuine saving faith! Faith is not something that we can afford to be fuzzy about. The Bible tells us that the sinner is saved by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), the Christian must walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

The main message of James is not unique. James received these truths first from his half brother according to the flesh – Jesus Christ, the Lord. **Matthew 7:16-20 (NKJV) "**[16] You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? [17] Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

In this passage, James deals with an imaginary person, a person that is a compilation of so many people in our day. This person claims to have saving faith, but there are no works flowing from this professed faith. This imaginary person that James is using to teach truth about real persons says that you can separate faith from works and that the two don't necessarily go together. James writes much of this letter (especially today's passage) to refute that false belief.

I. Saving Faith Is More Than Just a Verbal Affirmation (V14-17)

Let's focus on that word, "says". James is speaking of a person that makes an affirmation or profession of faith. James is making the strong point that words of profession that we have faith are without value when they are not backed up by, evidenced by a pattern of obedient works. As we will see in verses 17

and next week in verses 20 and 26, **a profession of faith without a pattern of works that evidence the truth of that profession is dead faith**. No one is saved by dead faith.

A. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Save (V14)

The grammatical structure of this verse demands a negative ("no") response. In other words James is saying that faith without the evidence of works does not save, because it is not genuine faith. There is a word added in most English translations that clarifies what James is saying in verse 14. Listen to the ESV of **James 2:14 (ESV) "**What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can **that** faith save him?" The phrase "that faith" is the faith that has no evidence of works. Throughout Christian history, the passage we are dealing with today has been the center of a lot of confusion and this is a good time to deal with that confusion. The problem that many have is that they think that what the Apostle Paul wrote (especially in Romans) and what James wrote contradict one another. For instance, Paul wrote in **Romans 3:28 (ESV) "**For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV) "**[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, [9] not of works, lest anyone should boast." Compare that to verse 14 of our text: **James 2:14 (NKJV) "**What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can [that] faith save him?" I want to show you that James and Paul do not in any way contradict one another. After all, James and Paul were simply instruments that the one Holy Spirit used to give the Scriptures through. God doesn't contract Himself!

In combat, one of the most unsettling scenarios is when the enemy is concealed and can hit advancing troops from several different directions. One of the tactics used in that situation is the buddy system where the advancing soldiers stand back to back to be able to spot the enemy from wherever they may reveal themselves. In a sense James and Paul are standing back to back combating enemies of the Gospel who are attacking the Gospel from 2 different directions. Paul is addressing the enemies that were teaching that salvation comes through keeping the law – salvation **by** works. Paul's message is that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. James is addressing the enemy that is attacking from a different direction. James is addressing the enemy who has perverted saving faith and made faith no more than saying the right words (profession) or giving assent to the right facts, and saying that good works that manifest a changed life are optional. Let me illustrate this in different ways. Paul is like a diamond miner who is showing us the source of the diamond of salvation. James is more like the jeweler who is examining the mined diamond looking for evidence that it is real. Paul says, "Here is where salvation comes from – grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone". James says, "Here is what genuine salvation looks like." It results in a transformed life that that has a pattern of obedience and good works. Paul's burden is to show us **what** justifies (faith alone in Christ alone). James' burden is to show us **who** is justified; it is the one with a pattern of obedience to God. Let me make a series of statements that say the same things in different words.

- Paul speaks about the **provision** of our salvation; James speaks about the **proof** of true salvation.
- Paul is talking about the **means** of our salvation; James in talking about **marks** of true salvation.
- Paul speaks of a **"know-so"** salvation; James speaks of a **"show-so"** salvation.

Listen carefully; no one has ever been saved by their works. If you could search through your past and pick out the 15 highest and holiest minutes of your life and let those alone determine your salvation, they would not be sufficient to earn your salvation. If you have truly been saved by grace through faith alone in Christ and His payment on your behalf, you have a changed life that evidences your salvation by a pattern of good works as a part of an obedient life. Someone (I lost the source) said, "A wordy but workless faith is worthless before the judgment bar of God." The Baptist Puritan John Bunyan said "At the day of doom, the question will be, 'Were you doers or talkers only?'" There is a phony faith that is profession only that does not save.

B. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Serve (V15-16)

In verses 15-16 James gives us an illustration of dead faith. Dead faith responds to real needs with nothing but pious sounding talk and no deeds. These falsely pious words in verse 16 can be in either the

middle voice or the passive voice. It could be translated, "warm yourself and fill yourself". If it is translated in the passive voice, it could be translated "stay warm and well fed" as though he should just go ahead and take care of himself or just trust God to it and don't bother other people. The question in verse 16 is "what good is that"? [ESV]. God expects His people to meet those needs. It is interesting that before the government in our nation took over the meeting of the needs of the poor, it was the church that did so. I believe that the reason the government took over was because the church dropped the ball and the sad result is that now most Americans look at the government as if the government is god. If you back before the 1930's in America and in many Western European countries, it was the churches that met those practical and physical needs of the poor. We see the remnants of that now. Long ago churches ceased to have a real impact through hospitals, but what was attached to the names of Hospitals? It was Saint Mary's Catholic Hospital, Fort Sanders Presbyterian Hospital, Baptist Hospital. There is a reason for that. The hospitals were started by churches. The same is true of orphanages and other benevolent organizations to help the poor. Many of these benevolent organizations (like orphanages) are still funded by churches. In 19th century London, many of the orphanages were started by and financed by the Metropolitan Tabernacle whose pastor was Charles Spurgeon. George Mueller was a Pastor, but he is best known for the orphanages he started and operated. In Kenya, we have worked for many years with Pastor Gideon Makuthi who provides jobs for former prostitutes and has started a ministry to widows who would starve apart from the churches help. In addition there is the orphanage that we have helped so much with. Just because we live in a land where the government has taken over much of the work God has given to the church, we are not to neglect those who are poor and without food or shelter. How do we respond to those who are truly in need? How do we respond to those who are not lazy, but are genuinely struggling with hard circumstances? False faith utters pious platitudes and does nothing. Genuine faith rolls up the sleeves and helps.

Let me make it clear what James is saying and not saying. He is not saying that acts of mercy to those in need earn our salvation. He is saying that acts of mercy evidences our salvation. John said virtually the same thing in **1 John 3:17-18 (ESV) "**[17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." Be careful offering pious platitudes like, "I'll be praying you" when God expects you to do more than that; He expects you to be His agent in meeting that need. A perfect example is the early church in the book of Acts. We read in **Acts 4:32-35 (NKJV) "**[32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, [35] and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." They evidenced the genuineness of their faith to make real sacrifices to meet real needs in others in the body of Christ.

C. A Profession of Faith Alone Does Not Survive (V17)

This verse is just a summary of what we have seen in verses 14-16. A faith with no following works is a faith with no worth. I hope that I have not communicated that this meeting of the genuine needs of others is something we have to just grit our teeth to do because God commanded us to. Mercy ministries manifest genuine faith when we practice the mercy with genuine joy. I love this quote by Charles Spurgeon, whose church was known for their ministries of mercy to the poor and hurting. He said speaking to Matthew 25: "The saints fed the hungry and clothed the naked because it gave them much pleasure to do so. They did it because they could not help doing it, their new nature impelled them to do it… They did good for Christ's sake, because it was the sweetest thing in the world to do anything for Jesus." [Charles Spurgeon, Quoted in David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in James*, page 43].

II. Saving Faith Is More Than Mental Assent (V18-19)

When we speak of mental assent, we are speaking of affirming that something is truth instead of error. It is acknowledging that a statement or purported fact is true. For many, salvation is simply a matter of acknowledging that the facts of Scripture are indeed facts and not error. It is the acknowledgment that indeed Jesus is God's only begotten Son, He did live a sinless life, died on the cross and rose again on the third day.

A. Mental Assent Alone Has No Demonstration of Faith (V18)

It seems like this "someone" James is referring to is treating faith and works like spiritual gifts. It seems that someone is implying, "Some have the gift of teaching and some have the gift of service. You have the gift of works and I have the gift of faith." James says, "No, faith or works are not optional." True saving faith always gives evidence of works – always. It is not "pick and choose". Works flowing from faith are not optional; they are inevitable. If there are no works following faith, all that the person has is mental assent and not genuine faith.

B. Mental Assent Alone Is Demonic Faith (V19)

This illustration must have shocked those first readers. Satan and his demons are more orthodox in their beliefs than many liberal seminary professors! Think with me for a moment how orthodox the demons are in what they confess to be true. The devil and demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God. **Matthew 8:29 (NKJV) "**And suddenly they [demons] cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'" The devil and demons believe that Jesus is holy. In **Mark 1:24b (NKJV)** a demon cries out, "I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" The devil and demons believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. **Luke 4:41a (NKJV) "**And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God!" The devil and demons believe in the existence of hell. **Luke 8:31 (NKJV) "**And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss." The daily affirmation of faith of the godly Jew was the Shema – **Deuteronomy 6:4 (NKJV)** "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!" The devil and demons could truthfully quote the part of the Shema that said, "The LORD is one". They could not truthfully quote the next verse. **Deuteronomy 6:5 (NKJV) "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." The person with dead faith was touched only with his intellect. There is a sense in which the devil and demons go even a step beyond that. They are touched even in their emotions! **James 2:19b (NKJV) "**Even the demons believe--**<u>and tremble</u>**!" They are scared to death in His presence because they know who He is and His power. Neither the Devil or a single demon is an atheist (one who claims that God does not exist) or even an agnostic (one who just doesn't know if there is a God or not).

Suppose that a demon wanted to join a typical church. Let's do a little interview with him. "Mr. demon, do you fear God?" "Oh, yes, I tremble in his presence". "That's good, we ought to fear Him. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead?" "Yes, I accept as fact all of that." "Well, welcome to our church! We'd like for you to get involved in the inner workings of the church." "Oh, I already am involved". What questions were left out? Questions such as, "Have you surrendered to Him as Lord?" "Have you repented of sin and put your complete trust in Him alone and His finished payment on the cross to pay your sin debt?" "Are you a new creation in Christ and do you possess a consuming love for Him and a deep desire to please Him?" The truthful answers to those questions would be "No".

CONCLUSION

Is your salvation real? Is there a profession without the works to evidence it? Is your faith more the "faith" the demons possess. I plead with you to receive the real thing today.