

1 HOW DO WE KNOW YOUR FAITH IS REAL?

JAMES 2:14-22

2 CONFLICT, CONFUSION, OR CONTEXT?

RECONCILING PAUL AND JAMES

3 QUICK REVIEW

- In the last message from James, he explained to us that true saving faith cannot coexist with racism or favoritism.
 - Christ's love is extended to all mankind and we all come from a common ancestry. (Racism is an evolutionary principle.)
 - Favoritism is not consistent with the mercy of God that is available to all mankind.
- Now James says that true saving faith cannot exist without manifesting itself in godly acts.
 - James is combatting the self-justifying speech used to avoid godly acts – especially toward those with whom we are not socially compatible

4 JAMES 2:14-20

What is the benefit, my brothers, if someone says that he has faith but does not have works? That faith is not able to save him, is it? If a brother or a sister is poorly clothed and lacking food for the day, and one of you should say to them, "Go in peace, keep warm and eat well," but does not give them what is necessary for the body, what is the benefit? Thus also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe, and shudder! But do you want to know, O foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

5 CONFUSION OVER PAUL VS JAMES

- Martin Luther said that James should not be part of the Scriptural canon because he believed James taught that justification was by works rather than the grace of Christ.
- But James himself says just the opposite!
 - *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness," and he was called God's friend. (James 2:23, LEB)*
 - James clearly states that Abraham simply trusted in Jehovah and God credited him with righteousness. Why was Abraham made righteous? Because He received God's grace through an act of faith.

6 SO WHY WAS LUTHER CONFUSED?

- Perhaps we can understand Luther's confusion, because James also says THIS about Abraham's justification:
 - *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was working together with his works, and by the works the faith was perfected. (James 2:21–22, LEB)*
- How do we reconcile these 2 passages?
 - In James 2:23, James agrees with the Apostle Paul that JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD is received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
 - But in James 2:23, our JUSTIFICATION BEFORE MEN (the evidence we give others of our being born again) is made evident through the works we do that men can see. (Men cannot see our

hearts, but can see our actions.)

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7 JAMES BELIEVES IN A FAITH THAT CHANGES YOU

- When you grab hold of an electrical wire with current, it changes your behavior!
- When you truly repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior (vs. going through the motions or putting on an act), it changes your behavior forever.

8 WORKS AUTHENTICATE OUR FAITH

- Genuine faith is authenticated by godly works.
 - *What good is it for a man to say, 'I have faith,' if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him?* (v. 14, TEV).
 - The kind of faith that is content to utter pious phrases and ignore the destitute, as one example, is “dead” (vv. 15–20).
- A genuine faith is one that is actively at work.
 - Paul said the works of the law could never save a man.
 - James says that works of faith are proof of salvation.
 - Abraham’s faith was not an empty profession but a principle of action (vv. 21–24).
 - The same is true for even a prostitute, like Rahab (vv. 25–26). Just as Abraham showed his faith by his willingness to offer Isaac, so Rahab showed her faith by aiding the spies.
 - Faith and works cannot exist separately and alone. They must go together.

9 PAUL AND JAMES DIFFERED IN THEIR USE OF “WORKS”

- Paul used “works” to refer to religious acts (works of the law) and rituals that *could not provide justification before God*.
 - *...He saved us, not by deeds of righteousness that we have done, but because of his mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,* (Titus 3:5, LEB)
 - *“It [salvation] is not from works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:9, LEB)
 - *For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them.”* (Galatians 3:10, LEB)
- James uses “works” to refer to godly acts visible before men which provide evidence of a true inner relationship with Christ

10 WHAT JAMES MEANS WHEN HE SAYS “WORKS”

- James was concerned with the demonstration of faith in Jesus through works of mercy.
 - James illustrates partiality with the unequal treatment of a rich man and a person who is destitute
 - Here he refers to a brother or sister in the Lord – a fellow Christian – in need of financial assistance for basic essentials
 - The specific works to which James refers as giving evidence of true salvation are works of mercy – meeting basic needs, sharing the Gospel, providing life assistance, showing care and concern with more than words

11 WHAT PAUL MEANS WHEN HE SAYS “WORKS”

- Paul was concerned with justification through Christ alone and not by ritual works of the law, such as circumcision, apart from faith in Christ.
- He is focused on ceremonial obligations, rituals, religious observances.
 - Greek Orthodoxy, Roman Orthodoxy, Church of Christ, and others still focus on the use of

“sacraments” to confer or preserve salvation or bestow the presence of the Holy Spirit

- Paul wants us to know that NO religious observance or ritual can effect God’s grace providing us with justification. For it to be grace, it has to be ALL GOD!

12 YOUR FAITH IS ON TRIAL

- James recognizes that when we claim faith in Christ, that claim is instantly put on trial by people around us.
 - God does not have to try our faith; He already knows the reality of what is in our hearts
 - But how do people know? They must look for evidence of faith in our lives. They cannot see our heart, so they must look for a change in behavior and evidence of godly character that results from a changed life.
- Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? What evidence do you provide that your faith in Christ is real?

13 THE CENTRAL ISSUE

- In 2:14, James essentially asks, “If a man says he has faith, but there is no outward evidence of it, is that really a saving faith?”
 - He expects a negative answer
- However, James is NOT saying that a person who has a lot of godly works is necessarily forgiven and going to heaven
 - After all, the Pharisees did a lot of good things – though most of them were “works of the law”
- What he is saying is that true saving faith produces – as a natural part of its character – works of love and mercy toward others. You cannot bottle up the love of Christ. It must pour out upon others.

14 WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH

- Those who receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord demonstrate acts of mercy and love toward others.
 - Only God is able to save. Only those who do the Word make valid claims to be believers.
 - God will not show mercy in the judgment to those who have been unmerciful.
- But neither profession of faith nor deeds of faith actually “save” anyone; only God saves.
- It is thus much more advisable to emphasize what James emphasized: faith without deeds is good to no one. He was not implying that the deeds of faith are effective for salvation. Rather, the deeds of faith demonstrate the validity of the claim to be a believer; without them the claim is empty or “dead”
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15 NEED WITHOUT DEED

WORDS WITHOUT WORKS

16 JAMES 2:15-16

- *If a brother or a sister is poorly clothed and lacking food for the day, and one of you should say to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but does not give them what is necessary for the body, what is the benefit? (James 2:15–16, LEB)*
- Note that James speaks of a “brother” or “sister” – a member of the Christian family. Some of them are in constant need.
- A 2-part verbal blessing:
 - Go in peace
 - Keep warm and be well.

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17 **1 JOHN 3:17-18**

But whoever has the world's material possessions and observes his brother in need and shuts his heart against him, how does the love of God reside in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17–18, LEB)

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18 **THE CUSTOM OF THE DAY**

- To the person in misery, James's fellow believers were saying, "Have a nice day!"
 - The statement, "Go, I wish you well," or more literally, "Go in peace," in the ancient world was sincere only when it accompanied some demonstrative act such as giving a gift or alms.
 - In normal relationships between "haves" and "have-nots," the needy person is given the gift and the accompanying verbal blessing, without begrudging them the gift (cf. 1:5; "without finding fault").
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Richardson, Kurt A. James. Vol. 36. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997. Print. The New American Commentary.

19 **HOLLOW WORDS OR MERCIFUL ACTIONS?**

- *Go in peace* – a traditional salutation
- *Be warm and be filled* – This statement shows that someone is aware of the poor person's specific needs (food, clothing, and shelter), but chooses to only give words that are not backed by acts of mercy.
- Did Jesus speak on the issue of words versus works?
 - Yes – in Matthew 25

20 **WORDS ARE NEVER ENOUGH!**

- The poor need more than mere words.
- So does the believer who needs the saving act and wisdom of God.
- A word of blessing without an act of blessing is like the promise of salvation without the saving act of God in Christ.
 - Without the atoning death and the resurrection of Christ, our faith would be in vain.

21 **MATTHEW 25:31-36 – LOOK AT WHAT GOD REWARDS**

Now when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them from one another like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me as a guest, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you cared for me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

22 **MATTHEW 25:37-40**

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you as a guest, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?' And the king will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:31–40, LEB)

23 **MATTHEW 25:41-46 – SEE WHAT GOD CONDEMNS**

Then he will also say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you did not give me anything to eat, I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me as a guest, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not care for me.'

Then they will also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and not serve you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:41–46, LEB)

24 **JESUS AND JAMES AGREE**

- Jesus is not saying that works justify us before God
- Jesus and James are BOTH saying that if we have true, saving faith, it produces in us both the righteousness and love that reflects that Christ lives within us
 - Real faith works
 - Real faith shows
 - Real faith does works naturally; it is not forced works done to impress or fool others

25 **DEAD FAITH**

- *Thus also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.* (James 2:17, LEB)
- What is dead faith?
 - Faith that is a mere mental assent to the facts of the Gospel
 - Faith that is unaccompanied by a change in behavior
 - Faith that does not result in our pursuing acts of mercy toward others to show them the love of Christ

26 **SHOW ME!**27 **JACK MCDEWITT**28 **MARGARET ATWOOD**29 **VLADIMIR LENIN**30 **BARBARA WALTERS**31 **PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT**32 **SHOWING VERSUS SAYING**

- James knows that you cannot see the heart of a person
 - I might guess what is in your heart, but the reality is that we each have thoughts that are hidden from others
 - Since only God sees our heart, how are others to see whether our faith is real? How do they know it is a faith worth living and dying for?
- James says, "You SAY you have faith, but just try proving that to me without works. But I can SHOW you my faith by my works." In other words, his works are the demonstration and proof of the authenticity of his faith.

33 **DEMONIC FAITH**

- James is still challenging those who say they have faith to prove it without works (but it cannot be done!)

- He says that even the demons believe (intellectual assent) and they even tremble (emotional reaction). But that is as far as it goes.
 - Just to believe Jesus is the Son of God is not enough; you must RECEIVE Him! You must REPENT!
 - Even shedding tears at the altar is not proof of dynamic, saving faith.
 - Even a demon knows who Jesus is and they have an emotional reaction at His presence. But they are obviously not justified.
- Works are the EVIDENCE of faith!

34 DYNAMIC, SAVING FAITH

- *But do you want to know, O foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? (James 2:20, LEB)*
- James says that it is an "empty-headed fool" that believes:
 - Words are enough
 - Rituals or sacramental procedures are enough
- True dynamic saving faith includes:
 - Intellectual assent to the facts of the Gospel
 - Emotional stirring of your heart as you recognize the awfulness of your sin
 - A volitional act whereby you choose to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior
 - A life that is changed to show acts of mercy toward others because the love of Christ is in you.

35 FOR NEXT TIME...

- We will look at 2 different examples of saving faith:
 - Abraham, the father of the Jews
 - Rahab, the harlot

36 SO, ARE YOU THE REAL DEAL?

- Did Jesus so change your life that your life is characterized by works of mercy to show the love of Christ to others?
 - Sharing the Gospel
 - Demonstrating genuine care and concern
 - Using the funds that God has entrusted to you to help others
 - Giving to missions with a passion for others to know Christ
 - Performing acts of kindness to demonstrate Christ's love to others in times of emotional distress
- Or did you simply go through the motions to ask Jesus to be your Savior, but you are not really that different from how you used to be?

37 ABRAHAM ON TRIAL

- *They answered and said to him, "Abraham is our father!" Jesus said to them, "If you are children of Abraham, do the deeds of Abraham!" (John 8:39, LEB)*
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