

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND WORKS - JAMES 2:14-26

1. **PROBLEM:** TWO VIEWS OF “JUSTIFICATION”

A. **PAUL** WROTE... Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1. Romans 3:28 (NASB) For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

B. **JAMES** WROTE... James 2:21,24 (NASB) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?... You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

C. THOSE VERSES SEEM TO BE OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER

2. **THE SOLUTION** (SEE THE CHART “TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN”)

A. **PAUL AND JAMES** USE “JUSTIFY” IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS... BUT THESE TWO USES ARE ACTUALLY TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.

1. **PAUL** IS LOOKING AT THE ROOT OF SALVATION.

a. AT THE MOMENT OF SALVATION, YOU ARE SAVED THROUGH FAITH PLUS NOTHING.

2. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, **JAMES** IS LOOKING AT THE FRUIT OF SALVATION.

a. AFTER SALVATION — AFTER THE ROOT OF FAITH HAS BEEN PLANTED — OUR LIVES WILL BEAR THE FRUIT OF GOOD WORKS.

3. ANOTHER CONTRAST INVOLVES TWO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES:

a. **PAUL** LOOKS AT LIFE FROM GOD’S PERSPECTIVE... **JAMES** LOOKS AT LIFE FROM THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE.

1) **PAUL** USES THE WORD “JUSTIFIED” TO MEAN “DECLARED RIGHTEOUS” IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

2) **JAMES** IS ADDRESSING BELIEVERS WHO HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED THIS GIFT OF SALVATION...

i. SO JAMES USES THE WORD “JUSTIFIED” TO MEAN “DEMONSTRATE MYSELF TO BE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE SIGHT OF PEOPLE TO SHOW THAT I HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED GOD’S GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.”

3. **REVIEW:**

A. **JAMES** SAYS, “IF YOU SAY YOU BELIEVE LIKE YOU SHOULD... WHY DO YOU LIVE LIKE YOU SHOULDN’T?”

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B. SO FAR JAMES HAS WRITTEN THAT THE SIGNS OF A MATURE CHRISTIAN ARE:

1. A JOYFUL ATTITUDE OF ENDURANCE THROUGH TRIALS WHICH PROVES OUR FAITH. (James 1:2-12)
2. VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION WHICH DEMONSTRATES OUR CHARACTER. (James 1:13-15)
3. PRACTICING WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS TO "DO" WHICH GIVES US PEACE. (James 1:22-25)
4. NOT SHOWING PARTIALITY OR PREJUDICE WHICH GLORIFIES GOD NOT MEN OR WOMEN. (James 2:1-13)
5. A REAL FAITH THAT RESULTS IN GOOD WORKS. (James 2:14-26)

C. JAMES CONTINUES HIS PATTERN OF WRITING IN THIS SECTION:

1. FIRST, HE STATES A PRINCIPLE.
 2. THEN, HE GIVES A REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE.
 3. LAST, HE CALLS FOR ACTION REGARDING THE PRINCIPLE.
4. James 2:14-26 IS THE MAIN THEME OF THE ENTIRE BOOK.
- A. EVERYTHING BEFORE THIS PASSAGE IS LIKE AN ARROW POINTING FORWARD TO IT.
1. EVERYTHING AFTER THIS PASSAGE IS LIKE AN ARROW POINTING BACK TO IT.
 2. IN JAMES'S MIND James 2:14-26 IS THE APEX OF A PYRAMID.
- B. SOMEONE ONCE SAID THAT FAITH IS LIKE CALORIES:
1. YOU CAN'T SEE THEM, BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS SEE THEIR RESULTS!
 - a. THE POINT IS THAT REAL FAITH RESULTS IN GENUINE WORKS.
- C. FAITH IS A KEY DOCTRINE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:
1. SINNERS ARE SAVED BY FAITH (EPH. 2:8-9),
 2. BELIEVERS MUST WALK BY FAITH (2 COR. 5:7).
 3. WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD (HEB. 11:6),
- D. IT HAS SAID THAT FAITH IS NOT "BELIEVING IN SPITE OF EVIDENCE, BUT OBEYING IN SPITE OF THE CONSEQUENCES."
1. FAITH IS CONFIDENCE THAT GOD'S WORD IS TRUE AND CONVICTION THAT ACTING ON GOD'S WORD WILL BRING HIS BLESSING.
- E. NOTE BELIEVERS DO NOT "DO" GOOD WORKS IN ORDER TO BE SAVED... BELIEVERS "DO" GOOD WORKS BECAUSE THEY ARE SAVED!

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5. FOLLOWING HIS **PATTERN**... **FIRST**, JAMES STATES THE **PRINCIPLE**:
- A. **James 2:14 (NLT2)** “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can **that kind of faith save anyone?**”
 - B. JAMES ASKS **TWO RHETORICAL QUESTIONS**, **NOT EXPECTING AN ANSWER**, **BUT ABOUT TO GIVE ONE**:
 - C. **FIRST QUESTION**:
 - 1. “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you **say** you have **faith** but **don’t show it by your actions**?”
 - a. PEOPLE MAY BE **CALLED CHRISTIANS** AND **CLAIM** TO BE PART OF THE **FAITH**, **BUT DO THEY HAVE ANY GENUINE RESULTS** THAT **PROVE** TO THOSE AROUND THEM THAT THEIR **PROFESSION IS AUTHENTIC**?
 - b. THE **SECOND QUESTION** REFERS TO A **CERTAIN QUALITY OF FAITH**... **FAITH WHICH PRODUCES NO FRUIT**.
 - D. THE **SECOND QUESTION** REFERS TO A **CERTAIN QUALITY OF FAITH**... **FAITH WHICH PRODUCES NO FRUIT**.
 - 1. “Can **that kind of faith save anyone?**”
 - a. THE **IMPLIED ANSWER**, OF COURSE, IS A **RESOUNDING NO!**
 - b. IN FACT, THE FORM OF THE QUESTION IN **GREEK** SHOWS THAT JAMES IS ASKING A **RHETORICAL QUESTION** THAT **DEMANDS A NEGATIVE ANSWER**.
 - E. **QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH AS BELIEVERS MATURE**:
 - 1. **WHAT KIND OF FAITH REALLY SAVES A PERSON?**
 - 2. **IS IT NECESSARY TO PERFORM GOOD WORKS IN ORDER TO BE SAVED?**
 - 3. **HOW CAN A PERSON TELL WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE EXERCISING TRUE SAVING FAITH?**
 - F. FOR THE NEXT **12 VERSES** JAMES **EXPANDS** ON HIS **BASIC ASSERTION**... **FAITH THAT DOES NOT PRODUCE WORKS IS NOT GENUINE SAVING FAITH**.
 - 1. HE DOES THAT BY **EXPLAINING THREE KINDS OF FAITH**.
 - a. **DEAD FAITH**
 - b. **DEMONIC FAITH**
 - c. **DYNAMIC FAITH**
 - 1) **BUT... ONLY ONE IS TRUE SAVING FAITH**.
6. **DEAD FAITH**

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A. James 2:15-17 (NLT2) “Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. [“... Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.” - James 2:17 (NASB)]

B. AFTER STATING THE PRINCIPLE, JAMES GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH WITHOUT WORKS WHICH HE CALLS DEAD FAITH.

1. JESUS WARNED IN... Matthew 7:21 (NLT2) “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.

2. EVEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH THERE WERE THOSE WHO CLAIMED THEY HAD SAVING FAITH, YET DID NOT POSSESS SALVATION.

a. WHEREVER THERE IS TRUTH, YOU WILL FIND THE COUNTERFEIT.

1) DISCUSS COUNTERFEIT/FLIP SIDE

3. PEOPLE WITH DEAD FAITH SUBSTITUTE WORDS FOR DEEDS.

a. THEY KNOW THE CORRECT VOCABULARY FOR PRAYER AND TESTIMONY, AND CAN EVEN QUOTE THE RIGHT VERSES FROM THE BIBLE... BUT THEIR WALK DOES NOT MEASURE UP TO THEIR TALK.

b. THEY THINK THAT THEIR WORDS ARE AS GOOD AS WORKS, AND THEY ARE WRONG!

C. THE REAL LIFE ILLUSTRATION... James 2:15-17 (NLT2) “Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”— but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

1. THE PERSON WITH DEAD FAITH NOTICED THE VISITOR AND SAW (“Suppose you see a brother or sister...) HIS NEEDS, BUT HE DID NOTHING TO MEET THOSE NEEDS.

a. AS BELIEVERS, WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO HELP MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE, NO MATTER WHO THEY MAY BE.

b. GALATIANS 6:9-10 (NLT2)

So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

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2. TO **HELP** A PERSON IN **NEED** IS AN **EXPRESSION** OF **LOVE**.. AND **FAITH WORKS BY LOVE**

- a. **Matthew 22:36-39 (NASB)** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, " **'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART**, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, **'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'**
- b. **Galatians 5:5-6 (NLT2)** But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. **What is important is faith expressing itself in love.**
- c. **1 John 3:17 (NLT2)** If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but **shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?**

3. **ANY DECLARATION OF FAITH THAT DOES NOT RESULT IN A CHANGED LIFE AND GOOD WORKS IS A FALSE DECLARATION.**

- a. **JAMES SAYS THAT KIND OF FAITH IS DEAD FAITH.**
 - 1) **THE PERSON WITH DEAD FAITH HAS ONLY AN INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE.**
 - 2) **IN THEIR MIND, THEY KNOW THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION, BUT THEY HAVE NEVER SUBMITTED HIMSELF TO GOD AND TRUSTED CHRIST FOR SALVATION.**
 - 3) **THEY KNOW THE RIGHT WORDS, BUT THEY DO NOT BACK UP THEIR WORDS WITH THEIR WORKS.**
- b. **FAITH IN CHRIST BRINGS LIFE (JOHN 3:16), AND WHERE THERE IS LIFE THERE MUST BE GROWTH AND FRUIT.**
 - 1) **DISCUSS... GROWTH AND FRUIT.**
 - 2) **3 TIMES IN THIS PARAGRAPH, JAMES WARNED US THAT "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD" (James 2:17, 20, 26).**

D. **DEAD FAITH IS NOT SAVING FAITH.**

1. **DEAD FAITH IS COUNTERFEIT FAITH AND LULLS A PERSON INTO A SENSE OF FALSE (AND OFTEN HYPOCRITICAL) CONFIDENCE.**

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PAUL	JAMES
“For we maintain that a man is <i>justified by faith</i> apart from works of the Law.” (Rom. 3:28)	“You see that a man is <i>justified by works</i> and not by faith alone.” (Jas. 2:24)
Uses “justified” to mean “pronounced righteous in the sight of God”	Uses “justified” to mean “proved righteous in the sight of others”
Shows how an unbeliever becomes a Christian	Shows how a believer lives as a Christian
Emphasizes the root of salvation	Emphasizes the fruit of salvation
Stresses inward disposition	Stresses outward actions
Demonstrates God’s part with human participation	Demonstrates human part with God’s help