

1. **Introduction:** Chapter 3 deals with the relationship between faith and the deeds that accompany faith. The verses are easier to understand if we distinguish between “saving” or “initial” faith and “sustaining” faith.
2. **Saving Faith:** God’s gracious gift that enables a positive response to the gospel.
 - We receive saving faith in a “once for all time” miraculous event that occurs at a single point of time. Saving faith is all of God. We are passive receivers of saving faith. Nothing we do or could do influences in any way God’s gift of saving faith.
 - Saving faith brings new spiritual life, God’s declaration that we are legally righteous before Him based on Jesus Christ’s vicarious life and death that is credited to us. The Holy Spirit comes to permanently indwell the new believer.
 - These things are all of God’s grace. Those being saved contribute nothing but the sin that causes them to need to be saved from God’s wrath.
 - We will define “sustaining faith” shortly.
 - Having been justified (declared legally righteous) by God’s gift of saving faith, our destiny is to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into a spiritual likeness of our Lord Jesus, holy as He is holy, righteous as He is righteous.
 - Paul says in Romans 8 that everyone who is justified **will be glorified**.
3. **Work Out Your Salvation:** As emphasized last lesson, believers are told ***“to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose”***(Philippians 2:12). What does this mean?
 - Notice, we are to work out the salvation that God has already given.
 - God works in our inner being transforming us into a spiritual likeness of Christ.
 - Our cooperating role is to use our God-enabled power of choice to choose our external behavior, words and actions, to be consistent with and cooperative with what God is doing in transforming our inner being.
 - The external work we do is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, Paul says it is possible for us to grieve, quench, or walk in step with Him. Our “goal and responsibility” is to “walk in step” with the Spirit.
 - Walking “in step” with the Spirit means we make our external actions correspond to His gracious internal transforming work.
 - When we receive saving faith, we begin the process of sanctification by which the Holy Spirit gradually frees us from the reality of sin in our life.
 - To enable success in the sanctification process, God gives us sustaining faith.
 - Sustaining faith enables working out in life the implications of saving faith. Unlike saving faith, we participate in sustaining faith through our obedience.
 - We strive to obediently make thoughts, words, and actions align with the internal transformation that the Holy Spirit is causing within us.

- Sustaining faith is **Evidenced** or **Validated** externally by the good works of a changed life thereby evidencing or justifying our claim to be “in Christ.”
 - Lack of evidence of good works creates doubt about saving faith. So, James’ asks, *“What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?”*
4. **James 2:14-17:** *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*
- Scripture says we can know we personally have saving faith, but we cannot know if another person has saving faith. We can observe their outward behavior.
 - James says a person who has saving faith will exhibit observable outward behavioral evidence consistent with having a new spirit. If a person has no such evidence, they and others should question their claim to saving faith.
 - James provides an example of spurious claims to faith shown by an absence of fruitfulness of faith manward.
 - *“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”*
 - The lesson from this example is a claim to saving faith. when no good works are produced, is a false claim.
5. **James 2:18:** *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.*
- Saving faith does not exist without corresponding good works.
 - In the next verse, James gives an example of spurious faith based on lack of fruitfulness Godward.
6. **James 2:19:** *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - and shudder!*
- The lesson is that believing God exists is not sufficient. *“Even the demons believe – and shudder.”* Faith (belief, trust, and obedience) in God produces good works.
 - Next are two examples of genuine faith and its relationship to good works.
 - These are examples from two extremes, both producing results that please God.
 - The first example is Abraham, the second is Rahab. Abraham, the patriarch of the Israelites, and Rahab, a Gentile.
7. **James 2:21 -24:** *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed*

God, and it was counted to him as righteousness -and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

- The word translated “justified” has two related, but different meanings. Depending on context, the meaning is either “to declare legally righteous” or “to demonstrate righteousness.”
 - In Romans, Paul uses “justified” to mean “declared legally righteous in the sight of God even though I am still a sinner.” That is a part of God’s gift of salvation.
 - James, writing to believers who have already received the gift of salvation, uses the word “justified” to mean “to demonstrate having received salvation.”
 - **Abraham**, the patriarch of the Israelites, showed himself to be a man of faith (that is a believer) when he obeyed God’s commands as he was being tested by God’s order to sacrifice his only son, Isaac.
 - Abraham trusted the absolute goodness and unlimited power of God despite the command from God to sacrifice his only son, whom God had given to Abraham to be the source of descendants that God promised to make into a great nation.
 - (Hebrews 11:19) Abraham considered that God was able even to raise Isaac from the dead. In that way God would honor His promise to Abraham.
 - Abraham proved his faith by preparing his son for sacrifice as God commanded even though sacrificing Isaac seemed to counter everything God had told him. His active faith enabled his actions and faith was completed by his obedience.
 - God did not allow Abraham to go through with the sacrifice of Isaac, but God counted Abraham’s faith and willful obedience as righteousness.
 - God called Abraham His friend. Abraham’s obedient “good works” demonstrated His salvation, not that he was perfect, but he trusted God.
 - **Rahab** was a very different case. She was a Gentile not an Israelite, and thus not a member of God’s covenant people.
 - Yet she believed the God of Israel would keep His promises to Israel and deliver Jericho into their hands. She believed and chose to follow the God of Israel.
 - She demonstrated her faith (obedient trust) in God when she received the messengers and, for their safety, sent them out by another way.
 - In Matthew 1:5 we see that Rahab herself became an Israelite and was one of four OT women included in the genealogy of Jesus. Isn’t that a great example of the lasting fruit of conversion to authentic faith?
 - Concluding this section about works of faith, James restates his thesis.
8. **James 2:26: *For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.***

- Separation of things that shouldn't be separated leads to death. It is true in physical life. When the spirit is separated from the body, the body dies.
- To think of a Christian life where faith is separated from good works is to imagine something that does not exist.
- Obedient "good works" evidences (or justifies) our claim of faith "in Christ."
- Faith (both saving and sustaining) is evidenced by good changes in behavior, good changes in speech.

9. **Chapter 3 - Truth in Communication**: In this chapter, James focuses on speech, the outwardly observable action that is our primary means of communication. He digs deeply into problems and benefits that arise from words we communicate.

- That focus is consistent with all Scripture. Negative things mentioned include the tongue described as wicked, deceitful, perverse, boasting, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, complaining, blasphemous, foolish, contentious, sensual, and vile.
- The tongue can condemn, control, and has a propensity to corrupt.
- But on the other hand, speech and other means of communication can be beneficial.
- They are necessary in communicating the gospel. hearing the gospel. **Proverbs** says several good things about communication.
- Examples: a mouth of righteousness is a fountain of life (10:11), the tongue of the wise brings healing (12:18), and lips of knowledge are a precious jewel (20:15).
- The main point of this chapter is that words communicated, particularly through speech, have inordinate power for good or for evil. Words can lift-up or hurt.
- Because of their power, believers must carefully guard the words they use to communicate with others. What James says about speech also applies to the myriad ways modern technology enables communication of words.

10. **James 3:1-2**: **Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.**

11. **Teachers' Accountability**: James begins his treatment on the power of communication with a focus on teachers. He says, because of their position, teachers are respected and believed. The power of their words is multiplied.

- For that reason, "**we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**"
- Persons in activities like news broadcasting, talk shows, making movies, etc. have similar and typically greater influence than other teachers.
- The warning that James gives applies to anyone whose position provides them prestige, leverage, and opportunity to influence people with their message.

- James' admonition was written specifically to believers, but sins of speech and other communication methods are charged against anyone who commits them, just as is the case with other sins.
- Before believers become teachers of God's Word, they should be certain they understand the accountability that goes with the privilege of teaching. Because of their influence on others, teachers will be judged more strictly.
- Teachers of God's Word are accountable to speak God's truth in a manner such that those who hear also understand God's provision and what He expects of them.
- Teachers of God's Word must not use their role as an opportunity to press their own biases and opinions on others. Instead, they must strive to understand what the Scripture itself teaches and be able to explain it in terms others will understand.
- Teachers of God's Word must speak God's truth and model that truth in their own lives. James says not many should become teachers for all stumble in many ways.
- Everyone stumbles at times. Since the tongue is a primary tool in teaching, teachers must master the use and control of their tongue to the degree possible.
- To avoid stumbling teachers should be well prepared and be honest about limits of their knowledge, remembering that God sees and hears everything.
- James' injunction on being careful how we communicate applies to everyone who is in a position of prestige, power, or notoriety that makes them more likely to be believed.
- The tendency to stumble is so universal that James says everyone stumbles in many ways. If a person could always speak without stumbling, they would be perfect and able to control their whole body.
- He clearly does not believe anyone is capable of always controlling their speech such that they never say anything that is morally wrong, hateful, spiteful, untruthful, or imperfect in some other way.
- What is the source of the problem with the tongue? We will consider that next.