

Justification by Faith Alone_Part Two
Text: James 2:14-26; misc Scriptures

Sermon Audio: What is James discussing in James 2:14-26? Faith or works? What is the relationship between faith and works. In this sermon P. Bruce will answer that question by going through the passage verse by verse/

I. Introduction\Review

- A. The Mega-theme in the Book of James is having a Genuine Faith
- B. We are Justified by Faith Alone
- C. We are Justified by Faith Alone; but not by a Faith that is Alone.

II. The Argument from Logic (vs 2:14)

- A. James 2:14 Can that faith save him?
 - 1. What use is it...
 - 2. The answer should be obvious.
 - a. A non-working faith is empty, good for nothing.
 - 3. The position James takes is not new. It is taught throughout the Bible.
 - a. Ex. 20:6, ...”but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.”
 - b. Jn. 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”
 - 4. Can that Faith save him?
 - a. 14 How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? (Catholic Bible Online)
 - b. 14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? (NRV Catholic Edition)
 - c. Can **this kind of faith** save him (NET Bible)
- B. What does James mean by Works?

1. Works in James are acts in life that are the result of a living, saving faith.
2. Works are the natural by-product of a working faith
3. James gives us examples throughout his epistle.
 - a. 1:4 Joy, in the midst of a trial is a by-product of saving faith.
 - b. 1:3-4 Trials transform the believer, making us more mature and that too is a by-product of saving faith.
 - c. 1:12 Persevering under at trial is a by product of saving faith
 - d. 1:22 Obeying the word of God is the most obvious by product of saving faith
 - e. 1:26 being able to control one's tongue is a by product of saving faith
 - f. 1:27 caring for those in need
 - g. 2:1 not showing favoritism
 - h. 3:13-17, having behavior that is gentle and wise
 - i. 4:4, rejecting the world system
 - j. 4:6, 10, having humility before God
 - k. 4:11, not defaming others
 - l. 4:13-16, submission to God's will
 - m. 5:1, not loving money
 - n. 5:14-16 confession of sin
 - o. 5:19-20 concern for the sinning brother

III. The Illustrations (James 2:15-20)

A. The First Illustration (vs 15-17)

1. Meeting the needs of fellow believers (is also a good work)

a. food and clothing

b. Matthew 6:25-31

(1) Worrying about our basic needs...

(2) In James the expectation is ordinary Christians will be used by God to meet those needs.

c. Go in peace

(1) Matt 25, "when dd we see you hungry?"

(2) Don't just say shalom

2. Contrasting a faith that is alive with a faith that is obviously dead. (v17)

B. The Second Illustration (vs 18-20)

1. The illustration seems to come from a hypothetical point of view

2. Working with the pronouns

3. Being able to articulate complex doctrines does not equal salvation.

a. Example of the man born blind in Jn. 9.

b. Attacking a mere intellectual faith head on (v19)

(1) Deut. 6:4

(2) The shema is a declaration of loyalty to the one true God.

(3) Even the demons have some correct doctrine...but shudder

c. You foolish fellow (dunderhead)

(1) Refers to intellectual deficiency this context a person who lacks understanding of spiritual truth (Faithlife Study Bible)

(2) Therefore, your faith without works is useless

IV. The Argument from History (vs 21-26)

A. Abraham (vs 21-24)

1. He asks them if Abraham was justified by offering up Isaac.

2. The verb "righteous" or "justified" has two main senses, to be pronounced righteous or to be vindicated. To be vindicated is the sense James intends here.

3. Genesis 22: God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac and Abraham obeys

a. God says in v12, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

b. James says that Abraham's faith was confirmed. It was tested and found to be true.

c. Abraham's faith was vindicated by his obedience.

d. Works is plural and this indicates that the offering of Isaac was the culmination of a life of obedient works-Isaac was the high point.

4. In v22 James explains what he means by the works justifying

a. Two results of true belief

(1) Abraham was justified, "credited to him as righteousness" and 2) friendship with God.

(2) Rom. 5:10

b. James concludes that by looking at Abraham's life (v24) one must see the interrelationship of faith and works.

B. Rahab (vs 25)

1. In the same way

2. In Jewish tradition Rahab holds a distinct position because she converted to Judaism, married Joshua, and was the ancestress of many priests and prophets, including Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

3. What we know for certain is that in the Book of Hebrews she is held up as an example of true faith and in Matt 1:5 she is in the genealogy of Jesus.

a. Joshua 2:11-14 talks of Rahab showing an affirmation of the person of Yahweh.

b. As a direct result of this affirmation she committed treason against her people and helped the Jews.

c. The Bible tells us that the reason she did this was not because she wanted to lie but because she believed in God!

d. The belief prompted the action.

C. Vs 26 is the bookend and summary statement.

1. The body is dead without the spirit. So too is faith without works.
2. Just as the dead body has the appearance of a man, it cannot truly be a man without the spirit.
3. In the same way, a workless faith may appear to be saving faith, but without obedient works it is not better than a corpse.

Conclusion

1. “God changes the heart and that changes the hand.” (Pastor Matt Henry)
2. James is not criticizing correct theology, but he does insist, that it is not proof of saving faith. He is urging that only through obedience to the Word of God can we prove the genuineness of our faith.

Questions for Community Groups

1. What stood out to you and why?
2. Read Matt. 25:31-46: What does this teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ say about the relationship between faith and works? On what basis does the King in this passage judge His subjects?
3. If you think you have time connect Matt 25:31-46 with the passages that precede it
4. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. What does this passage say about salvation and works?
5. Read Luke 19:1-10. What does this incident reveal about the transforming nature of saving faith?

Questions 2, 4 and 5 from MacArthur, J. (2001). [*James: Guidelines for a Happy Christian Life*](#) (p. 49). Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group.

