

Faith Part 10 – Faith that Works (5-19-2019)

Opening: A woman’s long journey ends in healing and relief . . .

Mark 5:25-29 (ESV)

(25) And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, (26) and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. (27) She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. (28) For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." (29) And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Introduction: Today we are going to talk about Faith that Works . . .

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?

Notes: This question lies at the heart of the nature of faith, and our salvation in Jesus . . .

Save (Greek is Sozo): To save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction. The basic meaning of the verb “sozo” is to rescue from peril, to protect, keep alive. It involves the preservation of life, either physical or spiritual . . .

- This word occurs 54 times in the Gospels
- 14 relate to deliverance and healing from disease or demon possession
- 20 instances, the inference is to the rescue of physical life from some impending peril or instant death
- The remaining 20 times, the reference is to spiritual salvation

1) **The Controversy** – The relationship between faith and works can be confusing & complicated

Paul vs. James – the Battle for Faith . . .

James 2:17-20 (ESV)

(17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (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. (19) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (20) Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Romans 3:22-25, 27-28 (ESV)

(22) For there is no distinction: (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith . . . (27) Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. (28) For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

James - Faith without works is dead and useless

Paul – By Faith alone we are justified

Well let's see if they give us any practical real life examples to help clear this up . . .

Romans 4:1-5 (ESV)

(1) What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? (2) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (3) For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.**" (4) Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. (5) And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness

Notes: Work means I'm owed something, but that is not our position. By faith we are justified – it's Jesus work that saves!

Paul uses Abraham as our example, and He quotes Genesis 15 when God promises a son to him in his old age.

James 2:20-24 (ESV)

(20) 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.

Notes: Faith is completed by works, we aren't justified by faith alone. He even calls us foolish for thinking Faith apart from works is foolish!

James uses Abraham & Isaac as our example too, different story from Abraham's life, but same quote.

Galatians 3:1-3, 6-9 (ESV)

(1) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. (2) Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? . . . (6) just as **Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"**? (7) Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. (8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." (9) So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Notes: Paul is saying that we are Abrahams children, not by birth, but by faith!

- How can Paul & James seem to be at such odds with each other?
- I mean, this is the Bible, and not some side issue, but one of primary importance!
- How can they use examples from the same man's story and view them so differently?

2) **Clarity and Mystery** – Learn to embrace the paradoxes of Jesus, by holding them loosely & reverently

Listen – **God is Holy!** (set apart, different, unique, sacred)

Therefore we should approach Him with some humility, in the position of a learner not a knower

Maybe 2 (seemingly) contradictory things can be right at the same time!

The secret of Abraham is that he was a friend of God, walked with God, trusted in God . . . (See: Gen. 12-25)

- **Believed the Promise (Gen 15)** – God promises Abraham (already an old man) that He will have a son, in fact his legacy will be more in number than the stars in heavens. **And Abraham believes Him!**

Genesis 15:6 (ESV)

And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- **Took Matters into his own hands (Gen 16)** – One chapter later, the “Man of Faith” takes matters into his own hands! (A story of Failure)
- **He was willing to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22)** – His son is now born, but he is asked to sacrifice him. The “Man of Faith” proceeds to walk out this instruction, **believing** God will work it out. (He embraces the mystery)
- **He never saw the ultimate fulfillment of the promise (Heb 11:8-19)** – He was told about the 400 years of captivating coming in Egypt (Gen 15:13-14), told they would be brought out, told that He would become a great nation, told that all nations would be blessed because of Him!

Hebrews 11:12-13 (ESV)

(12) Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. (13) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

- This is the story through each of these saint’s lives. Go back and read about each of them in Hebrews 11. Each story starts by saying . . . “By faith, so and so did such & such”
- It doesn’t say by faith they thought and pondered and internalized their faith. They lived it out.
- There is mystery to how Faith & Works operate in our lives. I don’t want to steal that mystery from you, but I can say you will receive clarity as you live out your faith through a real relationship with God.

3) A Living Faith that Works – Faith that works is faith that works!

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

(8) For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift** of God, (9) **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that **we should walk in them**.

- **Faith as striving** – human effort to achieve good is broken & wrong!
- **Faith as a gift** – Enables our worshipful response due to our belief in the presence of God in our lives!

James 5:13-20 (ESV)

(13) Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. (14) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (18) Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (19) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, (20) let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Notes: Put into practice areas of faith . . .

- 1) Want to see miracles & healing? Pray for people! Pray at home, pray with them & for them.
- 2) If we believe we are called to love our neighbor – proactively ask how, and then do it!
- 3) If we believe we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength – what if we thought about what that could look like & then acted on it?
- 4) If we believe in the power of forgiveness, that we should forgive like he forgives – do it and see what happens.
- 5) Faith leads to seeing God’s hand, it leads to adventure, it even leads to failure – which is necessary! The hardest I ever prayed, I was believing for a miracle, and it didn’t happen.

Conclusion: Faith that Works (active, labors) is Faith that Works (successful)

Mother Teresa - "We are not called to be successful, but faithful"

The story we opened with is a powerful example of faith in action. And Jesus responds to that kind of faith . . .

Mark 5:34 (ESV)

And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well (sozo); go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

In your life groups this week, and in your personal reflection consider these questions . . .

- What am I **believing** God for? Ask, Seek, and Knock!
- What am I being called to **sacrifice**? Let go of it and pursue Him!
- Where do I need to **trust** in the waiting & failing? Bring my disappointments and my failures to Him, don't pull away from Him!