

## **Sermon Notes: Defining Faith**

*James 2:14-26*

**Text: James 2:14–26 (NKJV)** — *14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus 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 without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

**Review:** *See back*

**Take Away:**

**I. Getting Paul and James Sorted** (*References: Galatians 3:10-14; John 8:39-41, 56; Galatians 3:24; Romans 1:16-17; James 1:25; Ephesians 2:8-10*)

**II. The Evidence of False Faith in the Church** (*References: Romans 5:3-5; Mark 1:23-24*)

**III. The Evidence of Genuine Faith in Life of the Saints:** (*References: Matthew 25:41-46; John 13:35; Joshua 2:9-11; Acts 5:17-19; 1 Corinthians 15:17-19; Matthew 16:24-25; Galatians 2:20*)

## Review of James 2:1-13:

1. Last time, James called us to **not hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with partiality**. Again, James' theme is still at work as he moves through different areas of Jerusalem church: *Genuine Christian faith produces genuine Christian fruit*. Thus he exhorted his congregation to recognize the weightiness, or the "*kabod*" of Christianity. The Christian faith is *heavy*. It has gravity to it, thus it should cause an effect upon those who claim it. In particular, it is incompatible with the sin of partiality. Drawing from the OT, James shows that keeping the royal law, *to love your neighbor as yourself*, means you cannot show someone partiality because of their wealth or lack of it. To judge like this is to judge *wrongly* or against God's standard. Man looks at the outside, but God judges the heart. Thus if a rich man and a poor man both walk into the Lord's Day gathering, and the church gives undue attention to the rich man, because he is rich, *this shows that the church is not judging by the law of liberty, but by the standard of the world*.

2. Next, James zoomed into the scenario he brought forth to show that there is more going on here than meets the eye. James calls us to once more take a look at the two visitors to the Lord's Day gathering as they come through the door. James would say, "Look at the rich man. Follow the thread out from him. Where does he come from? Does he not come from the rich rulers in Jerusalem who oppress you? Why do you flatter him by showing him partiality? Do you think he will help you in the midst of your suffering? Do you think he'll put a good word in with your oppressors that you guys are actually alright? Doesn't he come from those who are of the world, the city of man? Why do you expect the world, who hates Christ, to help you? Now look at the poor man. Follow the line out. Where does he come from? Who takes care of him? What power must he turn to in his need? Isn't it the Lord? Isn't it the Lord who cares for the poor? Do you not see that Christians in the world are far more like the poor than the rich? They have no one to turn to for help, *except the Lord!* The same is true for the church living in a wicked world. Do you not already see that Christians who are poor in the world will be made rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God? Why would you put your confidence in princes? Don't trust in wicked god hating rulers. Trust in Christ who reigns in heaven.

3. Lastly, James looks under the floorboards of the religion of the religious elite in Jerusalem. He warns his church, if you keep the royal law, *to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19)*, then you do well. But, if you show partiality towards the rich and powerful like this, then you judge the law like the Pharisees do and you are in sin. And in their system of judging by the law, *there is no mercy for they are merciless*. Break one part of the law, and there is no way back for you for they hated God's salvation, His Messiah. But they are also *hypocrites*. They say they honor God, but they don't keep what they preach. They say, "don't commit adultery" but they murder. They say, "don't murder," but they commit adultery. Instead of loving God, they love the praise of men and *the best seats in the synagogue*. They make void the law of God by their traditions and there is no salvation for those who follow them. James exhorts his people to obey the *law of liberty* as God intended. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ as the full revelation of the OT. That Christ died and rose for *sinners*. That in Christ there is forgiveness. In this way, judging by the gospel the culmination of all the OT Scriptures, *is what brings mercy*. For mercy Christ triumphs over the judgement of the Pharisees.

## Questions for the Table:

1. Discuss what you might say to Luther, if you had a chance, on his position on the Book of James. Have someone play Luther and push back on the importance of justification by faith alone.
2. Describe how Paul looks at justification at the beginning and how James looks at justification at the end of one's Christian life. (For Paul's view, read Romans 4:1-8)
3. How would counsel someone who claims to be a Christian, but does not seem to show any Christian fruit in their lives? In fact, they seem to act far more like the world than like Christ.
4. Children, how is obedience a *fruit* of loving your parents? Do you have to *trust* your mom or dad to truly obey them?
5. What did Bonhoeffer mean when he said, "*When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die?*"