



The Park Church: Corporate Bible Study

BIBLE JOURNEY: JAMES AND 1,2,3 JOHN LESSONS 2&3

JAMES NICHOLS

Review: Looking Back, Moving Forward

Looking Back:

Overview of James:

- ▶ Letter written by James, the younger brother of Jesus(Matthew 13:55)
- ▶ James was not a believer while Jesus was alive, but came to faith after seeing the risen Christ(1 Cor. 15:7)and became leader of the church at Jerusalem(Council of Jerusalem, etc)
- ▶ This letter focuses on developing “True Religion” through trials, exercising faith, growing in wisdom, doing good works, and fervent prayer. It also provides several basic lessons in Christian living that would inspire other early (2nd century) Christian literature

Moving Forward: Now that we have seen some of the basis of his discourse, lets Explore how James uses Old Testament Scripture to make his arguments, and observe the tension between James’ emphasis on works, and this contrast with Paul’s focus on faith.

Foundational Text: James 1:19-25(ESV)

- ▶ ¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
- ▶ ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.
- ▶ ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James' use of the Law (Old Testament)

- ▶ We often think in terms of the “Spiritual” New testament and the “Mundane” Old Testament. The Levitical Law is seen as the standard for an obsolete, works-based religion that gets abandoned once we reach the era of spiritual true knowledge. However, a biblical worldview sees this as misguided, as shown in Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:17).
 - James reinforces concepts like “Law” and “works,” “love” and “freedom,” which are central in both Testaments.
 - James repeatedly references the “Law of Love” illustrated in Leviticus 19 long before the Gospel of God's love in Christ and the indwelling of His Spirit.
 - The book of James reinforces this idea by referencing themes from Leviticus, showing the moral importance of these commands even in the Early Church

James and Leviticus

Leviticus (NIV)

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. (19:15)

Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (19:18b)

Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD. (19:16)

Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. (19:13)

James (NIV)

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. (2:1)
But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. (2:9)

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. (2:8)

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. (4:11)

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. (5:4)

James and Leviticus (Cont.)

Leviticus(NIV)	James(NIV)
Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people. (19:18a)	Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! (5:9)
Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. (19:12)	Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned. (5:12)
Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. (19:17)	Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (5:20)

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In Front | Faith & Works in the NT LECTURE (Lesson 2)

James and the New Testament

- ▶ The book of the New Testament closest to to the message of James' letter is the Gospel of Matthew.
 - When considering James and Matthew in their approach to the life of faith, these two books have close connections in both themes and vocabulary, Among many other things.
 - Matthew and James both emphasize the transformation in the life of a believer that faith should lead to, that of ever closer mirroring Christ
 - In both books, faith is not just a spiritual belief or mental state. Faith is a reality that should permeate and change every part of the believer's life, transforming them in a distinct way. James is known for his insistence on the presence of works in the life of a true believer

Themes in James and Matthew

Common theme/message	Matthew (ESV)	James (ESV)
Faith and doubting	And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.” (21:21)	But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (1:6)
On becoming doers of the word	Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. (7:24, 26)	But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. (1:22-23)

Themes in James and Matthew(Cont.)

Common theme/message	Matthew (ESV)	James (ESV)
A criticism of lip service	Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." (7:21-23)	What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 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? (2:14-16)
A call to perfection	You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (5:48)	And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (1:4)

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In | James & Paul: Faith & Works LECTURE (Lesson 2)

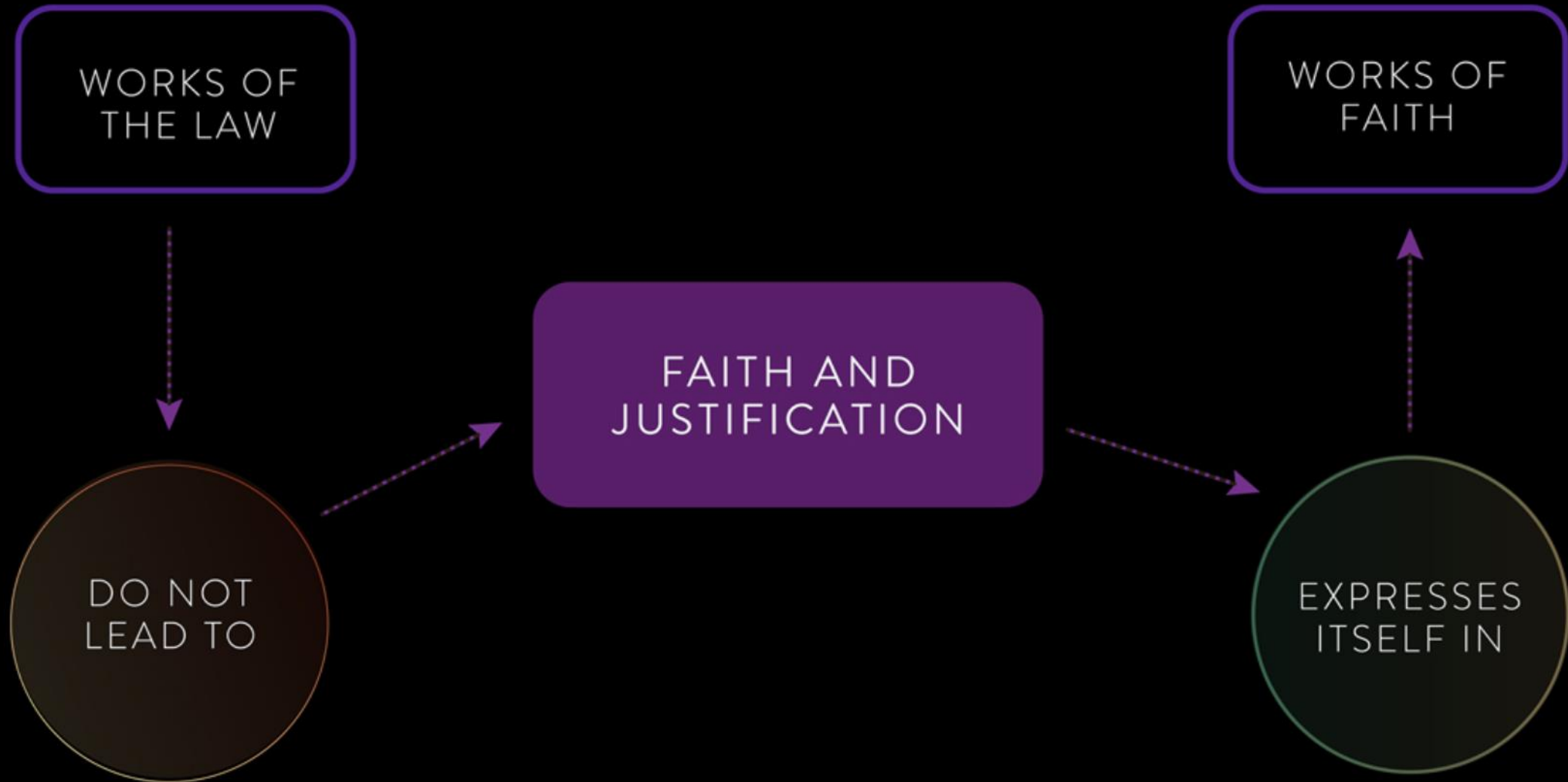
James and Luther: Faith vs. Works

- ▶ German reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) had one of the more famous and inflammatory opinions on James' epistle. Luther's personal struggles with guilt and legalistic view of salvation during his life led to his embrace of Paul's message of grace and justification in letters like Romans and Galatians. However, this would lead to an overreaction to the book of James as a contradiction to some of Paul's writings:
 - ▶ *"In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to the others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it."*
- ▶ Luther remains one of the great fathers of Christian tradition, and like all of us he was a complicated person. In this case, he stood against orthodox Christian tradition by disregarding a book accepted as authoritative since the earliest Christian era.

James and Paul on Justification

- ▶ Early African church father Augustine of Hippo offers a resolution to the tensions between Paul and James in a treatise written early in his life of ministry:
 - *Therefore the opinions of the two apostles, Paul and James, are not opposed to each other when the one says that man is justified by faith without works, and the other says that faith without works is useless: because the former (Paul) speaks about works that precede faith, while the latter (James) speaks about those that follow faith; as even Paul shows in many places.*
 - Augustine, De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII, Liber Unus 76 [MPL 50:89].
- ▶ Augustine notes that the apparent disagreement between Paul's emphasis on "faith" and James' emphasis on "works" is really an example of the two men addressing the same topic from opposite sides of the Christian life. Paul is addressing how we are justified before God(know we justified). James is speaking to how this internal justification is expressed in externally to others(show we are justified).

PAUL AND JAMES



James and Paul on Justification(Cont.)

- ▶ The two authors are speaking from different perspectives of justification. Despite the appearance of communicating competing ideas justification, they're not saying contradictory things. James and Paul make different points, and combined reveal the more holistic view of the New Testament idea of salvation.
- ▶ Both authors describe a life of faith shown as we grow in love and godliness. Paul's letters have many examples of such a faith expressed in action:
 - **Galatians 5:6 (NIV):** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.
 - **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV):** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

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Behind | Who Is John? LECTURE (Lesson 3)

Foundational Text: John 1:1-10

- ▶ ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—
- ▶ ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

John 1:1-10(Cont.)

- ▶ ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- ▶ ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Themes in 1 John: Dichotomies in Type

1 John Reference Text	Point of Comparison/Contrast
1 John 1:5- This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light ; in him there is no darkness at all.	Light vs. Darkness
1 John 2:15- Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.	Love of the Father vs. Love of the World
1 John 2:22- Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ . Such a person is the antichrist —denying the Father and the Son.	Christ vs. the Antichrist
1 John 3:14- We know that we have passed from death to life , because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death .	Life vs. Death
1 John 3:15-16- Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.	Love vs. Hate
1 John 4:18- There is no fear in love . But perfect love drives out fear , because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love .	Love vs. Fear

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In | Key Themes & Dichotomies in 1 John (Lesson 3)

Example: God vs. The World

- ▶ **John 3:16-17:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”
- ▶ **1 John 2:15-17:** “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”
- ▶ The “world” vs “The World”: How can we reconcile God’s love for the world and our separation from the world as Christians

1 John and the Gospel

- ▶ Unlike Peter and Paul's letters, John never explicitly names himself as the author of his writings. However, both the early church fathers and contemporary biblical scholars accept his authorship since their circulation. In addition to the tradition, the writing style and conventions of these three letters have provided good evidence that they share an author with the Gospel of John

1 John (NASB)	John (NASB)
By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (4:9)	For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (3:16)
As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (2:27)	Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (15:9-10)

How does God Abide with Us?

- ▶ When reading John's letters, the idea of being indwelt by Jesus and the Spirit may be more familiar, but the thought of the Father living in us—and of our living in the Father—is important for us to come to terms with. Refer to 1 John 3:24.
 - “The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”
- ▶ While the Spirit is singled out here as being “given,” no similar distinctions are made as to which persons “live in us,” or as to which “we live in.” The assumption is “all of them.” Here we can refer back to a similar passage in John 14:23:
 - “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

Our Shared Anointing

- ▶ John also includes other references connecting believers with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, in subtle and profound ways. Compare the language in Luke 4:18 (NIV) and 1 John 2:20, 27
- ▶ This reference connects believers with Jesus in a subtle but profound way. Jesus himself had anointing from the “Holy One”, the Holy Spirit, as he claimed by reading from Isaiah in the synagogue.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit dwells in and anoints believers in the same way that he anointed the Son in the New Testament. Passages such as these they ought to remind us that Christians are not distant followers of an ancient model or doctrine, but are living extensions of God’s own life and ministry on earth.

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In Front | Judgment & Fruit of the Spirit LECTURE (Lesson 3)

Final Thoughts

- ▶ James and John both write so that their audience will have security in their salvation. However, it's important to understand how they define the true children of God who attain this offered assurance.
- ▶ John's first epistle echoes both Hebrews and James, all providing evidence for the hope we as believers have, but only after serious contemplation and introspection.
- ▶ These letters remind us how monumental God's love for us really is. Jesus' life is the model after which we pattern our own.