



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Walking in Faith

James 2:14-26

Sermon given remotely on May 10, 2020

From the Lancaster Home in Menifee



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Walking in Faith

James 2:14-26

Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 2**
- Today, we continue our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- Today we are going to at one of James' main messages in his letter; the discussion of faith and works
- This is so important, that I would say that it is impossible to live the Christian life if you get this wrong
- In fact, James is going to say that you can't even get to heaven if you get this wrong
- My goal, with God's help is to help you to get it right
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Walking in Faith**
- The Christian life is like an airplane
- It needs two wings to fly – faith and works
- And to fly right, they need to be in balance with one another
- If you have ever worked with birds, you might know that to keep them from flying you clip one of the wings, just clip the feathers on one wing
- They can't fly right, and eventually they will stop trying to fly
- Same thing is true in our Christian walk – without faith and works, not going to live right
- In today's text, James is going to describe three kinds of faith
- In the end we are going to see that only one kind of faith is true faith
- Only one kind of faith is saving faith
- Only one kind of faith leads us to heaven
- The first kind of faith is **Dead Faith**
- **James 2:14-17**
- The key to understanding verse 14 is in the phrase 'if someone says he has faith'

- A mere confession of faith is not real faith, is not true faith
- ‘Can faith save him?’ – Can that kind of faith – can just saying you believe God actually get you to heaven
- This is a rhetorical question, that expects a ‘no’ answer **Matthew 7:21**
Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.
- Just saying you believe in Jesus is not going to save you
- True faith is always accompanied by works
- Uses the example of a person without enough food or clothing
- If a person claiming to be a Christian can help and doesn’t, his faith is useless
- And in verse 17, worse than useless – it is dead faith
- This does not mean that works are necessary for salvation
- The Bible teaches clearly that faith alone saves ‘sola fide’ **Romans 3:28**

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

- But that doesn’t mean works aren’t important **John Calvin**
It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.
- Just saying you are a believer does not make you a true Christian
- Using James words - that would make you a hearer, but not a doer.
- The second kind of faith is **Demonic Faith**
- **James 2:18-20**
- Faith is invisible – it is an internal work of God in the life of an individual through the Holy Spirit based upon the truth of the Word of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross
- Your word that you have faith is not sufficient evidence of true faith
- Even saying you believe God and His Word is not good enough
- James uses the demons as his example
- ‘Even the demons believe’ – what do they believe?
- They believe in God, they believe in the Trinity, they believe that Jesus is Deity, they believe in Hell, they believe what the Bible says
- And that belief causes them ‘tremble’ or ‘shudder’ because they believe that their ultimate destiny is to be cast alive into the Lake of Fire with Satan

- But that belief doesn't save them, because there are no works born from that faith
- They know the truth, but they refuse to humble themselves before God and do works of faith
- They will not bow to God's sovereign rule
- There are people, maybe some watching or listening to this message, that know what the Bible says, and even believe God is real, they believe heaven and hell are real, they believe that God is righteous, and that He will judge them for their sins, but they do not respond to God's call
- That kind of faith is dead also – it does not save you
- Third kind of faith **Dynamic Faith**
- This is the kind of faith that saves, and it proves that it saves by what it does
- James is going to use two diverse examples of dynamic faith; Abraham and Rahab
- These two were about as far apart as two people can be
- A man and a woman, a righteous man and a prostitute, the friend of God and an enemy of God
- They are like bookends on all of humanity, if these two can exercise dynamic faith, than anyone can
- **James 2:21-24**
- In verse 23 James quotes Genesis 15:6 – Paul also quotes this same verse to say that is when faith began for Abraham – when God made the promises to Abraham and he believed God
- In verse 21 James refers to an event that took place seven chapters later in Genesis 22 – Abraham offered the son God promised as a sacrifice
- James says Abraham was justified by works – offering his son
- Doesn't mean that he was saved by those works, offering Isaac was proof he was saved, was the evidence of his salvation in chapter 15
- Justification is one of the key doctrines of Christianity **Warren Wiersbe**

Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross.

- My role in justification is believing **Ephesians 2:8-10**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

- Abraham's 'work' was proof he had already been justified by faith
- Justification takes place on two planes
- Vertical – by faith justified before God – Horizontal – by works justified before men
- True dynamic saving faith always functions on both planes
- Second example is Rahab
- **James 2:25**
- You can read about Rahab's faith in Joshua chapters 2 and 6
- Rahab had learned about God and His promises to give the land of Canaan to the people of Israel
- She believed that God was going to do it – that she and her people were deserving of destruction – that only by humbling herself before God could she save herself and her family – that is faith
- Faith is taking God at His Word and acting upon His Word
- As a work of faith, she hid the two 'messengers' or spies – which was an act of civil disobedience
- Her faith resulted in her doing something
- As a reward for her faith, she was saved when Jericho was destroyed, and she eventually married the Great-great-grandfather of King David and is named in the lineage of Jesus
- James closes this chapter with a comparison
- **James 2:26**
- The human body is temporary – the spirit is eternal
- Death occurs when the spirit departs from the body – body cannot live without the spirit
- Faith cannot live without works, works of faith are what brings faith to life
- It is important that we understand what these works are that we have been referring to **J. Ronald Blue**

To gain spiritual maturity a believer must be what God wants him to be and do what God wants him to do.

- You can't do what you want and be doing works of faith
- You have to be yielded to the Word of God and to the Spirit of God in the name of the Son of God to do works of faith
- Abraham would never have considered offering his son, if God hadn't told him to
- Rahab would never have risked hiding the spies if she hadn't believed God wanted her to
- True faith does whatever the Lord asks us to do

Gospel Reality

- This kind of message invites the question, 'What kind of faith do you have?'
- We looked at three kinds; dead, demonic, and dynamic
- If your faith is an intellectual faith, but it doesn't bring you to understand your sin separates you from God, and doesn't reach out to meet the need of others – it is dead
- Or if you believe, and your sin bothers you and you are concerned about whether you are going to heaven or hell, but you don't humble yourself before God – that is the same faith the demons have – it does not save
- Only a faith that believes God and that is proven by responding to God's Word and Spirit can save you
- And the very first step in that journey is to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, stepped down out of heaven and became a Man
- That He lived a perfect life – giving us a model of walking in the Spirit
- Must believe that you have not lived a perfect life, no matter how good it was – wasn't good enough for heaven
- That He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin in our place, even though He was sinless
- Believe that on the third day He rose from the dead promising resurrection to our mortal bodies
- That He ascended to heaven and is now praying for us
- And finally, that He will someday return for us, and we will be with Him forever

- That is the very first step on a faith journey – but it can't be the last step – not if it is true faith
 - We live in a world that needs people of faith to fearlessly go where God is leading them in their faith
 - People are asking – “How do we walk in faith while in this COVID-19 quarantine?”
 - Three quick things and then we will close
 - First – **Know what God has said in His Word!**
 - You can only believe what you know – and to know what God wants, you need to know what He said – do not neglect regular time in the Bible – God's Word
 - Second – **Know what God has said to you personally!**
 - While real faith is a public thing, it is also very personal
 - What God says to you might be different than what He says to someone else
 - God may give one person liberty to do something that He won't give to another person
 - And it has nothing to do with faith, but God's sovereign will at work
 - That is often a point of contention within the church
 - Third – **Fearlessly do what you believe God has said!**
 - This is where true faith comes in
 - In Matthew 14, Jesus told Peter and the other disciples to get into a boat and go to the other side of the lake
 - It didn't very much faith for Peter and the other life-long fishermen to do that
 - But then came the storm - and then Jesus came to them walking on the water **Matthew 14:28-29**
- And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.**
- It took real faith for Peter to do that, which he proved he had by stepping out of the boat
 - True faith is believing that God wants you to step out of the boat and then you doing it even if you have no idea how you are going to do it or what is going to happen or what others are going to think

- I wonder how many of the other disciples thought Peter was making a mistake as he stepped out of the boat
- And then I wonder what impact Peter's faith had on the other disciples
- Brothers and sisters, during this time of uncertainty and unrest, we need to be people of real dynamic faith
- **Know what God has said in His Word!**
- **Know what God has said to you personally!**
- **Fearlessly do what you believe God has said!**
- One last thing and then we will close – **Live YOUR faith!**
- Focus on what God is telling you, not what He is telling someone else
- One of the reasons for this is because you can't be absolutely certain what God is telling them, or that they are even hearing from God
- You live your faith and let them live their faith
- If you are both hearing from God – He will be glorified, others will be blessed, and faith will grow
- And that is what we want, right?
- **Pray**

May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21