

James 2:14-26 (Teaching)

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Preacher: Spencer Baumgardner

[0 : 0 0] But this is, in my personal opinion, probably the most debated section, definitely of the book of James, and possibly of the entire Bible.

This particular section is why Martin Luther himself wanted the book of James not taught in the schools. Now it's sad that he wanted to remove from the canon of Scripture. There's no real concrete evidence of that, but he did say that the book of James should be thrown out of the schools because in his words it didn't contain one crumb of Christ. But once again that was Martin Luther's take on it, and this section that we're about to get into was a big part of their reason why, because Martin Luther was a big fan of the whole by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, or the Scripture alone, the five souls of Scripture. And he felt that this kind of went against by grace alone. But if you pay attention, as I hope to point out this morning,

James doesn't contradict the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. He doesn't contradict that at all in his writing here. So we'll pick up in James chapter 2 starting in verse 14.

James asks a question. He says, What does the prophet, my brethren, though a man sayeth faith and have not works, can faith save him? Now, as I said, it seems on the surface that James is completely contradicting really Paul's writings. You read what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. You read what Paul wrote to the Galatians, emphasizing faith, emphasizing salvation by grace through faith. And Paul did write those things. And James here asked a question, can faith save him? Well, of course, faith can save. It's all throughout the Bible that faith saves. And that faith begins over in the Old Testament with Abraham, who James uses as an example at the end of this very chapter that we're reading now. The Bible says that Abraham believed God, and it was kind of to him for righteousness. He believed God, he had faith in what God promised him.

So his faith is what saved him. Yes, but James asked the question, can faith save him? What faith are we talking about? What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say you have faith and have not works? This is the specific faith that James is talking about, not faith.

[2 : 4 4] In general, as we would think of it, or faith, and he was 11, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Can faith without works save that man? And James is saying no, it can't because works is a byproduct of your faith. If you proclaim Christ, and if you profess Christ, but you don't have the works to back up that profession, your faith is in vain.

I mean, there's all kinds of people out there, and Vernon and I both met some yesterday. Do you believe the people I try and go attract to, and I heard I go to church, or we go to church? Well, good for them. I'm glad that they go to church. But it's been said before, and I'll reemphasize it, if I stand in a garage, that doesn't make me an automobile. If I go to church, that doesn't make me a Christian. I can go all kinds of places that doesn't necessarily make me into whatever type of person normally, normally frequent such a place. So, or whatever thing is normally placed in that place for that matter. If I stand in a kitchen, that doesn't make me a refrigerator. I mean, it's a ridiculous notion to think that, but you wouldn't believe the people I heard say that yesterday and the day before, we go to church, we go to church, and praise God that they go to church, and I hope that they go to a church where the Bibles be preached, and I hope that those folks are saved. But James is specifically asking the question, and other translations of the Scripture have this correct, or several other translations out there that say, can that faith save him? James doesn't use the word that in his, he says, can faith save him, but that's why he's referring to his faith, can faith without works save him, and it cannot.

It's simply a profession, but there's no works to back it up. Also, we're, I mean, you read what Paul wrote to the Ephesians, we all love the Scripture, in Ephesians chapters two, that says, for it is by grace that you are saved. It says, it's not of works, let's say you mention both, but what does verse 10 say in Ephesians chapter two, for we are created by Christ, we are created, in Christ Jesus, unto good works, we're created for good works, so there must be works to back up our faith, we're created unto good works by Christ, we're not just created new creatures to sit around and do nothing, we're created by, as new creatures, unto good works, that we can go out and perform these good works. What does Jesus Christ say in John chapter 15? I preached this verse yesterday, and I know I've earned it too, I heard him do it. Jesus says that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. The very next verse in verse 14 says, you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command. If you do, do, that's a work. It's not saying that your work will save you, it says you're my friends, you have faith in me, you believe in me, and you are my friends. If you do, if you work, if you do the things which I've commanded you to do, those works will back up the faith that we have in Jesus Christ. So once again, James isn't saying here that faith cannot save, faith is the only thing that can save. Our faith in Almighty God is what saves us, his grace that he sheds upon us, when we have that faith in him, that is what saves us, yes, but if it's simply a faith that has no works, I mean the Bible says that if a man being

Christ is a new creature, if we're a new creature, we're going to act like a new creature, we're going to do new things that we didn't do before. If we're still going to the same places, hanging out with the same people and doing the same things that we've done before we were saved, we never got saved. We're created a new creature, therefore we do new things, we do new things.

So what James is asking is can that faith, can a faith without works save him? And James is emphatically saying no, it can. He says, if a brother or sister be naked in destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace and be warmed and filled, not with standing, you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what does it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone. This is quite a statement that James makes here. It's quite a picture that he's drawn. He's saying that there'll be one coming into your congregation that's poor and needy and hungry and cold. And you just look at them and you say, you say, well, go on you, go on your merry way, go and be warm, but you don't produce them so you don't give them a fire. You don't give them heat, you don't give them something to warm and be filled, and you don't give them food to satisfy that need. You just say, go on, be warm and filled. What good is that going to do? It'll do no good because they don't have the means to do that themselves. But we as Christians are expected to help people in these needs. I'm not saying that Christians need to spend every dime or every penny that they have or throw it out to the world. I'm not saying that at all, but we are to care for the needy. We are to look after their needs. We are to be sympathetic to their needs. What did Jesus Christ say? He said, the poor you'll always have with you, but not me, but the poor will always be here. And it is our job to look after the poor. It's our job to try and help the poor. Like I said, I ain't saying you need to make your house into a Motel 6 for every homeless person in the area to move into. But you're to be sympathetic to those needs. And we are to try, we are to try as a church, as a congregation of believers, and as individual believers, and as the church is the body of Christ, worldwide, we are to try our best to help supply those needs that are out there in the world. Because it does us no good, no good whatsoever, to tell someone, go and be a warm and filled and not give them the things which they're in need of. Even so, faith, if it has not works, is dead being alone. That's a huge statement. Your faith is dead, if all it is, is a profession. If there's no works to back up your profession, of Jesus Christ, your faith is dead. Another word for this would be bearing. What's bearing mean? It's unable to produce anything. It doesn't produce any fruit. What's Jesus say? Granite, he's talking about the

[9 : 58] Pharisees and the religious elite. He says, you'll know them by their fruits. He's talking about false prophets in the, in the servant on the mountain when he says, they say, you'll know them by their fruits. Folks, if we know lost people, how many of y'all have lost folks in your family and how do you know that they're lost because of the rotten fruit that they're producing?

Because they aren't living the Christian life, because they're not doing, they're not working as a Christian should do. That's how we know. So, and on the flip side of that coin, how do we know someone's saved? Really and truly, none of us know 100% sure. Y'all don't know if I'm saved or not.

My own wife don't know for certain, for 100% certain if I'm saved or not, and I don't know 100% certain if she's saved or not. That's between her and God and me and God. Only we know that for, for 100% absolute fact. But if we profess Christ, we should have works that show that we have faith in Christ. How does the world perceive Christians? How many of y'all have been told before? You're not acting very much like a Christian. I've been told that. And there's been times in my life, I haven't had to be told that. The Holy Ghost of God let me know I wasn't acting very Christian in my mannerisms or in my attitude or in my ways. But how do we know the loss because they act like the loss? Heathens have always acted like heathens and pagans have always done what pagans do.

Christians, Christians are supposed to act, Christians are supposed to be separate from the world. They're supposed to act like Christians. They're supposed to walk and talk like Christians.

They're supposed to have faith like Christians. But how, what good does it do for us to profess our faith under the world but not show them that we truly believe, that we truly believe in this Bible, that we truly believe in the Jehovah God of the Scriptures, and we truly believe that Jesus Christ bled and died for our sins and for any lost person that may have us under a microscope looking at us. Jesus died for all those things. But how will they know that if we don't have the works to back it up? James says, even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead. It is dead as barren being alone. Faith must have works. James is not discounting, discounting faith here at all as a means to salvation. What James is saying is that we must have works in order to prove our faith. And who are we proven it to? It's not to ourselves. I know that I believe in God. What does Paul write to the Corinthian church? He said, if the gospel be hid, it's into them that are lost.

[12 : 47] You ain't hiding the gospel from me. I've received the gospel. I understand the gospel. I know the gospel. I know the forgiveness of sin. I know about salvation. So if I'm hiding it from anybody, it's only to the lost. Yeah, a man say, thou hast faith and I have works. Shoot me with that faith without thou works and I'll shoot you with my faith by my words. I like James here.

James is cutting to the bone with this. And evidently, this was an issue with the people that he was writing to. The issue was, no, it's by grace and through faith on them. This was long before the Reformation ever took place, granted. But that's what these people were saying. And salvation itself is by grace alone and through faith alone. But he says, a man, yeah, a man may say that his faith and I have works. What's he saying when he says that this would have been an argument that people were making that James was addressing. And this was a very popular way for really for rabbis to argue. But it was also a way that Greek philosophers also argue.

They would say, well, you have this and I have that. But what was James getting at here? He was getting at the gifts of God. He was saying, maybe you have the gift of faith and I have the gift of works or vice versa. But God distributes these gifts as he pleases. Maybe he didn't give me the gift of faith like he did you. No, James is saying, this is not the case. If you have faith, you will have works, period. Yeah, man may say that his faith and I have worked shooting that faith without that works. And I'll shoot and I will shoot you my faith by my words. In other words, you can't show your faith without works. That's what James is getting at shooting my shooting. I'm sorry, I'll spit it out here. Second shooting shooting me that faith without that works. Now shooting my faith by my words. It's a challenge that he's making. He said, show me your faith without any works. Prove to me that you believe without any works. Show me that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that suffered on a cross and died for my sins. Show me that without any works.

And I'll show you I believe the same thing, but I'll show you by my words. It's a whole lot easier to believe someone has faith when they have the works to back it up right as opposed to someone who just says, well, I believe and James gets it that here in just a second. They'll believe us that there is one God that'll do us well. The devil's also believe and tremble. James is building this case. He's building it up and building it up. They'll believe us that there is one God. Why would he have wrote that? He was writing to a bunch of Jews. Remember that in chapter one. It says that he's writing to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad greeting. He's writing to the Jews. He says, thou believest that there is one God. This was a profession out of the book of Deuteronomy that the Jews recited every morning and every evening that the Lord our God is one God. He is one God. He says, thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. He said, you're doing good to say that there is one God. There is one God. There's one God and three different persons. God the Father,

God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. But they all make up one God. They all make up the God. He says, thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. The devil's also believe and tremble.

[16 : 42] They don't do anybody a bit of good to tell me they believe in God if they're living like they don't. They don't do you any good to tell anybody that you believe in God if you're living like they don't. This discussion last week, I don't remember who it was with. Missy and I both brought it up.

Family is the hardest people you will ever witness to. They're the hardest people to convince that there is one God. They're the hardest people to convince that you are indeed a Christian. You do indeed believe. Why is that? Because they've seen you get angry. Because they've seen you sin.

Because they've seen how you act in certain situations. That's why it's so hard to witness to family. They are the hardest ones. The hardest ones for you to witness to. It'd be much better that a complete stranger witness to family as opposed to family witnessing to family.

Because they've seen us in our worst moments. Even as a born again Christian, they have seen us at our very worst. That's why it's so hard to convince them. The devil's also believe and tremble. Satan believes in God. Satan absolutely believes in God. A.W. Tozer addressed this one time. I can't quote it word for word. That A.W. Tozer said something along the lines of it does no good for us to believe that God created the heaven and the earth. For Satan believes that. Judas Iscariot believed that. Ahab believed that. So that's basically saying the same things here. It does us no good to recognize that God created the world. There's a slew of people out there exactly like this. There is not just a ton. There's a ton of half of people out there that believe that say I believe. And if you're honest with yourself, you were probably like that one time too. You said well the scripture just says all I have to do is believe. And it does say that. And I praise God for that. But I've used this example many times and I'll use it again.

The Jesus that people tend to believe is the Jesus in the cradle or in the manger. And the Jesus that lived a perfect life and the Jesus that bled on the cross and the Jesus that was buried in a tomb and the Jesus that was resurrected and they leave it at that. But they don't want to believe that Jesus of the book of Revelation. They don't want to believe that Jesus Christ is coming back as judge. They don't want to believe that he's coming back as the Bible says on a white horse and the armies of heaven will be following him on their horses and that he's coming to bring judgment. That's the Jesus that people don't want to believe. And if you believe in the Jesus Christ in the manger, you have got to believe that Jesus Christ that is coming back as judge. If you don't believe that judge Jesus Christ, you don't truly believe that Jesus Christ in the manger. Therefore your belief is in vain. It's in vain. You've got to believe it's the same Jesus. It's the same exact Jesus. There's no difference between the Jesus that was placed in a manger in Bethlehem and the Jesus that's coming back one day as judge. The Bible says he does judge and make war. People don't want to believe in that Jesus. The folks that's the Jesus I served. That's the Jesus that saved me. They'll believe us that there is one God that does well.

[20 : 34] The devil's also believing in trouble. But we'll tell no, oh vain man, that faith without works is dead. He asked the question again. They just follow questions. We'll tell no, that faith without works is dead. He's trying to show this. He's trying to show this in these little little snippets that he's giving. You might look at James and what he's written here as far as, shoot me without faith, without that works, now shoot me my faith, by my words. And you might say it sounds kind of smart out there. And it does. It really does sound that way. But James is trying his best to drive home a point that your faith without works is vain. And he says here, but we'll tell no, oh vain man, oh vain man, oh you that profess Christ, but don't have the works to back it up.

You that profess Christ, and you do nothing to show the world of your belief in Jesus Christ. I mean, you look all throughout the scriptures and there's a lot of doing after faith.

Even Jesus taught that himself. We were using an example out of John 15. But Jesus also said, said that if any man wanted to follow him, said let him deny himself. What is denying himself? That's a work. Let him deny himself. Take up his cross. That's a work. And follow me. That's a work. And why would we deny ourselves? Why would we take up a cross? And why would we follow him?

Because we have faith in him. It's got to begin with faith. If it doesn't begin with faith, your works is in vain. And if your faith has not works, it's in vain. These are the points that James is trying to drive home here. Verse 21 was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac upon the upon the altar, seeing how seeing thou how faith wrought with his works.

And by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. So here he go to remember he's writing to a bunch of Jews here, right into the club tribes scattered abroad. So he's writing to Jews that would have been very familiar with Abraham.

[22 : 56] They've been very familiar with the accounts that James is referring to here. But he said he asked the question he says, was he not justified by works? Now that sounds heretical on on the surface. It really does. But it's not. He says when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar, see us now how faith wrought wrought with his works. James clarifies, I'm not being a heretic, and I'm not going against anything that even that suggests that salvation is by grace through faith, faith wrought with his works, it worked with his works is what James is talking here.

They work together, they go hand in hand, you can't have one without the other. If you're a true believer in Christ, and the scripture was fulfilled, this is very easily overlooked. That one little line and the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and it was imputed under infrared righteousness. What does that sound like? Sounds like prophecy. And the scripture was fulfilled.

Ain't that what happens when prophecy is when prophecy is actually fulfilled or prophecy actually happens and it's accounted for something in the past is prophesied and when it's actually done or followed through within the future, what do we call it? We say it's been fulfilled. He says the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. When was that said? That was in Genesis 15. But what's the account that's being given here? What work? What work was wrought that justified Abraham when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? So we've got from Genesis 15 to Genesis 22. Basically what James is saying here when Genesis 15 says that he believed God and it was counted in for righteousness, when did he believe God? When God said look up at the stars Abraham, number them if you are able to, so shall your seed be. And that's when the scripture says that Abraham believed God and it was counted him for righteousness. But what proved that? It was his work in Genesis 22. What justified that?

It was the work in Genesis 22. When God said take Isaac up there, take him over there to Mariah, you take him up on the mountain, you offer him up as a burnt offering to me. And Abraham done that in the book of Hebrews in chapter 11 says Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac even from the dead. That's the faith that he had. But it began with faith. It didn't start with works.

His works proved the faith that he had in God. That's what he was getting at. You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only. Once again quite a statement that he's making but it is not heretical and it is not saying that works overrides faith. It is saying that your works prove your faith. Likewise also was not re had the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and sent them out another way for as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also. Ray had he's done going from Abraham the father of the Jewish nation really and truly you want to look at it. You can go all the way back to Adam if you want to but really and truly you look at you look at when God called Abraham out or Abram then out of the land of earth when he called him out of that land Abraham was really truly the first

[26 : 52] Jew that ever walked the planet. He was the one that began the Jewish faith. He's the one that God looked down and selected to start that. Now I said you can go plumb back to Adam and you can go from Adam to Seth and you can go on down the line and you can count it that way but really truly Abraham was the first first jews why they refer to him as Father Abraham but he's going to Rehab the harlot a prostitute in the city of Jericho not only that not only was she a prostitute but she was a Gentile and it says likewise also was not Abraham the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way we should all be familiar with Rehab's story we know that Joshua sent two spies into the land and those spies and this was just putting it in a real condensed nutshell those two spies spent the night at Rehab's house but what did it start with? It didn't start with the men the men coming and knocking on Rehab's door saying delivering us the spies when we're back to the to the king that that those spies were at that house and she sent them out another way knowing good and well where those two spies were it didn't start with that it didn't start with her words it started with her telling those two spies the your god has delivered you it started with her faith in the god of the Hebrews she had faith in this god it began with faith and because she had that faith because she knew that that land was going to be destroyed because she had faith that god had sent those spies along with all the Israelites across the river and to and was sending them to Jericho to destroy it that's what caused her to perform the works that she did her faith produced works it produced works not her works produced faith her faith produced works for as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also so James once again makes quite a statement for as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also is James referring to the the body without the soul here

Megan I personally think that he's going all the way back to the beginning of counseling Genesis because God four man out of the dust of the earth and man was just laying there man was not a living being until god breathed until god breathed the breath of life into man so as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also if you have faith and you have no works to back it up folks your faith is dead it is barren it's not producing anything for you it's not producing anything for the kingdom