

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Open your bibles to the book of James.

This morning, we are going to finish James 2 –

There is a question that I have seen asked over and over again in social media as well as a few Christian movies.

The question is -

“If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

Now, this is certainly a thought-provoking and soul-searching question!!!

Would a jury, after going through all the evidence convict you and I of being a Christian.

And by "evidence," I don't mean how many Bibles we own, or how many of our presets in our car radio are set to Christian stations or how many times we respond to someone posting a bible scripture on social media or how many Sunday's out of the year we spend at church.

By evidence, I mean – how we interact with one another.

By evidence, I mean – our application of the word of God.

By evidence, I mean – fruit.

Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

“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.

By their fruit you shall know whether or not they are a real Christian or simply someone who claims to be a Christian.

James is going to challenge the early church and us to examine where we stand in our Christian walk and by doing this, it will reveal the type of faith that we actually have, is it a dead faith or a saving faith.

Let's pray...

The section of scripture that we are going to study this morning has brought a great deal of confusion among believers –

In fact, there are many believers that when they read this section of scripture – they will conclude that James is saying that a person **is saved by works**.

They will argue that a James is preaching an entirely different gospel that the one that Paul preached in his epistles.

In fact, on Saturday mornings, when the LDS or the Mormons come and knock in your door and you begin to have a conversation and you tell them that the bible says that we are saved by grace through faith – sometimes, they will even reference this section of the book of James in order to bring upon confusion – remember that these cults believe that they are saved by their works.

There are others who will say that James wrote his epistle to counter the theology that Paul taught in his epistles.

But a close inspection of James' epistle reveals that James wrote his letter before Paul comprised his letters.

This letter to the early church is believed to be one of the earliest written books of the New Testament.

And when we study it in context – we will find that James doesn't contradict what Paul taught, the truth is that James complements the words of Paul.

So let's read our text -

[Jas 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.

Now, let's look at what Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10

[Eph 2:8-10 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. **10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

The issue isn't whether or not we are saved by faith, the bible is clear that we are saved by grace through faith.

James is not arguing against this.

The issue that James is bringing up is whether or not an individual can be saved when their faith does not produce any works.

Is their evidence that the faith that an individual has is a “**saving faith**”

He wants to make a distinction between a genuine faith and a counterfeit faith.

And when we read it in context, we see that our text is simply a continuation of the exhortation that James had been making to the early church.

Two weeks ago, we studied how James pointed out that a genuine believer was one who controlled his tongue – and one who showed compassion toward the needy.

Last week, James pointed out that a genuine believer is one who doesn't show partiality or favoritism toward others.

Now, James will ask the church to examine themselves to make sure that the type of faith they have is indeed a saving faith.

[Jas 2:14 NKJV] 14 What [does it] profit, my brethren, **if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**

I asked you to make a note where James says, if someone **says** he has faith.

The emphasis is on says – **this person claims to have faith.**

Their profession of faith is in words only and not on deeds – I am pretty sure we all know someone who tells you they are a Christian but the evidence is simply not there.

If someone claims to be a Christian and there is no fruit being produced – is that person really saved???

That is the question that James brings up to the church.

You see, it's possible to claim to have faith but not actually have it.

And by faith, I mean faith in the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross.

By faith, I mean a submission to His will.

By faith, I mean a saving faith.

The only evidence of that type of faith is the fruit that is produced.

Because the moment when we accept, by faith, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, there is a change that occurs within us.

We begin to have a change of heart.

And as we draw closer to Him and allow Him to mold us and shape us according to His will (as we spiritually mature), the byproduct will be fruit.

If there is no fruit – then clearly there is no faith.

You see, the intent of James is to make sure that those who say they are a Christian – he wants them to examine themselves to see if the faith they have is a counterfeit faith or if it is indeed a saving faith.

Because if it is a counterfeit faith – they are walking around thinking they are saved – but in reality they are not.

We have to recall that the epistle was written to the converted Jews who resided in Jerusalem.

Because of their Jewish background, they were used to following a list of do's and don'ts.

But when they found grace, in Jesus Christ – many of them thought that they could like their lives any way they wanted - **after all, they claimed to have faith.**

So James provides an illustration to make his point.

[Jas 2:15-16 NKJV] 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

The example that James is bringing up here is a person who is truly in need – this person doesn't possess the basic necessities.

If you opened up the pantry in their home – if they had one – it would most likely be empty.

They don't know when their next meal is going to be.

They don't have the clothing that will keep them warm.

This is not an individual who is asking for help because they might shut off their cable or the cell phone plan.

This person is really in need.

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?

I had you make a note of the phrase – one of you.

Because this illustration is being directed at each one of us.

If we encountered someone who was really in need – and our response was to simply offer comforting words without responding to their needs – even though we may have the means to meet their needs, James says – what good is that?

James is not advocating that we give money to everyone who stands outside the local Circle K who wants a handout – we should use discernment.

What James is saying is that when we come across someone who is in need – like the individual in his example, those that have Jesus Christ in their hearts – those who have saving faith, they will naturally provide for them out of the same compassion and mercy that God showed them.

They are not doing it out of guilt or doing it to somehow earn God's favor – their doing it because they have saving faith.

Turn with me to the gospel of Matthew 25,

[Mat 25:31-46 NKJV] 31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides [his] sheep from the goats. 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

In the last two verses, we see the grace of God.

Jesus speaks of those blessed of my Father as those who will inherit the kingdom of God.

But look what happens as they respond to the grace of God. Keep in mind that Jesus is the one who speaking here.

35 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 'I [was] naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed [You], or thirsty and give [You] drink? 38 'When did we see You a stranger and take [You] in, or naked and clothe [You]? 39 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did [it] to Me.' 41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do [it] to one of the least of these, you did not do [it] to Me.' 46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

[Jas 2:17 NKJV] 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

The great theologian John Calvin wrote,

It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone."

A faith without works is a dead faith.

However, a living faith produces works.

Three times in these last few verse, James will remind us that faith without works is dead.

If we really believe something, we'll follow through and act on it.

If we truly put our trust and faith in Jesus, our behavior will be altered to conform to that belief.

[Jas 2:18 NKJV] 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.

James challenges those who think works aren't essential to faith – and says, "How are you going to make your faith manifest apart from works?"

Where is the evidence of your faith?

"I can show you my faith in Christ by the fruit of my life."

"But how are you going to show me your faith in Christ apart from works?"

[Jas 2:19-20 NKJV] 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?

In James' day, most of the world believed that there were many "gods".

The Greeks had many gods and when the Romans defeated the Greeks, they simply adopted the Greek gods and changed their names.

However, it was the Jew who was different, believing that there was only One God.

[Deu 6:4 NKJV] 4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD [is] one!

But here James is trying to say that while it's a good thing to believe in One God - mere belief of the fact that there is just one God isn't enough.

Many people believe in God – and they think that simply because they believe in God that somehow that is going to translate into eternal life in heaven.

You ask someone if they believe that they are going to heaven – there response - yes because I believe in God. Is that enough???

And the answer is No - Because demons believe in God – they have faith in God – and get this, their faith is not simply an intellectual one, they actually demonstrate emotion in their faith as they tremble.

What is needed is a a true living faith in Jesus Christ – a faith that can be seen,

[Jas 2:20 NKJV] 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

James is attempting to teach an important doctrinal truth – that faith without works is dead

The issue is whether the person who claims to have faith without works – does that person really want to know the truth.

And James is going to provide two Old Testament examples to make his point.

He is going to use Abraham and Rahab.

You could not find two more different persons!

Abraham was a Jew; Rahab was a Gentile.

Abraham was a godly man, but Rahab was a sinful woman, she was a harlot.

Abraham was the friend of God, while Rahab belonged to the enemies of God.

What did they have in common?

Both exercised saving faith in God.

In other words, the evidence of their faith was displayed by their works.

[Jas 2:21-24 NKJV] 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.

In order to understand the first illustration of James, turn with me to Genesis 15,

[Gen 15:1-6 NKJV] 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I [am] your shield, your exceedingly great reward." 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house [is] Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 And behold, the word of the LORD [came] to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

Now, the word accounted is a legal or financial term; it means "to put to one's account."

As a sinner, Abraham's spiritual bankbook was empty. He was bankrupt! But he trusted God, and God put righteous on Abraham's account.

Abraham did not work for this righteousness; he received it as a gift from God.

Abraham was declared righteous by faith.

He was justified by faith at that moment.

What evidence do we have that Abraham was justified???

[Gen 22:6-12 NKJV] 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid [it] on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where [is] the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only [son], from Me."

The account of Abraham taking Isaac to the top of Mt. Moriah and walking in obedience to the Word of God - that is the evidence that Abraham had been justified by faith back in Genesis 15.

It is important to note that Abraham was not justified by faith + works.

He was justified by a faith that works – an active faith – not a dead faith, a saving faith.

Abraham was not saved by obeying God's difficult command.

His obedience proved that he already was justified or saved.

[Jas 2:25 NKJV] 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent [them] out another way?

When the spies came into Jericho, they had an encounter with Rahab.

Instead of turning them over, she hid them so that they wouldn't be captured.

Rahab tells the spies that the people have lost the will to fight because for forty years, as the Children of Israel wandered the wilderness, they heard everything that God had done on their behalf.

She declared her faith by declaring that Yahweh, He is God in heaven above and on earth.

And asked that when they conquered Jericho, if they would show grace to her father's house.

Rahab had faith, and the evidence of her faith was that she hid them and then helped them escape.

As a result she was saved by a faith that works.

Just like Abraham.

[Jas 2:26 NKJV] 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James argues that faith without works is a useless, unproductive and fruitless faith.

Just as a dead body can't be productive, neither can one's faith be of value when one does not carry out good works.

Faith that does not produce works is like a lifeless body.. which is incapable of doing anything!

A corpse that does not have the breath of life within its frame and cannot perform any actions - and in the same way a man that has faith in God but does not produce good works is as useless as a human body devoid of a human spirit, and has no practical value.

God began a good work in each one of us when we were saved BY faith, in order for us to DO good works for His glory!

As Christians we are the product of God's workmanship. He made us alive in Christ Jesus, by faith... for works - for the specific purpose of doing good deeds, "which God has already prepared for us to do"

May we work the works of God for His greater purpose and glory.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.