

"Living Faith or Dead Faith?"**James 2:14-26****Part 1**

Introduction: Today in our study of the book of James we have come to a section that has caused quite a great deal of controversy among many Bible teachers. Within this section we have come to we are able to see into the heart of James and also we are able to see God's concern for people.

I have said this before but I need to say it again: when Jesus spoke the words of the Sermon on the Mount James was in the crowd and he was listening very intently. There were several points which really left an impression within his mind but there was one point which Jesus touched on that stayed with James and it caused within him a major concern. Let me show you some verses from the Sermon on the Mount which James never forgot.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Within these verses Jesus revealed that when the Day of Judgment comes there will be MANY who will think they are going to enter into heaven but they will find that their faith was not a saving faith.

The point to be made is a point that I have shared with you before: there is a difference between religion and salvation. Jesus was concerned with people being deceived by thinking they were saved when the Truth is they are only religious.

James heard this and he also had the very same concern and that is exactly what he is going to address in the verses that are before us.

Before we get into these verses however let me show you that this concern was also with Paul.

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

There are many people who are deceived and they think they are saved but really they are not.

Illustration: When I was in VBS many years ago as a little boy. I said a prayer but I did not understand the cross and that Jesus died for me to pay for my sins. I said that prayer and my life never changed as a matter of fact I plunged deep into sin when as I grew older. It was not until I sat under the teaching of the Bible that I was convicted and came to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior.

Let me show you a verse that many people misunderstand.

Romans 10:13

¹³ *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

I hear this verse quoted many times and people say all we need to do is to call on the Lord and we will be saved. Let me explain this verse with a real life experience if I can.

Illustration:

Years ago I was in the ocean with Penny and Katie and we were at the Outterbanks. While we were enjoying the water we got caught in a very strong rip current and we were all pulled out into water that was far too deep to stand in. We had one boogie board on which we all 3 held onto. Now there was not a lifeguard close but if there had been I would have called out for help. Several things became clear to me in that situation:

1. We were in serious trouble.
2. We were helpless.
3. We wanted out of the danger.
4. We needed someone to rescue us.

I was ready to cry out at the top of my voice to a lifeguard.

That is what it means to call on the name of the Lord. His name means Savior and to call on His name is to realize 4 points:

1. You are in serious trouble because of sin.

2. You are helpless to save yourself.
3. You no longer want to be a servant of sin.
4. You need Jesus Christ to rescue you.

Let me now ask a question, "How can I know if I am saved or not?" This is exactly what James is going to explain to us in this passage. But before we look at what James says let me show you two verses:

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God,

Paul tells us that when we are saved our lives will be changed. James is going to show us how our lives change.

I. The Principle

Notice James 2:14

James opens this section with a question. Can faith without works save a sinner?

Now let me explain that James is not saying that we are saved by faith plus works. Paul made that clear in his writings.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

James is simply saying that when we have a True saving faith it will manifest itself in works. Paul actually said the very same thing.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Now let me explain how Paul and James are working together. They are standing back to back fighting separate opponents. Paul is fighting against works salvation and James is fighting against easy believeism.

II. The Illustration

Notice James 2:15

Here James considers a person who professes to have compassion and he or she crosses paths with someone who has needs at the time they meet.

They need food and clothing NOW. They are a brother or sister in the Lord.

Illustration:

Uncle Floyd.

Notice James 2:16

If the one who professes to have compassion does not help the one in need then his compassion is dead. He has no compassion because if he did he would have done something. None of us can argue that point. Compassion without action is no compassion at all.

III. The Reasoning

Notice James 2:17

Here James brings the illustration right back to faith. He makes it very clear that faith without works is dead. In other words it is not a saving faith.

Ryrie says this:

"A workless faith is a worthless faith".

I want to stop here and consider what James is talking about when he refers to "works".

Let me take you back to the Sermon on the Mount again and look at the words of Jesus.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I have underlined 2 important points within these verses.

1. **Jesus says it is those who do the will of the Father who will get to heaven.**

This is another way to describe those who are obedient to the word of God.

2. **Jesus refers to those who are not saved as those who work iniquity.**

This is the opposite of those who "do the will of the Father". These people's lives have never changed. They have continued to live in their sinful practices. They professed to be saved but there was never any change in their lives.

Let me show you what Jesus said a few verses deeper into the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Here Jesus says that the person who practices what Jesus had said will be like a man with his house built upon the rock. But the one who does not practice His Word is like a man with his house built upon the sand.

The point which Jesus is making is that when a person is saved they will be obedient to His Word.

John said the very same thing.

1 John 2:3-6

³ *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

⁴ *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

⁵ *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

⁶ *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

This is the very same thing that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Notice James 2:19

I have spoke with several people over the years who actually believe that if they believe in God that when they die they will be accepted by Him into heaven. This verse tells us that the devils believe in God but we know they are not saved. They even fear God and tremble.

Mark 1:23-24

²³ *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,*

²⁴ *Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*

Notice James 2:20

Faith without works is dead. In other words it is not a saving faith.

Conclusion:

Is your faith real? Has the faith which you profess to have changed your life? Does it produce good works?

Revelation 20:11-13

¹¹ *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.