

The Book of James Part 6 – James 2:20-26

Our study in the book of James continues today in chapter 2. If you remember, the last time we left off with verse 19. Today, we're going to pick up with verse 20. But let's go back and review a couple of verses because verses 17-19 actually tie into what we're studying today.

In James 2:17-18, it says:

¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

And we saw last time that faith without works is lifeless, is what James is speaking of here in verse 17. Yes, a man could say, "You have faith, but I have works," according to verse 18. A man could say, "Let me see your faith without your works," in verse 18. A man could say, "You will see my faith by my works," verse 18.

And then in verse 19, it says:

¹⁹Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

I believe James is saying here that it's good that you believe in your head that there is a God, but is that enough? He goes on to say demons also know about God, and the evidence of their belief is uncontrollable shaking. In other words, that's what this word "tremble" means in verse 19.

It's not enough simply to know about Jesus Christ, about God, but you must have Him within your heart. You must ask Him to come in and save you. The devils, the demons, know there's a God, but that's not enough to save.

You must believe that He is able to save and that you want to trust Him as your Savior. And, of course, we know that demons and devils cannot be saved. They chose to follow the devil some time ago.

And then, we pick up with James 2:20. Let's read through verse 23.

²⁰But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²²Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

In verse 20, we're seeing here that faith without works is lifeless. In man's sight, it's worthless, but in God's sight, that's what a man is justified by... or a woman. He talks about Abraham in verse 21. Abraham was justified. Was he made sinless by works, according to verse 21? No.

Then we look at verse 22. It says see that faith wrought is made complete by works. In the sight of man, that is true. But in the sight of God, it's not true. And notice verse 23, a Scripture was fulfilled there. It says,

²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith....

The Scripture fulfilled; Abraham believed God, according to that verse.

And then we see that righteousness was imputed or righteousness was bestowed upon Abraham. Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him according to Genesis 22:2-3. This is after

he believed God in Genesis 15:6, not before. Then righteousness came. This is complete, lacking nothing, according to the Word of God. Notice Genesis 15:6 says,

⁶And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

In Genesis 22:2-3 says:

²And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. ³And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Abraham did as God said. But what happened because Abraham took his son Isaac to offer him? He wasn't saved by the act, or the works, but he received blessings because of his obedience or his work. Genesis 22:17 says:

¹⁷That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

Romans 4:6 says:

⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without work.

Righteousness imputed. One man has said this: "God made a swap." Actually, the correct term is "imputation." He imputed our sin to Christ and His righteousness to us.

We are saved by faith through grace. It's not of ourselves, according to Ephesians 2:8-9. And James is not telling us here that we are saved by works. He's telling us that man sees the

works. That's our testimony to the men and women of this world that God sees the heart.

Now notice with me James 2:24-26. James goes on to say:

²⁴Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

The key here is "ye see." Man sees. Verse 25 continues:

²⁵Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

We're seeing here that God is saying you see then Abraham was justified by works, not by faith only, in verse 24. Man, "ye see," man sees the outward. God sees the inward.

Now, when we get to the section of Scripture that talks about Rahab, it says was Rahab justified by works in the sight of man? Yes. But in the sight of God, no. In Hebrews 11:31, it says:

*³¹By faith the harlot Rahab perished not... Notice the words there "by faith..." *the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.**

And note this. Some translate "harlot" here in Hebrews 11:31 as innkeeper. If you go back to the book of Joshua 2:8-11, it says:

*⁸And before they were laid down, she came up... This is speaking of Rahab... *she came up unto them upon the roof; ⁹And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side**

Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. ¹¹And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

So you see, even Rahab believed God. She believed. They had heard. And that's just like people today who hear about God. They hear the Word of God and they trust the Lord to save them. They ask Jesus to come into their heart. They're saved, not by works. The Bible says in Titus 3:5 that it's not by works of righteousness which we have done but it's according to His mercy that He has saved us.

Now, as we look on, the body is not a live body if it does not have breath, according to James 2:26. Let's read that again.

²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Faith is not a living faith if there is no activity, if there is no works. In other words, once again, let me remind you that James is speaking of what man sees. To a man, if a saved person does not do anything for the Lord, that person who is looking on sees no works, so therefore, there is no life within that person who is supposed to be doing works for the Lord.

Now, the verses in James chapter 2 about works teach that man sees, in verse 24, and can only see other men as justified by God through visible or outward manifestations, and that's works.

Let's be clear. A person is not saved by works, doing something to earn salvation. A person can only be saved by and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I've already quoted Titus 3:5.

First Peter 1:18-19 says this:

¹⁸For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

James is not saying a person is saved by faith and works. What he is saying is that our faith is made visible to this lost and dying world as we are actively working, serving our Lord because we are saved. We cannot work for God if we are not saved. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God, according to Isaiah 64:6. It says:

⁶But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses [...that means works...] are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

There are many more verses that we could cite today in Romans 8:5, 8-9, that says:

⁵For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

⁸So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

In Acts 16:31, the Bible says:

³¹And they said, [...This is speaking to the Philippian jailer...] And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And I think of that grand old hymn, "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow." May we never forget Jesus paid it all.

It's been good being with you today. Next time, we'll pick up with James chapter 3. Let me invite you to look at our Website today,

www.LRWM.org. On the Website, you'll be able to download all of the lessons that we're going through in the book of James, and you can download transcripts, as well.

May the Lord bless you and keep you until the next time. If you've never trusted Christ as your Savior, may you do so this day. Ask Him to come into your heart.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you.