

# **"Justification by Faith Alone, Part One"**

## **James 2:8-16**

**June 14, 2009**  
**by C.W. Powell**

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (Jas 2:8-16 AV)

We must remember that James is written for the people of God for their direction as they live in this world. He begins by encouraging us concerning trials and tribulations, for that is our portion in this world, not in the world to come. They teach us patience, which is needed for our journey through this world.

Although we are in this world, we are to seek our wisdom from God. But in order to receive wisdom from God, we must be single-minded, for the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, darting from this thing to another thing. This is also too much our condition in the world and a single-minded man is an unusual thing to find in this world, especially once who is fixed on Jesus Christ.

But this single-mindedness both humbles the rich, and elevates the poor, for both will receive the crown of life after he endures temptations. God has promised this crown of life to those who love him. It is single-minded love for Christ that elevates the poor and debases the rich. The poor who complain about their lot, and the rich who glory in their riches are both in love with the world and not in love with Christ, for the things of the world have nothing to do with the love of Christ. Christ's treasures cannot be purchased with silver and gold. Both the rich and the poor need to abandon their love of the world and seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Or as Solomon put it: Pr 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. Pr 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

The greatest treasure of all is the very life of God which He gives to the people of God. This is described in James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Both rich and poor partake of this great gift of God, begotten of God unto eternal life, promised a crown of life to those who love Him as the greatest treasure of all.

We are therefore to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The fighting and the wars that men engage in is basically over the stuff. Somebody has more stuff and somebody else wants it. This theme will also be developed later in James and tied to wisdom and faith, but that is a later sermon. The important thing is to look into the perfect law of liberty, see our natural face, and not to forget what we look like. Those who have seen their face in the law of God will keep their mouth's shut, for religion that does not bridle the tongue is self-deceived. True religion does not consist in gathering stuff and condemning others, but consists in serving the weak and living holy lives. Thus we have the summary of chapter one.

Therefore, it is a great sin to prefer the rich to the poor in the church and we are given a summary of the law, the law of our king: Jas 2:8 "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." That brings us to our text: vs. 8-16 which we will exposit as follows:

I. The law of God requires perfect and complete obedience in all details if we expect to be judged by it.

A. James does not give us any wiggle room at all. Vs. 10-12. I hinted at this last week, but will say more now.

1. James is saying exactly what Paul said in Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

2. Paul was simply repeating the law: De 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

3. Paul and James were repeating the words of Christ in Matthew 5

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall

break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

B. There is absolutely no difference between what the law said, what Paul said, what James said, and what Jesus said. They all say that the requires absolute and perfect obedience.

C. No partial obedience will be accepted in place of what the law requires. We are commanded to preach, to teach, to do [verse 12]. This is exactly what Jesus said, 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

D. Because of this: There is nobody great in the kingdom of God, except Jesus Christ, for He is the only one who ever did this. He himself spoke thus:

"But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." (Lu 17:7-10 AV)

E. Remember this: when you judge people on the basis of the law, then you also condemn yourself, for you also lie under the law of liberty. Verse 13 applies to all of us: Jas 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. This leads us to the words of Christ:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

F. If you cannot show mercy in your judgment, then you will receive no mercy.

This is wisdom as you go through this world. We are not to render final judgment on anyone, but that which is fitting for our time and place under the sun.

II. True faith, therefore, on the earth, is not lived before God, but before men. God does not have to have any demonstration.

A. Christianity lived on the earth is not in terms of empty abstractions, but concretely and specifically. Illustrations:

1. Profession love for God is empty if we do not love our brother. 1Jo 4:20  
If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

2. Profession of compassion for our neighbor is empty if not accompanied by works.

a) If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16  
And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

b) It is like speaking in church:

(1) Use words people can understand. God doesn't need language, but people do.

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

(2) You don't go to church to please yourself; but to edify the church, for your gifts are given to you to edify the church, not yourself. 1Cor 14:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal--[bring together] to profit the church.

3. True faith, then, must have legs on the earth, or it is worthless, as far as the world is concerned. Vs. 14

a) That is, the profession of faith is worthless. "If a man say" Faith cannot be separated from works, but we can speak of empty professions of faith. And the faith is an empty profession is it doesn't have works.

b) It is not faith at all, and men are justified in counting it as empty and vain, for it is.

c) It is insincere, not honest, hypocritical, and worthy of being branded as such.

d) James is going to illustrate living faith by two concrete examples: Abraham and Rahab, to examples as far apart as can be imagined. Abraham, the father of the faithful; and Rahab, the harlot. Neither offered up to God works in order to be justified, but the faith by which they were justified did bring forth fruit in their lives, as we will see.

## Conclusion and Application

1. Faith can only come from the engrafted word. Something outside ourselves is grafted into our very life. Illustration: the red delicious apple comes only from grafts. In fact, all apples that you see in the store come from grafts; as do walnuts and many other fruits.

2. Reason: seedlings in fruit trees are not controlled and bring great variety in results, most of them of inferior taste and quality.

3. We have to have new life engrafted into us, if we are to have good fruit. True faith is a graft of the image of Christ into our natural stock. Only the graft survives the resurrection, and the old tree with completely pass away, and Adam's stock will no long afflict us.

4. The old stock cannot produce good fruit, but will produce wrath, strife, sedition...etc., mostly sins of the tongue, as we will see later in this book. In Christ we learn to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. We stop blaming and judging others, look to our own natural face in the royal law of liberty: for it shows us clearly our natural face, the face of our father Adam, and it is not a pretty sight. The law does not show us our new face in Christ, that we find in Christ alone, but we see our sins and misery in the royal law.

5. The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ does not result in respect of persons; nor unrighteous judgment, nor is it devoid of works, for if we are in Christ our life comes from Him and our faith is alive.

6. If we are not connected to Christ, but cut off from the vine, whatever we call or pretend to be faith, is not faith at all, but a dead limb worthy to be cut off and

burned in the fire as Jesus said in John 15. I am the vine, ye are the branches, He said. Without me ye can do nothing.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.