

1 ACTIONS: THE BAROMETER OF JUSTIFICATION

JAMES 2:14-22

2 QUICK REVIEW

- In the last message from James, he explained to us that true saving faith cannot coexist with racism or favoritism.
 - Christ's love is extended to all mankind and we all come from a common ancestry. (Racism is an evolutionary principle.)
 - Favoritism is not consistent with the mercy of God that is available to all mankind.
- Now James says that true saving faith cannot exist without manifesting itself in godly acts.
 - James is combatting the self-justifying speech used to avoid godly acts – especially toward those with whom we are not socially compatible

3 CONFUSION OVER PAUL VS JAMES

- Martin Luther said that James should not be part of the Scriptural canon because he believed James taught that justification was by works rather than the grace of Christ.
- But James himself says just the opposite!
 - *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness," and he was called God's friend. (James 2:23, LEB)*
 - James clearly states that Abraham simply trusted in Jehovah and God credited him with righteousness. Why was Abraham made righteous? Because He received God's grace through an act of faith.

4 WORKS AUTHENTICATE OUR FAITH

- Genuine faith is authenticated by godly works.
 - *What good is it for a man to say, 'I have faith,' if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? (v. 14, TEV).*
 - The kind of faith that is content to utter pious phrases and ignore the destitute, as one example, is "dead" (vv. 15–20).
- A genuine faith is one that is actively at work.
 - Paul said the works of the law could never save a man.
 - James says that works of faith are proof of salvation.
 - Abraham's faith was not an empty profession but a principle of action (vv. 21–24).
 - The same is true for even a prostitute, like Rahab (vv. 25–26). Just as Abraham showed his faith by his willingness to offer Isaac, so Rahab showed her faith by aiding the spies.
 - Faith and works cannot exist separately and alone. They must go together.

5 JAMES BELIEVES IN A FAITH THAT CHANGES YOU

- When you grab hold of an electrical wire with current, it changes your behavior!
- When you truly repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior (vs. going through the motions or putting on an act), it changes your behavior forever.

6 PAUL AND JAMES DIFFERED IN THEIR USE OF "WORKS"

- Paul used "works" to refer to religious acts (works of the law) and rituals that *could not provide justification before God.*
 - *...He saved us, not by deeds of righteousness that we have done, but because of his mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5, LEB)*

- *"It [salvation] is not from works, so that no one can boast."* (Ephesians 2:9, LEB)
- *For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them."* (Galatians 3:10, LEB)
- James uses "works" to refer to godly acts visible before men which provide evidence of a true inner relationship with Christ

7 **WHAT JAMES MEANS WHEN HE SAYS "WORKS"**

- James was concerned with the demonstration of faith in Jesus through works of mercy.
 - James illustrates partiality with the unequal treatment of a rich man and a person who is destitute
 - Here he refers to a brother or sister in the Lord – a fellow Christian – in need of financial assistance for basic essentials
 - The specific works to which James refers as giving evidence of true salvation are works of mercy – meeting basic needs, sharing the Gospel, providing life assistance, showing care and concern with more than words

8 **YOUR FAITH IS ON TRIAL**

- James recognizes that when we claim faith in Christ, that claim is instantly put on trial by people around us.
 - God does not have to try our faith; He already knows the reality of what is in our hearts
 - But how do people know? They must look for evidence of faith in our lives. They cannot see our heart, so they must look for a change in behavior and evidence of godly character that results from a changed life.
- Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? What evidence do you provide that your faith in Christ is real?

9 **WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH**

- Those who receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord demonstrate acts of mercy and love toward others.
 - Only God is able to save. Only those who do the Word make valid claims to be believers.
 - God will not show mercy in the judgment to those who have been unmerciful.
- But neither profession of faith nor deeds of faith actually "save" anyone; only God saves.
- It is thus much more advisable to emphasize what James emphasized: faith without deeds is good to no one.
 - He was not implying that the deeds of faith are effective for salvation.
 - Rather, the deeds of faith demonstrate the validity of the claim to be a believer; without them the claim is empty or "dead"

10 **A CHALLENGE TO ALL OF US**

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (James 2:18, LEB)

- You and I are incapable of seeing faith. God can see our faith because He alone can see our hearts.
- But people can only see the outward manifestations of our faith. In other words, if we have REAL saving dynamic faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, it produces a visible change in our behavior and demeanor that others can witness.
- Now James will prove his point with 2 different witnesses.

11 **EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE...**

- Even demons have belief in Christ (verse 19).
 - They know who He is.
 - They tremble at His presence, and they fear Him.
- Clearly, however, belief is not enough to save us.
 - We can all mentally assent to the facts of the Gospel.
 - And we might even feel emotionally stirred at hearing what Christ has done for us. But without a transaction of faith in which we receive Jesus Christ, nothing of eternal benefit has occurred.
- The only proof that anything has changed our lives is if there is a corresponding change in the outward manifestation of our beliefs – that is, our actions.

12 **ACTIONS ARE THE BAROMETER OF OUR JUSTIFICATION**

- You cannot see barometric pressure changes
 - But when the barometric pressure rises or falls, mercury moves up and down in a glass so that a meteorologist can determine if a cold front is moving into the area or if rain is likely.
- My joints hurt and muscles ache with 100% accuracy when rain is on the way -- even though Google and Amazon Alexa are still saying it is all sunshine.
 - It is the effect of the barometric pressure change on my nerves. It is the evidence that rain is coming and it is real.
 - Works are the evidence of faith made real so that others can see the effect of faith in our lives.

13 **JAMES INTRODUCES TWO VARIED WITNESSES**

1 Abraham

2 • Revered patriarch

- Jew
- Man
- Gave perfect obedience to God’s command to offer up his son
- Ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ
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3 Rahab

4 • Redeemed prostitute (“innkeeper”)

- Gentile -- a Canaanite
- Woman
- Gave an imperfect response to her faith by hiding spies (OK) and lying to government authorities (not OK)
- Ancestress of King David and Jesus Christ

14 **THE 1ST WITNESS: ABRAHAM**

HE PREPARED TO OFFER HIS SON AS A SACRIFICE TO GOD -- GENESIS 22

15 **JAMES 2:20-24**

But do you want to know, O foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was working together with his works, and by the works the faith was perfected. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:20–24, LEB)

16 **THE CRUX OF THE ARGUMENT ... AGAIN**

- Paul argued for the priority of faith.
 - He believed that only faith could save a person and that the works of the law were useless to do so since none of us could keep those works of the law properly.
- James argued for the proof of faith.
 - Like Paul, he believed that only true faith in Jesus Christ accompanied by repentance and a receiving of Christ the Savior could produce salvation.
 - But he argued that the only way to prove that your faith is real is for others to see the change that Christ makes throughout your life in its relationships and your behavior.
- Jesus Himself said that words are not enough. The Pharisees had the correct words but lacked the proof of accompanying actions.
 - *They answered and said to him, "Abraham is our father!" Jesus said to them, "If you are children of Abraham, do the deeds of Abraham!"* (John 8:39, LEB)

17 **PAUL'S ARGUMENT ON ABRAHAM**

- *What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness." Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited according to grace, but according to his due. But to the one who does not work, but who believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness* (Romans 4:1–5, LEB)
 - Quotes Genesis 15:6 showing Abraham was declared righteous by faith.
 - This statement occurs before Abraham's circumcision in Genesis 17:11. In other words, Abraham was declared righteous before there were any accompanying religious rituals or works of the law.

18 **JAMES' ARGUMENT ON ABRAHAM**

- *****WHILE FAITH IS THE BASIS FOR JUSTIFICATION, WORKS ARE THE BAROMETER OF JUSTIFICATION*****
- James explains that Abraham's faith was evident in his practice of the sacrifice of Isaac
 - James states that Abraham was justified or declared righteous before mankind when he demonstrated his faith by being willing to offer up his only son in obedience to God's instructions.
 - It is important to note that God only let Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac go far enough to demonstrate Abraham's willingness to obey in a way that we can still visualize today.
 - He did not, however let Abraham slay his son because that would have violated God's own standards of righteousness. And it would also miss the fact that on that very same mountain, God would offer up Jesus Christ as the only fitting sacrifice for our sins.

19 **THE HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE OF FIRST OCCURRENCE**

And it happened that after these things, God tested Abraham. And he said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Take your son, your only child, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains where I will tell you." And Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey. And he took two of his servants with him, and Isaac his son. And he chopped wood for a burnt offering. And he got up and went to the place which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and he saw the place at a distance. And Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go

up there. We will worship, then we will return to you.” (Genesis 22:1–5, LEB)

- Worship = giving to God what is dearest to us
- Worship = yielding to God our rights, our dreams, our future to trust in His will

20 THE ANSWER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH

- *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and placed it on Isaac his son. And he took the fire in his hand and the knife, and the two of them went together.*
- *And Isaac said to Abraham his father, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” (Genesis 22:6–8, LEB)*
- *And Abraham called the name of that place “Yahweh will provide [JEHOVAH-JIREH]” for which reason it is said today, “on the mountain of Yahweh it shall be provided.” (Genesis 22:14, LEB)*

21 THE DEMONSTRATION OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH

- *And the two of them went together. And they came to the place that God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood. Then he bound Isaac his son and placed him on the altar atop the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.*
 - Might there have been a demonstration of Isaac's faith here too?
 - After all, he did allow himself to be placed on the altar and bound by an old man. Isaac would have had no problems fighting off his father physically.
- Just what did Abraham believe that day?
 - *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered Isaac, and the one who received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, with reference to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants will be named,” having reasoned that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which he received him back also as a symbol. (Hebrews 11:17–19, LEB)*
 - Did Abraham explain that belief to Isaac?

22 LET'S GET TOGETHER

- Paul -- Abraham was justified by faith
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- James -- Abraham was justified by faith, evidenced by what he did

23 THE 2ND WITNESS: RAHAB

SHE HID THE SPIES AND LIED TO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES -- JOSHUA 2

24 JAMES 2:25

- *And likewise was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? (James 2:25, LEB)*
 - “Prostitute” -- many women were sold into prostitution by the age of 10 in ancient times
 - Some Hebrew commentaries refer to her as an “innkeeper” rather than a prostitute.
 - What were her actions that James cites as evidence of her faith?
 - Welcomed the spies of Israel
 - Sent them home by a different route than they came
 - No commendation here or elsewhere of her lying to government authorities

25 RAHAB HIDES THE SPIES AND LIES TO CITY OFFICIALS

- *Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two men from Acacia Grove as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and*

spent the night there. The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some men from the Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." And the king of Jericho sent for Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who came to you, the ones who have entered your house, for they have come to search out the whole land." But the woman took the two men and hid them.

- *And she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when it was time to shut the gate for the night, the men left, and I do not know where they went. Chase after them quickly, for you may catch up to them." (But she had taken them to the roof and had hidden them in the stalks of flax that she had spread out on the roof.) So the men chased after them on the way to the Jordan at the fords; and they shut the gate behind the pursuers that had gone out after them. Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof (Joshua 2:1–8, LEB)*

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26 RAHAB EXPRESSES HER BELIEF IN GOD

... and said to the men, "I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away in fear because of your presence. For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you went out from Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. We heard this, and our hearts melted, and no courage was left in anyone because of your presence. For Yahweh your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth below. (Joshua 2:9–11, LEB)

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27 RAHAB ASKS MERCY FOR HER FAMILY

- *So then please swear to me by Yahweh, because I have shown loyalty to you, and you will also show loyalty to my family. You must give me a sign of good faith, and you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all that belongs to them; you will deliver our lives from death."*
- *And the men said to her, "Our lives for yours. If you do not report this business of ours, we will show you loyalty and faithfulness when Yahweh gives us the land." Then she lowered them with a rope through the window, as her house was on the outer side of the wall, and she was residing in the wall. And she said to them, "Go to the mountain, so that the pursuers will not find you, and hide yourselves there three days until the pursuers return, and afterward you may go on your way." (Joshua 2:12–16, LEB)*

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28 THE SPIES KEEP THEIR PROMISE

- *So the people shouted, and they blew on the trumpets. And when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell flat. The people charged, each one straight ahead into the city, and they captured it. And they utterly destroyed by the edge of the sword all who were in the city, both men and women, young and old, ox, sheep, and donkey.*
- *Then Joshua said to the two men who spied on the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, just as you swore to her." So the young men who were spies went and brought Rahab and her father and mother, her brothers, and all who were with her. And they brought all her family out and set them outside the camp of Israel. (Joshua 6:20–23, LEB)*

29 RAHAB IN THE HALL OF FAITH

- *By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she welcomed the spies in peace. (Hebrews 11:31, LEB)*

- Ancestress of King David and Jesus Christ
 - *and Salmon became the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz became the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed became the father of Jesse, (Matthew 1:5, LEB)*
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30 **WAS IT RIGHT FOR RAHAB TO LIE TO CITY AUTHORITIES?**

- The 10 Commandments make it clear that we are not to bear false witness. Lying is a sin.
 - Nowhere in Scripture does it justify Rahab's lying as being okay under the circumstances. God accepts no such justification.
- Rahab knew that Yahweh would conquer Jericho and she believed that He was the only true God.
 - She responded to her faith by protecting Joshua's spies. There was nothing wrong with hiding the spies, but it was wrong for her to lie to city authorities.
 - The fact of the matter is that God is fully capable of blinding the eyes of the authorities to the spies. He blinded the eyes of those in Sodom and Gomorrah. He blinded the eyes of people in Egypt.
- Rahab's response was imperfect, but her imperfect actions demonstrate that she had faith in the God of Israel.

31 **A PROBLEM WITH EXAGGERATION**

- A woman said to her pastor, "I'm deeply troubled about a problem I know is hurting my testimony: I exaggerate. I always seem to enlarge a story until it's all distorted. People know they can't trust me. Can you help me?"
- The minister said, "Let's talk to the Lord about it." She began to pray, "O God, Thou knowest I have a tendency to exaggerate." At this point the preacher interrupted, "Call it lying, ma'am, and you may get over it!" The woman began to weep, because she knew he was right. She had been trying to make "lying" acceptable, and her excuse-making had made praying about it nearly impossible.
- All of us are prone to cover up our sins by giving them polite names. Bad temper is said to be "nerves" or "righteous indignation," untruthfulness is labeled "harmless exaggeration," and dishonesty is dignified by calling it "good business." To grow in grace, we must put aside all rationalizing and get to the heart of the problem. The blood of Jesus does not apply to excuses, but it has the power to cleanse any sin.

32 **THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER**

- Faith and deeds are as essential to each other as the body and the spirit.
 - Apart from (*chōris*) the spirit, or the "breath" (*pneumatōs*) of life, the body is dead.
 - Apart from (*chōris*) the evidence of works, faith may be deemed dead. It is not the real thing. True faith continually contributes to spiritual growth and development.
- In context:
 - Not only is a believer to stand confidently on God's Word even in the midst of trials and temptations (chap. 1), but also he must serve his brothers and sisters in Christ (chap. 2).
 - He is to accept all members of God's family without favoritism (vv. 1–13) and to aid the family with a working faith (vv. 14–26).
 - To gain spiritual maturity a believer must be what God wants him to be and do what God wants him to do.

33 **TIME TO DISCERN**

- Our own condition
 - Are we just mouthing the words of faith? Or does our life reflect our faith in Christ and our

belief in His promises?

- The condition of others
 - Many around us might make claims that they are going to heaven?
 - Do they really know WHY God would let them into heaven?
 - Does their life bear any evidence that you can see that they have been changed by Jesus Christ?
 - We are not to be judging, but we do need to practice discernment. Perhaps we need to encourage others to truly examine the reality of their own faith.