

Reconciling James and Paul

Epistle of James

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 2, the second chapter of the epistle of James. We move into a new section. This morning we will be looking at verses 14 to 26 of James 2. The title of the message this morning is "Reconciling James and Paul?" Reconciling James and Paul? Do we need to? That's why the question mark is there. How do we? Reconciling James and Paul?

The teaching of James 2:14-26, the passage we are about to read, is a passage that has caused some controversy through the centuries. Some have stumbled over it. The great theologian and reformer, Martin Luther, was one of those who had some difficulty with this text in particular and because of that the epistle of James in general, though that is overblown by critics and made way too much out of by Roman Catholic apologists. They don't take Luther in context. For instance, just one fact, in his first translation of the Greek New Testament into German in 1522, he had an introduction to the New Testament in which he referred to, in 1522, right after the Reformation has begun, he referred to the epistle of James as an epistle of straw. In every subsequent copy of the German New Testament, every new edition of the German New Testament, Luther edited that out. He never again said that the epistle of James was the epistle of straw. He still had some problems with it, he was working through it because of this particular passage, and you know, everyone has the areas they struggle in and when you think about where Luther had come from, how far he had to go, how far he was in the dark, it's not surprising that there are some areas where he didn't yet come into the light as we would hope or like. But were we in his position, we might have a very different perspective on his failings.

The fact is he was a man mightily used of God and the Reformation that he started in 1517, we come up on the 500th anniversary. Next month, October 31, 1517, was the day that the German monk, Martin Luther, nailed to the castle church door in Wittenberg Germany 95 theses or statements of protest. He titled it "A Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences." He wanted to start a dialogue with that dialogue really was the beginning of the Reformation, the Protestant Reformation. He had no idea what God was setting into motion with that one event. We praise God for it, though, as we recovered in the Gospel the clarion cry of the Reformation was faith alone, sola fide, the five solas of Reformation that are a summary of the doctrine of salvation. Sola fide, faith alone. Sola

gratia, grace alone. Solus Christus, in Christ alone. Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone. Sola Deo gloria, to God alone be the glory. And that is the summary of the Gospel. Faith alone is a great summary of the way of salvation. How is a sinner made right in the sight of a holy God? How can people like us conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, how can we be made right with a holy God? The answer that the New Testament teaches is by faith alone. That's a great summary of it and that's essentially what Paul says in Romans, makes really clear also in Galatians, but it is clear throughout the New Testament. It is clear in the teaching of Jesus.

Now, we come to a passage, though, that on the surface of it appears to contradict that and when we read it afresh having just given you that reminder of Reformation doctrine, you will hear it, you will see it. And I just want to say right up front: of course God's word does not contradict itself. As Paul wrote to Timothy, God who cannot lie. He cannot say one thing and then another and those things be true contradictions. They are only apparent contradictions. The keyword "apparent."

Now, listen to the text and you will see why Luther struggled and we are going to try to work through that this morning. Verse 14 of James 2,

14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and tremble. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, as we come to your word, we acknowledge again our complete dependence upon you. Lord, we are of yesterday and we know nothing. Who are we as fallen men, even if we weren't fallen we couldn't measure your perfections and your glory, and yet in our fallenness and the darkening of our minds, we know that we are unable, so we come asking that you by your Spirit through your word might give us light, that the opening of

your word would give light and in your light we might see light. For the glory of your Son, we pray in his name. Amen.

Reconciling James and Paul. As we read the text, you saw the apparent contradiction. Three times in the passage James says "justified by works." In fact the first point and we are going to consider this, I'm basically doing an overview of the section dealing with the big question about the apparent contradiction and so the title of the message "Reconciling James with Paul?" We are going to go back next week and begin to work through the passage more carefully. I want to look at the big picture so that we don't lose the forest for the trees and I have six points this morning that are really observations.

The first is there is an apparent contradiction between the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul regarding justification. There is an apparent contradiction between the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul regarding justification. Now, the doctrine of justification that James mentioned several times saying "justified, righteousness," it's the same root word in Greek, the doctrine of justification answers the question how do sinners become right or righteous before a holy God. That's the issue with which the doctrine of justification deals. How can sinners be made right with a holy God? How are sinners declared righteous in the sight of a holy God? Three times in the passage, I mentioned, James says "justified by works." Verse 21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" Verse 25, another example, "In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works?" In verse 24, he makes the statement that seems directly to just run right into what Paul was teaching in the Reformation doctrine. He says in verse 24, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." Now, you can see why people could stumble over that. It definitely appears to be contradictory.

So that's the first observation. We need to acknowledge there is an apparent contradiction between the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul regarding justification. That's the first point. We just concluded that. Now, the second point is this: in Scripture there are a number of apparent contradictions but no real contradictions. In Scripture there are a number of apparent contradictions which are not real true contradictions. Let me just give you a few examples. We could spend a lot of time working through the myriad number of apparent contradictions that are not real contradictions by any stretch of the imagination.

The first is that the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that God is one and the Bible teaches that God is three. That is an apparent contradiction, is it not? It seems like a real contradiction, doesn't it, when you first look at it? That's why it's an apparent contradiction. It really does look like one. Deuteronomy 6:4, one of the key verses that every Jewish child would learn to recite, the Shema which is the Hebrew word for "hear." "Hear, O Israel! The LORD your God, the LORD is one!" That was one of the first verses they memorized. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD your God, the LORD is one!" He is one God. But in the New Testament, now there is some anticipation of this in the Old Testament too, Genesis 1, "Let Us make man in Our image. In the image of God He made them." Do you see that? There is some anticipations of it but in the New Testament we find out that the one God exist in three persons. We find out that the Father is God. The New Testament makes that clear. The New Testament also makes clear that the Son,

Jesus, is God. And the New Testament also makes clear that the Holy Spirit is God. So this apparent contradiction is reconciled in this way: by taking all of Scripture into account you see that God, there is one God but that one God exists in three persons. That is the way to understand the Bible. That is the only right way to understand the Bible regarding the teaching of the nature of God. Those who deny the deity of the Son, deny the Son and, therefore, they will not be saved. If you deny the Son, you dishonor the Son, you dishonor the Father.

That's one of the apparent contradictions. Another, so the second point, we are still on the second point: in Scripture there are a number of apparent contradictions which are not real contradictions. The second would be divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The mystery of election that those who are saved are saved by the unconditional election of God. The Bible clearly teaches that but it also teaches that men are completely responsible for deciding for Christ and that if they don't, they go to hell because they did not believe, they did not repent. So it teaches the absolute sovereignty of God and the absolute responsibility of men. That is an apparent contradiction but when you work through the doctrines carefully, you see that there is no real contradiction there, that those who truly believe do believe of their own volition after God has chosen them and given them a new heart. It's a mystery you have to work through in Scripture. Some of you are probably still working through that. Just keep reading your Bible.

A third, the full deity of Christ and yet the subordination of the Son to the Father. It is related to the doctrine of the Trinity. The fact that Jesus is fully God and yet he is subordinate to the Father in the carrying out of God's will. He says things like, "The Son does nothing of His own initiative, only what the Father tells Him to do." But we believe that Scripture teaches both of those things but they are apparent contradictions. How can he be subordinate and fully God? This is where Jehovah's Witnesses stumble. They misread the Bible. They fail to read the Bible carefully.

Now those are three contradictions. I could multiply them. I mean, the full humanity of Christ and the full deity of Christ. The two natures in one person. You see, it's the nature of Scripture. The Bible is the word of man 100% and it's the word of God 100%. Is it the word of man or the word of God? Yes. Every word of it. So we maintain a number of these, what J. I. Packer called antinomies. An antinomy, according to Packer, he defines this really clearly in his excellent book, "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God." He explains that an antinomy, theologically speaking, it is that when two things appear to be contradictory seem to be completely contradictory are both maintained independently of each other and therefore both must be true. Like I just shared with you, those are antinomies. Antinomy comes from two Greek words, anti nomos. Antinomy. Nomos is the word for law. Anti, against. Against law. It seems to be impossible and yet it's not. And I gave you three examples of antinomies just a moment ago.

So that's the second: in Scripture there are a number of apparent contradictions which are not real contradictions. Third observation, third point this morning: we should not be surprised that there are a number of apparent contradictions in Scripture. And this just takes a moment just to stop and pause for a minute. Is it not actually completely

reasonable and logical that when the infinite God who spoke the universe into being by the word of his power, he is upholding all things, who is and was and is to come, is it not surprising that when the infinite God stoops down to speak to human beings that we would find in our finite minds his infinite truth to be at times more than we can handle? Isn't that the most logical thing in the world? Absolutely it is. Only a fool, a prideful fool would think that we should be able to measure God by our own minds. Now, the world is filled with prideful fools and we were those too, but it's just completely reasonable that there would be these antinomies, or apparent contradictions, in Scripture.

So we've said there are apparent contradictions between the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul regarding justification. That was our first statement. Our second was: in Scripture there are a number of apparent contradictions but no real contradictions. And thirdly we said: we should not be surprised that there are apparent contradictions in Scripture. Now fourth point, it's really a question: how are we to deal with these apparent contradictions? How do you approach them? Two principles. The first is there cannot be a real contradiction because, as I said earlier, God cannot lie. Two plus two cannot equal four and five. God shows himself to be a God of truth. He is continually talking about his truthfulness, the fact that you can, and the word for "truth" in the Old Testament, *amen*, is a word which means "solid and foundational; that you can rest on it." His truth is not changing, his truth is eternal. His word must be accomplished. His word must be true. So that's one of the first things, there cannot really be a real contradiction by definition.

Secondly, though, the way that we really approach it is we carefully study and humbly consider all that the word of God has to say. There is something that Luther, a doctrine that he taught which is so important here, called the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith, and that is the idea that Scripture interprets Scripture. That is where Scripture is less clear, you interpret the less clear by the more clear. This is really true in just the way you read any letter or document. You understand somebody's meaning when it is a little fuzzier by looking at it and putting it in context. "Oh, this is what they meant. When you look at it in context, he meant this. He didn't mean that." It's exactly the same way with the word of God. Scripture interprets Scripture and so that the faithful believe that God is true and keep studying his word and keep listening humbly, prayerfully, but studying diligently. "Lord, I don't understand this. Help me. But I am attending to your word. I'm trying to understand what you are saying here. I'm trying to understand how this fits into the larger scope of this passage, the larger scope of this book, the larger scope of the entire Bible." And as you study like that, it begins to become clear how these things fit together.

Let's just take a couple of examples. I mentioned the doctrine of the Trinity, well, Deuteronomy 6:4 makes the point that God is one. As I said, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD your God, the LORD is one!" That was an emphasis in the Old Testament, repeatedly hammered home that God is one. Though there were some interesting adumbrations or anticipations that there was a plurality in God as I mentioned in Genesis 1, "Let Us make man in Our image" also in Genesis 11, "Let Us go down at the Tower of Babel." Genesis 1, the name for God that is used throughout the whole Bible is the name Elohim. When you see capital G-O-D in your Bible, that's the name Elohim, God. But in the Hebrew,

they actually every single occurrence of that is actually a plural form of the word God. It actually literally if you just translate the word Elohim out of context by itself, it would be Gods. Gods. Now what is happening? Well, when you interpret it in context you see that every one of those plural verbs are used, plural nouns, Gods, are used with singular verbs. Gods is, basically, not Gods are. We don't have that much, person and number don't go quite the same way in English as clearly by changing the verb form, but in other languages you change it based on the singular versus plural, first, second and third person continually. We just have, "I hit. You hit. They hit. We hit." Hit never changed. But in Hebrew, hit would change and it would change and every time it would change, every time it would be used with Gods, it would be a singular. So it's saying that the true God is one yet there is some interesting plurality about him. It should have caused them to ponder. But the emphasis of the Old Testament is he is one, he is one, he is one, he is one. Why? Because in the context they were in, if he had revealed his threeness right off the bat, they would have been polytheists. Everybody around them was. "Oh, we just have three gods." No, you have one God but this one God is a glorious God who exists in three-persons, in a communion of love, the beauty of the Trinity.

So Scripture interprets Scripture. The way you come to that understanding is you let all of Scripture speak. You don't ignore large passages of Scripture or other portions of Scripture. You bring everything to the table. This is a very important principle. In fact, this idea, I heard an illustration one time that I think is very helpful. Any doctrine, if you want to understand any teaching of Scripture about a particular subject, the way that you should understand that biblically is to bring everything that the Bible teaches to bear on that discussion because God is revealing things in different places of his perfect truth and there are balancing truths in Scripture.

The illustration was this. Imagine you're trying to make a decision and you have a board room full of people who are all going to contribute to the decision. So what is your doctrine of marriage, for instance? Well, if you really want a biblical doctrine of marriage, what you need to do is bring into your board room around your conference table every passage of God that speaks about marriage. You don't leave any out. You bring in Genesis 1:26 and 27, man in his image, male and female. You bring in Genesis 2, it wasn't good for man to be alone, verses 18 to 25. You bring in Malachi about the permanence of marriage. You bring in all of it. I mean, all kinds of passages you would bring in. You would certainly bring in Ephesians 5:22 to 33, don't you? And all of those passages come into the room and they must all speak and all be heard if we believe that this book is truly the word of God, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, all Scripture is God breathed. All that is written is breathed out by God so all of it must be heard. So that's what we do on the doctrine of the Trinity, we hear all that the Bible says. The Unitarians ignore all, those who believe that there is just one God and Jesus isn't God and the Holy Spirit isn't God, they ignore vast numbers of passages. We need to hear all of them.

I mentioned earlier another one of those antinomies is the full deity of Christ in subordination of Christ to the Father. This would be, you could restate it by saying that the Bible teaches that we believe the Bible teaches that Jesus is equal to the Father in being and glory but he is subordinate to the Father in role and function. Equal in being

and glory but subordinate in role and function. Verses like John 14:28, Jesus says, "The Father is greater than I," but in that same chapter, in chapter 14 of John verse 8, he says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." In John 10:30, he says, "I and the Father are one." Remember when we preached through John for a number of years, we worked through a number of Jesus' "I am" sayings where he is basically claiming to be Jehovah or Yahweh when he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me. Before Abraham was, I am." We look at all of those passages and we come out with a right understanding. Jesus is truly God. He is Yahweh. He is Jehovah. But he also is one of the persons of the Trinity and he does take the Father's word and will as his direction.

We were talking about this, we have been talking about this recently in our men's Bible study on Friday mornings. We have a couple of men's studies on Saturday that are working through Colossians, taught by one of our elders, Jack, and then Fridays we gather out there for a systematic theology study. We are working through Wayne Grudem's systematic text and we have been looking at the section the last two weeks on the deity of Christ, the full deity of Christ, what the Bible teaches about that. So we were talking in Bible study on Friday morning about that and this particular issue, that he is fully God and he even talked about the subordination of roles, that that doesn't negate what the Bible is teaching about his full deity; that in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, Colossians; that he is the radiance of his glory and an exact representation of his nature, Hebrews 1:3.

So we were talking about that and I happened to mention, you know, for about a year I had one Jehovah's Witness guy that kept coming back to my house and we would have discussions. So I shared that and I was sharing, one thing I really wish I had thought to say to him when we were having our discussions was this, about the reality that you guys assume that because Jesus is taking a role of subordination in function and his role is to do the Father's will, you assume that means that because the Father is in a position of authority over him, that he is somehow less in being than the Father. And I said I wish I had been able to say to him, "Do you believe that children should obey their parents? Do you believe that the husband is the head of the wife and in certain areas the husband has the final authority and that needs to be seen?" I think he would have agreed to that. He wasn't politically correct enough to reject that. So I would have said, "Okay, do you believe, then, that your wife is an inferior being to you? Has less value than you? Do you believe that your children have less value than you? Do you believe because you have to do what the policeman says that he is of greater value, intrinsic value than you, a greater being? Of course not. We have the same being and value but a different role and function. Why do you insist to make this crazy inference about Christ? Read John again with that."

So I shared that and on Fridays I usually study at home so after Bible study I had a meeting or two and I head back home and around 10 o'clock, two Jehovah's Witnesses show up at my house and I walked to the door and I thought they might be but I was thinking, you know, sometimes you can sort of tell, you can tell Mormons, there are usually two guys and there are some bikes parked out front, and Jehovah's Witnesses, there are certain tendencies. But it's two ladies and so I was able just to throw that one out

at them. "Do you believe these things?" And sometimes it's not the one you are talking to, it's the one that is there with her, and I felt like when I made that statement about why would you assume that from that, that he's a lesser being, I felt like I saw something flicker in her eye. So I'm praying for that young lady that God will bring her to faith in Christ, saving faith, and she will stop dishonoring the Son.

But you see, it's looking at all of Scripture. That's how we come to that. In fact, the fifth observation, the fourth observation I just finished was: how are we to deal with the apparent contradictions and we said let Scripture interpret Scripture. The fifth point is: the mark of heretics. The mark of heretics, the unmistakable mark of heretics is that they ignore the other side of the antinomy. They ignore portions of Scripture. You could say it another way: the mark of heretics is they take Scripture out of context, often wield Scripture, and sometimes impressively. I mean, you might not want to go into a memory verse battle with your average Jehovah's Witness. They've got a lot of Scripture memorized, many of them. But the mark of heretics is that they ignore large portions of Scripture. They ignore the context. What they are really doing, maybe not fully consciously but this is what they are really doing before God, is they are suppressing the truth. They are holding down parts of the truth in unrighteousness.

They are ignoring, the Jehovah's Witnesses are ignoring the teachings that are clear about Jesus being God. I mean, as you read through, as I said the Gospel of John, that man that I mentioned, I told him, I was preaching through John when he came along too. I was preaching through John for a while so that was good. I was always preaching through John every time he came and I kept encouraging him, "If you just read the Gospel of John, how can you believe that Jesus is not fully God?" He said to me, "If you read the Gospel of John, how can you believe that he is God?" So I took him to passages, "Before Abraham was, I am." Finally he ended up by showing me in Matthew's Gospel, I think chapter 23, how certain people can interpret the Bible and certain people can't and you are not one, Ty, basically is what he was saying. I am one of the chosen, you're not, so it doesn't matter what you think about this text.

So I was grieved for him. We parted ways and he didn't come back but the reality is that they are ignoring things like in John's Gospel, John 5, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath. After he heals a man, the people are all upset because he healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees are upset because he healed on the Sabbath and so they are making kind of an uproar about that and, "Why did you do this on the Sabbath?" And Jesus says this, "My Father is working and I am working." The text says the Jews understood, it's not exactly the wording but this is basically it, the Jews understood that he was making a claim that because he said God was his Father, he was claiming to be equal with God. That's what the text says so they have to say the Jews were just wrong on that, even. Or the Jews were wrong in John 8:58 when he said, "Before Abraham was, I am." If Jesus had been a Jehovah's Witness, he would have said, "Before Abraham was, I was." That is, Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus was like the first created being so he wasn't in the beginning. He is not the I am but he is, he was. But Jesus is not a Jehovah's Witness and he didn't say that. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am," alluding to Exodus 3:14 where Moses said, "What is Your name? When I go to them, what am I to tell the people who sent me?" And

he said, "You shall say to them I AM WHO I AM sent you. Tell them that I am sent you. That is My name." That's basically the name Yahweh is, I am. It's the third person singular of the Hebrew verb for I am, a state of being, really he is, but God uses it in terms of first person, I am. I am Jehovah. I am Yahweh. Jehovah is basically a different way of saying the same word. In Hebrew it's Yahweh.

So they suppress these passages. They don't let them into the conference room. No, you are ruled out of order. You are ruled out of order, we are going to focus on this. That's the path to hell. You do not suppress the truth. You let God's word speak and you submit to it. That's the mark of humility that marks the believer. He submits to the word of God. It's hard but you humble yourself and realize that, "Lord, you must teach me. I'm not going to tell you who you are." And the same thing is true in Roman Catholicism. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They want to take James 2 and run with that and ignore Romans 3:28 and so many other verses, but Romans 3:28 Paul says, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works." Paul says, "This is the Gospel. We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works." Now what I'm going to say is let that into the room and let James into the room too. Let them both in. Let everybody around the table and let's work through this.

That's the path to truth and, again, it makes perfect sense because we're talking about infinite truth, we're talking about nuanced ideas that are very difficult to comprehend and so the Lord has a way of getting balancing portions and balancing principles in different places that when you look at them in light of the whole, you walk along the knife edge that is faithfulness to God. But the mark of heretics is they ignore so much of Scripture. This is what Satan does. Satan knows the Bible. Remember, he quoted to Jesus Scripture. He quoted it pretty well, actually. I mean, he quoted it perfectly as far as just reciting it but he made a valid point. He takes Jesus up on the pinnacle of the temple and he says, "If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down for it is written He will give his angels charge concerning You and they will bear You up in their hands lest You strike Your foot against a stone." He quoted from Psalm 91 accurately and with a ring of truth. I mean, surely God is protecting his Messiah. But Jesus said, "It is also written," something else has to be brought into the room, and he quotes from Deuteronomy, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." That's how you avoid the traps of the enemy, "It is written. It is written." That's how Jesus lived, the man Christ Jesus, who is fully God but lived a perfect life, full humanity, dependence upon God, looking to the word. The mark of heretics is they ignore and suppress much of the truth.

Now number six, the last point: reconciling James and Paul? The title of the message. So looking at the text, we know James writes by the Holy Spirit, Paul writes by the Holy Spirit, they are both passages breathed out by God according to 2 Timothy 3:16. So this is only an apparent contradiction. How does that work out? Well, what Paul teaches I mentioned earlier, he teaches in Romans 3 and the book of Romans is an explication of his Gospel and the Gospel of salvation, the clearest in all of Scripture, the fullest because he had never been to Rome, he was giving them his whole message essentially. When he wrote Romans, he had not been there yet and almost all of his epistles, Paul is writing to people to whom he formerly preached. Think about that. I've already been there, I spent

three months, six months, two years somewhere. He didn't have to just start from point A. He is reminding them, hitting the highlights. But in Romans, he is giving them his whole Gospel, that's why it's 16 chapters and that's why it's such a full and precise explication of the Gospel. God in his infinite wisdom gives us that book that way.

In Romans 3:28 he says we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works. This was one Luther latched onto, faith apart from works, cut off from works, and Paul continues to unfold that and cites Abraham as an example. Genesis 8:4, what did our father Abraham find how a man is made right with God? This is the question he is dealing with. In Genesis 15:6 we read, Paul basically says this, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." It's interesting, James quotes that same verse. They both believe that verse was canonical. They are both appealing to it. Paul is saying it was at the moment of faith that Abraham was justified by God. The moment that he placed his faith in the promise of God, the moment that he stopped looking at himself and looked outside of himself to God in his grace, for we believe that salvation ultimately is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

So Paul is teaching that, Ephesians 2:8 and 9, in fact, turn to Ephesians 2. The Apostle Paul, elaborating on salvation, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." That is, we are saved, we are justified not on the basis of works but on the basis of faith. The passage that Jess read earlier, Philippians 3. Hold your place in Ephesians 2 and we are going to come back to it in a second but look at Philippians 3:9, Paul says, this is Philippians 3:9, that I "may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Well, hold your place there and we are going to come back to there too. So we are going to go back and forth between Ephesians and Philippians for a moment.

Ephesians 2, we read you are saved through faith, by grace through faith not as a result of works. But look at what Paul says in verse 10, after he says not as a result of works so that no one may boast, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." He is saying that you are not saved on the basis of works but you are saved unto works; that once you are saved by grace through faith looking completely to the promise of God, not yourself, not what you offer, once you are saved, now you are to work. He basically says faith works. In fact, the equation that has often been said and I think it's helpful, that the Roman Catholic doctrine and basically every other false Christian doctrine is something, some order of this: faith plus works equals salvation. That's the equation that they offer. That's a false equation. That's not biblical. Faith plus works equals salvation. That's the false equation. The true equation according to Paul is: faith equals salvation plus works. Do you see that, putting works on the other side of the equation? Faith and faith alone on this side of the equation equals salvation, but if faith on this side was really alone and it really laid hold of the promises, salvation is not alone, there will be works. That's what he's teaching. That's what he's teaching in Ephesians 2:10.

Look back to Philippians 3. Paul is making clear, "Listen, I used to be a Pharisee. I was trying to be approved through the law," but in verse 9, "I now know that I have a righteousness that is not derived from the law but that which is through faith in Christ. That's how I become right with God. That's how I have been justified." The same word. But look what he says in verse 16, "however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained." Now that we are saved, live by the standard. It matters how you live, Paul says. Not to be accepted but because you are accepted. Look at verse 17, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Look at those who are walking like we are. He doesn't say believing like we are, he says walking like we are. He of course means believing like we are but he says you can also recognize about watch how they walk, watch how they live, watch what they do. Verse 18, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." These are people that profess to be believers, he says, but they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul with tears says this about them and how do you know that they are enemies of the cross of Christ? Look at verse 19, "whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." That's the works of the people who truly have not savingly believed.

Now go back to James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." He is saying the question is do you have a living faith or a dead faith? If your faith is really alive, it won't be alone. That is, your salvation will not remain alone. You can't be saved and not have works. You can't be saved by faith alone and then continue with faith alone. Do you see what I'm saying? If you are saved by faith alone, your faith that saves you will not remain alone. It will be accompanied by works, evidences of grace. Jesus said you will know them by their fruits. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, neither can a bad tree produce good fruit.

So when he's saying, "Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his son, on the altar?" He's saying, look, what you see there is the working out of the faith because he brings up where Abraham was saved was in verse 23. He said, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." That's Genesis 15:6. That's when Abraham was 85 years old. He received the promise and he believed and he was reckoned as righteous, that is, he was justified, he was declared righteous. This is what Paul points out in Romans 4. This is the moment of salvation. Genesis 22 is what Abraham is talking about, sorry, what James is talking about in verse 21. He's talking about Genesis 22 which happened more like 25 years after Genesis 15. He is saved by faith and faith alone but a saving faith will manifest itself in works of holiness. So when God told him to offer up his son, he confirmed his faith in God by his action. His deed confirmed and stamped the approval, yes, he has saving faith. That's what James is saying and if you had James and Paul in the room together and they taught through this, we had them together, that's exactly what they would end up saying. "Of course that's what I'm saying. Are you crazy? You think I'm saying that you are saved by works? Of course not. That's what our whole misunderstanding of the Old Testament was all about, the Pharisees and all of that." Like Peter says in Acts 15 when they are talking about, and they were wrestling in the early church with how exactly all this fits together,

sure, but God gave us a perfect record in his word. Peter says, they are talking about should they make the Gentiles follow dietary laws, be circumcised and all this, and Peter says, "Why should we make these disciples bear a yoke that our fathers nor we could bear?" We are not justified by works like that, works of law, works of legalistic...no, we are justified by faith but faith works. That's essentially the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul.

It's the teaching of Jesus. In his first sermon recorded fully in the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, he begins his sermon with essentially the idea of justification by faith alone when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Oh, how happy are you when you realize that you have absolutely nothing, that you are absolutely destitute before God." The word he uses for "poor" is the word not of a person who lives hand to mouth, kind of scraping a living, but who is poor but who is making it. No, this is a person who is reduced to beggary. No hope in themselves. "Blessed are you when you, oh how happy are you when you are poor in spirit because yours is the kingdom of heaven." The way to get to heaven is to become poor in spirit, mourning over sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. It's all there in the Gospel but it starts with that absolute poverty of spirit. Or as Jesus taught in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, remember? After he says the Pharisee said, "Lord, thank you that I am not like other people. Thank you that I tithe. Thank you that I fast." Who was he even talking to? And the publican beside him over a distance is not able to look at heaven but he beat his breast and says to God, "Have mercy on me, the sinner." Jesus says, "I tell you, that man was justified before God." He's not offering up a resume. He's not offering up works. He's saying, "I am completely hopeless and helpless." That is the genesis, the starting point of salvation.

Now when that has really happened, that's what he starts off with, Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But then in verse 16 he says, the same chapter, a little further in the sermon, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The teaching of Jesus, the teaching of Paul, the teaching of James, it just takes some careful examination and humble study, prayerful, dependent examination of what God says. God does not contradict himself and what you end up with is James coming at us and hitting us from the other side, kind of the other side of the antinomy and sort of chasing us back away from a kind of a presumptuous presuming on grace. Because I am saved, I can live however I want to live. James says, no you cannot. Paul actually says it too but James just says it a little more loudly and more forcefully. Why? Because he was dealing with that particular issue in the wisdom of God when he wrote his letter. Paul keeps us more or less, though I said he says both, he is more or less saying from the other side, "Don't trust in your works. Don't trust in yourself. Look to Christ. Put all of your hope in Jesus." They are both essentially saying the same thing and God in his perfect wisdom knew we needed to hear both of them.

So the issue of antinomy, do we need to reconcile James and Paul? I love what Charles Spurgeon said one time. He was asked one time, "Mr. Spurgeon," he was a noted Calvinist in the nineteenth century England, the Prince of Preachers he was called, one of

the great preachers of all time, but he was harassed and looked down on because he was very conservative theologically and believed in the doctrine of divine sovereignty in salvation, election. He was asked one time, "Mr. Spurgeon, how do you reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility?" He said, "Reconcile them? Why in the world would I attempt to reconcile them? There is no need to reconcile friends." They are not an enemy. They are not enemies, they are telling us two things that are absolutely complementary. At times we just can't measure exactly how it fits together but God affirms both are true. They are both true of the glorious God that we serve, therefore, there is harmony and beauty. Don't try to make it fit in ways and hammer square pegs in round holes. Just keep studying and looking and let God let it fall into place in his time, in his way.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the perfection of your truth that you have given us in Scripture a perfect revelation of your heart and your will, your character, the way of salvation, and you have done it in human language, you have done it through different men and different life circumstances writing to different groups of people who had different challenges, and yet you have given us in the canon of Scripture a perfect and complete revelation, all that we need for life and godliness. We praise and honor you. We ask you, Lord, to give us more faith. We confess that we are so often men and women of little faith. Help us, Lord. But thank you that you can because of the greatness and power of your truth, that faith as a mustard seed can move mountains. Thank you that it's not so much the size of our faith as it is the beauty and power and efficacy of the God who has spoken and whose word will accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. Lord, help us be people who glory only in Christ Jesus, who rest completely in him for salvation, not trusting in our own works but glorying in all that he has done, his finished work, his perfect record of righteousness, his complete satisfaction for sins, complete and total payment for every sin of everyone who would ever believe committed past, present or future. Father, thank you for the testifying of the perfection of his sacrifice by raising him from the dead. And Father, we ask that you would help us to out of the gratitude and joy and wonder of our salvation, to live more and more holy and godly lives. Help us pass the brief time of our lives in reverence and awe because you are holy and you have called us to be holy. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.