

James 2:14-26

REVIEW...

- In light of the purpose of trials – to teach us to abide in Jesus...
 - In light of our LACK of wisdom – and the dangers of deceptive temptations...
 - Because we have a FATHER of LIGHTS who wants us to bear fruit!
 - We should be – IMPERATIVE – swift to hear but slow to speak...
 - Be DOERS – IMPERATIVE - of the Word and not hearers only...
 - Known by our PURE religion – filled with love for others!
- That love plays out in our life as having NO PARTIALITY...
 - Rather than PARTIALITY – we are to fulfill the Royal Law!
 - The Law of the King according to the Bible is – LOVE your neighbor as yourself...
 - But if we show PARTIALITY – which is the opposite of love - we will end up stumbling people!
 - Therefore – SPEAK and DO as those who will be judged by the law of LIBERTY...
 - For those who judge without MERCY – will be judged without MERCY...
 - But Mercy Triumphs over Judgement!

FAITH THAT WORKS...

- 1ST – VERBAL FAITH... vs. 14 -18
 - 1st – Faith verses works...
 - The key...
 - FAITH – the substance of things hoped for – evidence of things not see – **Hebrews 11:1**
 - FAITH – apart from which it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God - **Hebrews 11:6**
 - FAITH in Jesus - the KEY that unlocks the FREE gift of SALVATION to us...
 - **Ephesians 2:8-9** – “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works [same word], lest anyone should boast.”
 - The commands...
 - James has spent the better part of TWO chapters telling us HOW to live our lives in Christ...
 - He has already given us 15 COMMANDS [imperatives] in regard to our walk...
 - But with all these TO DOs the natural question becomes – where does FAITH come in...
 - Is it enough to just have FAITH [πίστις] – or must we also have WORKS [ἔργον]!
 - The controversy...
 - It is worth mentioning that this passage is by FAR the most controversial in James...
 - Martin Luther – the Protestant reformer – famously tore this passage out of his Bible...
 - Because what James is about to argue is that we must have FAITH and WORKS!
 - Which on the surface is a direct contradiction of the writings of the Apostle Paul!
 - **Romans 3:28** – “Man is justified by faith apart from the works [same word] of the law.”
 - But what we are going to find is that these truths are not independent of each other...
 - To the contrary – they are immutable TRUTHS that weave together in beautiful harmony!
 - 2nd – Are words enough... vs. 14
 - Can words save...
 - What does it profit - my brethren - if someone says he has faith...
 - But does not have works - can faith save him!
 - James first tackles the value of VERBAL FAITH – what if I SAY I believe in Jesus...
 - Is it enough just to SAY the words – can [δύναμαι] that kind of FAITH save!
 - A powerful question – if we raise our hands at an altar call – say a prayer...
 - If we make a confession of FAITH in Jesus – are we SAVED!

- The obvious answer is YES – the Bible says just that – there is nothing we have to DO!
- **Romans 10:9** – “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
- ONLY having VERBAL FAITH...
 - The key word here is ONLY – if all we have to hold onto is we SAID we believe...
 - James argues that is NOT enough – words on their own CANNOT save!
 - To illustrate this he gives us the example of someone who is in NEED!
- o 3rd – EMPTY words... vs. 15-16
 - Naked and Hungry...
 - If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food...
 - And one of you says to them - depart in peace - be warmed and filled...
 - But you do not give them the things which are needed for the body - what does it profit!
 - The illustration being we see someone who has NEED...
 - If we just SAY - DEPART in peace / be WARMED / FILLED [imperatives]...
 - The suggestion being - we have FAITH it will happen – we commanded it to!
 - As a side note - there is a movement in Christianity called the Word of Faith...
 - Teaching if we only have enough FAITH – and SPEAK it - God has to do what we say...
 - This flows into what is called the PROSPERITY Gospel – God wants to bless us...
 - And the only reason why we are sick / poor – is because we lack FAITH!
 - But the assumption is that God HAS TO do what we tell Him too – heal / provide...
 - Which contradicts the Bible – we are to OBEY God / not instruct Him!
 - **John 14:15** - “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”
 - No POWER...
 - When that person who was in NEED leaves – were our words any help...
 - The obvious conclusion is we did NOTHING – that person went away naked and hungry...
 - There was no POWER in WORDS to change the circumstances of the person in NEED!
 - This has great application for our daily lives – WORDS are NOT enough...
 - We can say all day that we LOVE our wife – or that we RESPECT our husband...
 - We can say that we will obey our parents – or honor our boss...
 - But it is not our words that have an impact – it is our ACTIONS that speak loudest!
- o 4th – DEAD faith... vs 17
 - Words with FAITH...
 - Thus also faith by itself - if it does not have works - is dead!
 - Just as WORDS without ACTION was of no benefit to the man in NEED...
 - So also – FAITH without WORKS [a changed life] has not power to SAVE!
 - If we SAY we are Christians – but are still acting like the world around us - where is Jesus...
 - Our lives after we BELIEVE in Jesus should be DIFFERENT – changed...
 - Do we live in willful SIN - ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our lives...
 - Or are we running to Jesus - not overcome by sin – but seeking His GRACE to transform us!
 - If we are wondering where our walk with the Lord is – we should EXAMINE ourselves!
 - **II Corinthians 13:5** – “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you.”
 - Not to say that we never sin - but we do not practice sin...
 - **I John 3:9** – “Whoever has been born of God does not [continue to] sin...”
 - As believers – if we sin – there should be remorse / confession / repentance...
 - If there is NO remorse – NO repentance for sin – there is good reason for concern...
 - We cannot SAY we are saved and CONTINUE to live in unrepentant SIN!
- o 5th – Faith or works... vs. 18

- One of the other...
 - But someone will [indicative] say - you have faith - and I have works...
 - Show me faith without works - and I will show you faith by works!
 - James anticipates a person might argue - YOU have FAITH – and I have WORKS...
 - The suggestion is that we have DIFFERENT gifts – yours is FAITH and mine is WORKS...
 - Just because they are different does not mean that one or the other is wrong!
- But James begins to paint the inseparable relationship between FAITH and WORKS...
 - He commands [imperative] the person who says this - SHOW their faith without WORKS...
 - In contrast he will SHOW them his FAITH - his BY his Works!
 - If I told you I could fly – the very next thing you would ask is – show me!
 - No amount of words would convince you – unless I took off into the air!
 - In the same way it is IMPOSSIBLE to prove we have FAITH apart from WORKS!
- 2ND – EMOTIONAL FAITH... vs. 19-20
 - o 1ST – Example of demons... vs. 19
 - One God...
 - You believe that there is one God. You do well...
 - If VERBAL FAITH is not enough to save us...
 - What if our FAITH is based on EMOTION – I know in my HEART I am saved...
 - Is it enough to have EMOTIONAL FAITH – I really / truly BELIEVE there is ONE God...
 - BELIEVE [πιστεύω] from the same root word for FAITH...
 - It is NOT enough to ONLY have EMOTIONAL FAITH – without WORKS!
 - DEMONS believe...
 - Even the demons believe - and tremble!
 - DEMONS [δαιμόνιον] – 60x in NT – all but FOUR of the in the Gospels...
 - 1/3 of the angels [stars] rebelled with satan [dragon] against God - **Revelation 12:4**
 - As a result God cast them out of heaven - they were banished to the earth...
 - But there is a final judgment that awaits these fallen angels - **Jude 1:6**
 - When they will be cast into the Lake of Fire prepared for them - **Matthew 25:43**
 - Demons ALSO believe - have FAITH there is ONE God – but they DO NOT have WORKS...
 - They even TREMBLE – have EMOTION in reaction to their FAITH in God...
 - But their EMOTIONAL faith in the ONE God CANNOT save them!
 - I have to admit this is REALY HARD – it means we CANNOT trust our emotions!
 - EMOTION is not enough...
 - Because we can be CONVINCED of something – and still be VERY wrong!
 - Mormons will famously tell you they have the truth – because of the burning heart...
 - Jihadists will willing kill themselves in EMOTIONAL adherence to their FAITH!
 - A moving worship service can make us FEEL closer to God – in spite of our WORKS...
 - Coming to church JUST because it makes us FEEL better – does not change our heart ...
 - EMOTION does not bring clarity to TRUTH – it often conceals it!
 - Our problem is our heart – we are the problem – we are sinners!
 - **Jeremiah 17:9** - “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked...”
 - o 2nd – What to know... vs. 20
 - But do you want to know - O foolish man - that faith without works is dead!
 - For the SECOND time we are told – FAITH without WORKS is DEAD...
 - To those who still refuse to see the connection – they are FOOLISH...
 - Because we KNOW [γινώσκω] – LEARNED – that FAITH cannot live apart from WORKS!
 - We are FOOLS if we hold to VERBAL or EMOTIONAL faith alone – because we are deceived...
 - We have convinced ourselves we are SAVED – when we may not be!

- Which has POWERFUL and SOBERING application for our lives / and those we love...
- It is easy to take comfort that someone is going to heaven – because they SAID a prayer...
- Are assure ourselves that someone we love knows Jesus – because of EMOTION...
- But the TRUTH is we have learned that FAITH must also have WORKS!
- 3RD – TRUE FAITH... vs. 21-26
 - 1st – Father Abraham... vs. 21-24
 - Having laid out failure of VERBAL and EMOTIONAL faith alone...
 - James goes on to give us what TRUE FAITH looks like using THREE examples...
 - The first would be VERY familiar to his Jewish audience – Father Abraham!
 - HOW Faith...
 - Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar...
 - You see [indicative] that faith was working together with his works...
 - And by works faith was made perfect!
 - Abraham was JUSTIFIED - saved by WORKS - when he offered Isaac his son...
 - Not by WORKS alone – but by FAITH working TOGETHER with his WORKS...
 - TOGETHER – [συνεργέω] – cooperation of things to produce a greater combined effect!
 - It was the FAITH of Abraham that worked TOGETHER with his WORKS to justify him...
 - Neither had enough power on their own – he could not WORK for salvation...
 - Neither was his FAITH alone enough – but TOGETHER they justified the Father of Faith!
 - When Abraham offered up of Isaac – it PERFECTED [τελειόω] COMPLETED his faith!
 - We see then that a man is justified by FAITH – that is SEEN through his WORKS!
 - We know a fruit tree is alive – if there is fruit on its branches...
 - In the same way we know there is TRUE FAITH in Jesus – if there is FRUIT...
 - If there is no FRUIT / WORKS coming from a believers life – then there is no FAITH...
 - The FRUIT / WORKS are the proof that the FAITH is TRUE!
 - WHEN faith...
 - Do not miss WHEN the FAITH of ABRAHAM produced good WORKS...
 - **Genesis 15:6** - Abraham was 85 and had no children!
 - God told Abraham his decedents would be – as the stars in the heavens...
 - Just as you cannot count the stars [TEN billion – trillion] so would his children be!
 - Abraham BELIEVED the Lord – and God counted it to him as RIGHTEOUSNESS!
 - **Genesis 22:2** – God told Abraham to offer up his ONLY child as a sacrifice...
 - Abraham was 85 years old when God declared him RIGHTEOUS by FAITH...
 - When he offered up Isaac – WORKS - he was between 115-137!
 - That means there was up to 50 years before the fruit was seen!
 - And the Scripture was fulfilled which says - Abraham believed God...
 - And it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God...
 - You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith on!
 - If we plant a seed – we do not expect to harvest FRUIT a week later!
 - FRUIT takes time to grow and develop – but a healthy tree will ALWAYS bear FRUIT!
 - If we have TRUE FAITH in Jesus – there WILL be good FRUIT coming from our lives...
 - But not all FRUIT is immediate - it might take years for the FRUIT to come out...
 - That should be VERY encouraging to us – because we might ask – where is the FRUIT...
 - When will my husband / wife change and show the FRUIT of their FAITH...
 - The answer is we do not see the heart – but we pray – and wait for FRUIT to come!
 - 2nd – Rahab the harlot... vs. 25
 - Rahab had FAITH...
 - Likewise - was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works...

- When she received the messengers and sent them out another way!
- Rahab had FAITH – she is one of only TWO women mentioned in the Hall of FAITH!
- **Hebrews 11:31** - “By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”
- Rahab was a harlot - she had a VERY sinful and sorted past...
- But she believed - had FAITH in the ONE God of Israel - to save her from judgment!
- Rahab had WORKS...
 - Rahab is listed here WITH Abraham as an example of what FAITH looks like...
 - All of Jericho was TERRIFIED of the ONE God of Israel - but ONLY Rahab was SAVED...
 - She did not just have FAITH in God - she showed her faith by her WORKS...
 - She was willing to RECEIVE and SEND away the spies - and was JUSTIFIED [passive] ...
 - By living out her FAITH with good WORKS – it COMPLETED her FAITH!
- The Genealogy of Jesus Christ - **Matthew 1:5**
 - Rahab would go on to marry Salmon - and have a son named Boaz [married Ruth] ...
 - She would become the great grandmother of King David – a descendant of Jesus!
 - But she was a HARLOT [πόρνη] – porn - in THE genealogy of Jesus!
 - Which tells us that FAITH that WORKS has the power to transform ANYONE!
 - No matter what our PAST - as we have TRUE FAITH in Jesus – it will produce FRUIT...
 - That is the amazing POWER of the Gospel – the ability to make SINNERS into SAINTS!
 - Which means to matter how bad someone might be today – there is hope for tomorrow...
 - When FAITH – in due time – WORKS in their lives to transform them!
 - **Galatians 2:20** - “It is no longer I who live - but Christ lives in me...”
- o 3rd – The body... vs. 26
 - Inseparable...
 - For as the body without the spirit is dead - so faith without works is dead also...
 - There are two possible ways to interpret this final example...
 - If a physical body does not have AIR [πνεῦμα] – then it will DIE...
 - But it could also be - if we do not have the Spirit of God – then we are DEAD...
 - Speaking of our need for the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT to give us SPIRITUAL LIFE!
 - Either way the point is simple – they are inseparable...
 - In the same way FAITH and WORKS are INSEPARABLE – we MUST have FRUIT...
 - We cannot WORK our way into Heaven – James is NOT trying to argue that...
 - But also cannot just think VERBAL / EMOTIONAL FAITH is enough either...
 - TRUE FAITH will ALWAYS produce GOOD WORKS – a life transformed by Jesus!
 - FAITH and WORKS – two sides of the same coin – defining our life Christ!