

I. Introduction

A. Christianity and everything else

1. Salvation is entirely the work of God through Christ, even to our faith as a gift from God and dependent on God
2. So, what's the value of activity? Why work when I can get it for free?
 - a. "In good faith" - the right thing to do because of what God did?
 - b. Characteristic of special or super Christians?
 - c. No value, pointless?

B. Faith and works

1. What is salvation? Forgiveness of sins secured by Jesus' death and Resurrection freely given to and unearned by anyone who will call upon Jesus as Savior and King.
2. What is sanctification? Living out the process of becoming like Jesus over a lifetime.
3. What is the nature of faith and works in the life of the believer?
4. *James has something to say about this.

II. Maturing faith

A. The dilemma (v 14)

1. What good is it if someone claims they have faith but doesn't have any accompanying action?
 - a. "Good" = profitable, beneficial, gain
 - b. "Works" = action, accomplishment, deeds
2. Can that faith save?
 - a. "Save" = deliver from sin and/or judgment; rescue or heal
 - b. *What exactly is James asking here? In order to understand his point, we have to look at what he is saying in the context of the entire passage and the clues we get from the surrounding ones.

B. The hypothetical (vs 15-17)

1. Scenario

- a. A brother/sister habitually underfed, constantly falling short of the daily supply of required needs
- b. Note: James' use of the poor in hypotheticals suggest there was a 1st century church blind spot—a pattern of unchristlike thinking typical in the church.
- c. *For you/me: What are those blind spots or patterns in our church? The Western Church? The Global Church? If the early church had these issues, we most certainly do too.

2. Response

- a. "Depart, go in peace" or "Be warm and well fed"
 - 1) Common statement between believers expressing well wishes and confidence in God's presence and provision

- 2) The form of the statement is not a problem, but the function as a religious cover for the failure to act is.
- b. What "good" is that, how does that profit you or them?
 - 1) Words, no matter how well meant, did not profit the needy person.
 - 2) Failure to act in the presence of obvious needs not only ignores the one in need but also raises questions about the spiritual state of the one who fails to act (salvation; surrender).
 - 3) *In this scenario, that "faith" does nothing for anyone. It is dead (unuseful, inactive, inert).
- C. Objection (vs 18-19)
 1. Where does the quotation end?
 - a. "You have faith, I have works."
 - b. All of 18 & 19?
 - c. Difficulty: no punctuation in the manuscripts and lack of solid agreement among scholars
 - d. *I lean toward all of 18 & 19, just know that it is not the only viable understanding.
 2. The point of the objection
 - a. Comparison of Jesus followers who continually fall and then Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Buddhists
 - b. Good actions don't necessarily reveal correct beliefs.
- D. Rebuttal (vs 20-26)
 1. Faith without works is useless (dead)
 - a. What we do is obedience to what we truly believe.
 - b. Works make our faith profitable and of value.
 2. Abraham (vs 21-24)
 - a. Justified by works vs justified by faith
 - 1) Paul (Galatians 3:6; Romans 4:1-9)

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:1-3)

 - a) *And He brought him outside and said, "Look toward Heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:5-6)*
 - b) Justified as a judicial verdict of innocence of one who has placed trust in Jesus
 - 2) James
 - a) *Genesis 22:11-12 But the angel of the Lord called to him from Heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."*
 - b) Justified

- (1) OT: actual conduct that was foundation toward vindication with the Law
 - (2) Connected to the final judgment (Judgment suggested in 2:12-13 and 3:1)
 - (3) *"Justified" in Paul's writing (after the letter of James) seems to refer to how a person gets into relationship with God while James describes what that relationship must look like as it matures and receives a "well done" at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- b. "Faith was completed" (perfected, finished, matured)
 - 1) Abraham's faith went much further than intellectual accent, it was an active force producing more fruit (works).
 - 2) Abraham's faith reached its intended target of maturity when he acted in obedience to what God asked him to do.
 - 3) *Faith finds its greatest significance and meaning in our life when we obey God. ("Now I know," how else can I get there?)
3. Rahab (vs 25-26) Joshua 2
 - a. Contrast:
 - 1) Abraham: male, Jew, hero
 - 2) Rahab: female, Gentile, obscure
 - 3) *Faith is matured by action no matter who you are.
 - b. "Spirit"
 - 1) Not the Holy Spirit but that which animates the body
 - 2) The spirit energizes the body to be useful; so works energize faith to be more productive and profitable.
4. *Q: Is your faith you claim to have profitable and productive, or is it dead and useless?