



James

The Epistle of Straw?



Recap



- ▶ James, Jesus' brother, was a leader in the early Christian Church in Jerusalem
- ▶ James' letter is difficult to outline, but has many interrelated themes. Each class will discuss one or two of these themes in detail.
- ▶ Last week, we discussed James warning, "Do not show partiality..."



Recap: Show No Partiality

James 1:1–27

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.



What does faith have to do with our relationships?



Faith and Works

Our topic today



This is a confusing topic

- ▶ Our FIRST goal is to figure out what James is saying.
- ▶ After that, we'll try to make sense of it in light of the rest of scripture.
- ▶ So if you have questions, please be patient! I'll try to get to them.
- ▶ But if I don't, please post your question in the comments.



What good is dead faith?

James 2:14–26

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?



What good is dead faith?

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¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.



“What good is it...”

Note: James is talking about usefulness!

Do we expect our faith to be useful,
offering tangible benefits to ourselves and others?

James does!

“¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”

“²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”



James 2:14–26

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.”



Or “ You have works and I have faith!”



Faith and works are inseparable.

James 2:14–26

¹⁸ 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.



Even the demons *believe*...

James 2:14–26

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!



James 2:14–26

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;



Works, works, works

James 2:14–26

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was **working together** with his works, and faith was completed by his works;



Works “complete” faith

James 2:14–26

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was **working together** with his works, and faith was **completed** by his works;



What do we mean by “faith was completed by his works?”

The word “**completed**” can mean a couple different things:

- Perfected
- Finished
- Accomplished

What do we mean by “faith was completed by his works?”

The word “**completed**” can mean a couple different things:

- Perfected
- ~~Finished~~
- Accomplished

So either the faith is **lacking** something apart from works or it only truly **exists** *alongside* works.

“...that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:4)



James 2:14–26

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“Counted to him as righteousness”

James 2:14–26

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Justified *by works*

James 2:14–26

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was **working together** with his works, and faith was **completed** by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.



Dead.

James 2:14–26

²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.



Why Abraham and Rahab?

- These two are also highlighted in Hebrews 11, where they are both examples of faith!
- James points out Abraham offering his son and Rahab's reception and assistance of the messengers.
 - “[Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6)... long before Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.
 - Rahab was a prostitute... and a Gentile. Yet she is a paragon of faith **and** works in James, **just like** Abraham.



What does it mean for someone to be justified by works?

- ▶ Note something James does not say:
“Abraham justified himself...” or “Rahab justified herself...”
- ▶ Abraham and Rahab **were** justified **by** works.
- ▶ Hebrews 11 makes a similar statement:
“¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation.”



Justified by works? Or Faith?

Romans 4:1–3

¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”



Not a result of works

Ephesians 2:8–10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.



Righteousness, Justification, Salvation

- Righteousness \approx Justification
- Justification \neq Salvation
- 2 Kinds of Righteousness
 - Righteousness before God
 - Righteousness before men



James vs. Paul

Righteousness before God & Men

“²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?” (*James 2*)

- James is talking about the second kind of righteousness and **usefulness**.

“² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” (*Rom. 4*)

- Paul is talking about the first kind of righteousness and **merit**.

“⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (*Eph. 2*)

- Here, Paul is talking about the first kind of righteousness and **salvation**.



Discussion Questions

For journaling, calling a friend, discussing with family, and prayer



Who gets the glory for my faith?

Discussion Questions



Does my faith change my life? How?

Discussion Questions



Is there any part of my life over
which God is not allowed to rule?

Discussion Questions



The Tongue

Next Week...