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Works and Salvation in James Chapter Two.

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Works and Salvation in James Chapter Two.

Topics.

- Faith without works is dead.
- Faith apart from works and faith with works.
- Even devils believe and shudder!
- Abraham, was justified by works.
- Rahab the prostitute was justified by works.
- Faith apart from works is dead.

JAMES 2:14-17

Faith without Works is Dead.

- **James 2:14-17:** 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.

James is saying if we pray for a brother or sister who is lacking in warm clothing and has no food and we do not give them any of ours how is our prayer going to protect them from the cold or stop them dying of hunger. He is telling his listeners and by extension all of us that this type prayer of faith is useless if we are not going to help when we are able, he then likens this type of prayer to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by saying that it is dead if there is not some kind of outward evidence that testifies of it. Some religious teacher's use these verses of James to support the theory that Christians are saved to eternal life by faith plus works, but this is not what James is teaching. James in these verses is saying, “If a person professes that they are a Christian there should be some kind of outward works or deeds to evidence it. A great percentage of the world's population say they believe in God but they have no interest in:

- Reading God's word or talking about the things of God.
- Being with other Christians or learning about the Bible.
- Living before the Lord Jesus Christ and spiritually growing in him.

James is speaking about having inward faith without any works that outwardly evidence it. Many people worldwide have this type of false verbal faith they confess to be Christian, but there is nothing in their life that outwardly testifies to it. Jesus expressed this same idea in the following words:

- **Matthew 15:8:** “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;
- **Mark 7:6:** And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

These people are worshipping God in their praises and worship, but it is in vain since their heart is indifferent to the things God truly values. James is not teaching a different Gospel to the rest of the apostles; he is simply highlighting the fact that there should be an outward reality in a Christian's lifestyle that evidences what they inwardly believe. The

expression, "O vain man" refers to any man or woman who gives glory to God with their lips, without any outward works or deeds that evidence the reality of their faith. There will always be some kind of outward action or deed that evidences what a person truly believes on the inside. Genuine inward faith cannot be contained; bound or hidden it will flow from the inside out and manifest itself in some manner. Hebrews chapter eleven commonly known as, "The Hall of Faith" lists Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab the prostitute, Samson, David, the prophets and many others who God commended for their great faith. When we read of their lives, we discover that they all had some outward action or behaviour that evidenced their inward faith. Some accomplished great things through their faith while the faith of others was manifested in their refusal to deny God even though they were mocked, imprisoned, stoned, killed in battle, destitute and afflicted (Heb. 11). For further information on Great Faith see:

- Hebrews 11.
- In Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

James in these verses is shining a brilliant spotlight on how outward works and Christian faith work together. Clearly if we pray for God to bless and provide for a man or woman and we do not offer to help them when it is in our power to do so our faith is dead. James in the previous chapter wrote:

- Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (James 1:22).

Being doers of the word is about fulfilling Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40) (Mark 12:28-31) in the New Testament this is called the royal law (James 2:8). Being doers of the word is about loving our neighbour as ourselves which means helping others as we would help ourselves (especially the poor and the less fortunate), this is true religion (James. 1:27).

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour and the things we should be doing to be doers of the word.

Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount: the constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means being a doer of the word is about living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing right to others. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). This is also why Jesus and James call us to be doers of the word. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see:

- Matthew 5, in Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Faith Apart from Works and Faith with Works.

- **James 2:18-19:** 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!

Though the teachings and principles in this letter of James apply to all Christians worldwide the primary focus of James is directed toward the Jews who have been scattered into foreign countries and Gentile nations (Jas 1:1). It is certain these Jews were still practicing Moses laws of purification and adhering to ceremonial rites and their Jewish religious customs and traditions. James in the context of this letter is saying that true faith is not manifested in strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and legalistically keeping religious customs and traditions, but through love mercy and grace.

James was the brother of Jesus, clearly, he understood that the life his brother lived was not about keeping religious laws, rules, customs and traditions, but about showing others love kindness, compassion and forgiveness and being willing to help whenever one is able. In this letter James is shining a brilliant spotlight on how true inward faith manifests itself outwardly not in the strict adherence to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions, but in love and compassion toward others. A man or woman who say they believe in God, but never read the Bible, never have any fellowship with other Christians and never talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, and who show no evidence of the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., mercy, grace, kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love etc.), working in their lives and also flowing out toward others are deceiving themselves. This is because there is no outward behavior or actions in their lives that evidence their inward faith (i.e., what they confess to be and believe with their mouth).

Even devils believe and shudder: the context of this chapter is faith without works is dead meaning faith without any outward evidence to support faith is not real, true or genuine faith. James is talking to people who believed evil inferior gods called demons existed. These people are boasting that they believe in God, but there is nothing in their lives that outwardly evidences their faith so James in a form of rebuke says, “Even the demons believe and shudder!” (v19) to highlight the truth that faith and belief alone means nothing because even the demons believe in God and they are certainly not saved too eternal glory. James is basically saying that people who believe they are possessed with demons also believe in God and are afraid of Him so it means very little when a person says they believe in God if there is nothing in their lives that evidences that belief. He is trying to make it very clear to the people who are boasting that they believe in God, but don't show any outward evidence of their faith that they are deceiving themselves because a person's outward life should evidence their inward belief.

The great majority of the Australian population, say they believe in God and yet they have no interest in reading the Bible, learning about God or talking with others about Christ or even being with Christian people. It is important to note that James in his rebuke to his listeners is not saying outward behaviour saves a person to eternal life and everlasting glory, but that it evidences that they are saved. It is not enough to simply say, “I believe in God,” and then live a life totally indifferent to God and the things that He values. The confession of a person's faith in God must be followed by some form of outward behaviour that evidences its reality otherwise it is simply words in the wind.

Abraham, was justified by works.

- **James 2:20-24:** 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; 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.

All Christians know that Abraham had great faith but how do we know this, only because his faith was manifested outwardly by his obedience to God to offer up his only son Isaac. Outward actions evidence Abrahams inward faith, Abraham’s love and devotion to God could not be hidden, it was not in him to disobey God such was his inward faith. The only proof of Abraham's inward faith was his outward works. Abraham’s obedience to sacrifice Isaac proved outwardly his inward faith. James is teaching in these verses that without outward works, how would anyone know Abraham had great faith? Genuine faith is evidenced by outward works. Abraham the father of faith believed God, and his belief was proved by his outward act of obedience. Notice verses twenty-three God calls those in Christ who have this kind of faith His friend. James in this chapter is saying that all who confess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and whose faith is outwardly evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit (love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things and in helping others when able will be counted as righteous, justified and a friend of God. Christian faith is not a dead faith, but a living one meaning it is manifested outwardly in some form, this is because true Christian faith cannot be hidden or kept secret.

JAMES 2:25

Rahab the Prostitute was Justified by Works.

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- **James 2:25:** 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?

The following paragraph is a brief overview of the story of Rahab: Joshua sent two men to spy out the land of Jericho and they lodged in the house of Rahab a prostitute (Josh 2:1). Rahab told the spies that she believed the LORD the God of Israel is the God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath and that the hearts of all the men of Jericho melted because they had heard how the LORD had dried up the water of the Red Sea and how Israel had destroyed the two kings of the Amorites (Sihon and Og) (Joshua 2:8-11), because of her faith in the power of Israel’s God she hid the two spies from the soldiers of Jericho (Josh 2:6). Rahab’s faith resulted in her being saved and exalted as a great woman of faith so much so that her name is recorded in the hall of fame with all God’s other great men and woman of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. James is not teaching that Rabab’s works saved her as some think, since no-one is saved by self-effort and works rather James is teaching his readers that her outward works evidenced and proved her inward faith in the God of Israel. James message is that if a person says they have faith in God, but there is absolutely nothing in their life that outwardly evidences it they are deceiving themselves (i.e., if a person says they believe in the Lord, but live a totally worldly lifestyle they are deluding themselves).

NOTICE: the glory of God’s grace, Rahab was a prostitute a woman despised by society and especially the religious community, yet she is commended by God for her faith alongside Abraham Sarah, Moses, David and the many other men and woman listed in Hebrews chapter eleven.

JAMES 2:26

Faith apart from Works is Dead.

- **James 2:26:** For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

The body in this context can refer to two bodies:

1. The human body, without the spirit (i.e., life) which of course is dead.
2. An individual believer, a local church or churches world-wide that confess to be Christian and part of the global body of Christ, but lack the Spirit of the Lord (i.e., mercy, grace, love, kindness, compassion, justice and forgiveness etc.,) not only in their lives, but also flowing out toward others this is because without the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within they are spiritually dead no matter how religious they may appear on the outside.

Likewise, genuine Christian faith is living and active it cannot be separated from works, like the human body without life or the body of Christ without the Spirit is dead so too is faith without works. Though outward works of love do not save they evidence that a believer has true Christian faith and the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ and shine a spotlight on the truth that no-one is saved by self-effort and works alone. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake grace we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

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Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. These verses (there are many others like them) clearly show that James is not teaching that we are saved by works, but rather that true faith will be evidenced by some kind of outward behaviour and actions.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.