

# Faith Without Works is Useless

## An Expository “Journey” Through the **Epistle of James**

### 11- The Test of True Faith- Part 1

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May 23, 2021

#### **James 2:14-26**

**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 shudder.**

**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.**

To the Glory of God

Now, this is one of the most difficult and controversial Passages in the entire Bible. And I really tried to preach this in one take- but it simply can't be done. So, if God is pleased, I'm going to begin this today and I'll finish it on the first Lord's Day of June- as Brother Jeff is preaching next week.

By God's Grace, and to God's Glory- I have been faithful to teach you that there are some things that the Bible teaches- certain biblical Truths- that are "NON- NEGOTIABLE". These are Doctrines that are NOT debatable or up for discussion. You either believe these Truths- or you remain lost. You accept these Doctrines- or you are "yet in your Sins." You trust in what these Teachings say- or you're NOT saved; you're NOT a Christian- and you are headed for Hell. So, these are "EXCLUSIVE" Truths of the Bible; or "ESSENTIAL TRUTHS" of the Christian Faith. And this is what Jude meant when he wrote about,

### **Jude 3b**

**... the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.**

So, part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus- is that we are to *learn* about these Truths. Jude said we are to "earnestly contend" for them. And as we become familiar with them- we can be a part of the "once for all handed down to the saints- Faith"- which is the *Christian* Faith.

Now, basically, "Essential Truth" comprises everything about how lost people are saved- along with the Characteristics and Attributes of God- in all three Persons. So, two main Categories:

1. Who God is
2. How lost people are saved

... make up what is called, "Essential Truth". And believing what the Bible reveals about these two Issues determines whether you are saved and a Christian.

Now God *could* have set up Salvation in such a way that He simply would issue a "Divine Pardon" for every living human. God *could* have said, "*You are all forgiven; and I welcome you into My Kingdom.*" As God- He *could* have done that.<sup>1</sup> But He didn't. What God *did* do- was to create a "Means"; a "Vehicle"; a "Way" by which Salvation flows to human rebels. And that "Means of Salvation" is the "*Gospel.*"

Now the word, "*Gospel*"- is an English *transliteration* of a couple of Greek words, *aggelion* (Message/News) and *eu* (Good/Glad). And it is best rendered as, "*Evangelion*" (Latin: *Evangelium*). And this term was *originally* used, in other Greek literature back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- to describe a great *military* Victory after and long and intense campaign. But since the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- this word has come to be used- *almost exclusively*- in Christianity. And it has to do with the "*Good News*" or the "*Glad Tidings*" of Jesus *rescuing* us from the horrific and

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<sup>1</sup> When I say that- I realize that doing this would have presented God with certain problems concerning adjudicating the Offense against His Justice that our Sins committed.

frightening Wrath of God- that He has promised to those, who spurn His Love; and who joyfully and repeatedly sin against Him. And that “Gospel” involves not only Who Jesus is- but also His Life, Death, and Resurrection.

Now as I have said before- in order for the Gospel to be “*Good News*” *presupposes* that there is some very “*Bad News*” out there. Other than that- the Gospel would simply be “*News*”. And the “*Bad News*” is that, “**God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.**” (Psalm 7:11). And that is very “*Bad News*” indeed- since we are all sinners.

So, it is the “*Bad News*” of God’s just Wrath against sinners-that makes the “*Good News*” of a dead and risen Savior- Who is both willing and able to rescue us from that Wrath- to be very, very “*Good*” for us.

Now the word, *Evangelion* is also the root word from where we get other words like, “*Evangelist*” and even “*Evangelical*”. So, for example, in **2Timothy 4:5**, when Paul told Timothy,

**... do the work of an evangelist ...**

... he WASN’T talking about holding Crusades in football stadiums like Billy Graham did. He was simply telling Timothy to “**Preach the Word**”- both IN and OUT of the Church. Because an “*Evangelist*” is one who “heralds the *Evangel*” (Gospel).

Now God has commanded that the “Gospel” must be “preached”. In **Mark 13:10**, Jesus said,

**The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.**

... and in **Mark 16:15**

**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**

... and in **Matthew 10:7**- Jesus also said,

**And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**

... which is the Gospel.

The Apostle Peter said this in **The Acts 10:38-43**:

**38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.**

**39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.  
40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,  
41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.  
42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.  
43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."**

... and the Apostle Paul said this in **1Corinthians 1:17-24**

**17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.  
18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.  
19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."  
20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?  
21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.  
22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;  
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,  
24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

Now the word, "*preach*" comes from a Greek word (*kearuxoe*; Strongs #2784) that has to do with: *heralding or proclaiming something important*. And an example would be a town crier- heralding the Good News about the king, who is soon to come to the town. So, the crier would go to the center of town and with a loud voice- say, "*Hear ye; Hear ye- the King is coming! Prepare yourselves! The King is coming!*".

Now two things were true about the crier. He would NEVER take this responsibility on himself. No, he would be in serious trouble if he simply did this on his own. The king personally appointed each crier. And secondly, the crier could ONLY herald the Message that the king had given to him. So, he couldn't make stuff up. Every crier was authorized by the king to herald that one particular Message.

And that tells us that true, biblical preaching is NOT “sharing”. Preaching also isn’t a “discussion about religious matters”. Preaching is actually Worship. It is *expositional* Worship. So, preaching is the authoritative *heralding* of the single Message that God has given- by the man, who has been personally appointed by God. It is explaining and “making clear” (expositing) the single Message that God has authorized to be preached (Gospel) to every living being on earth.

And that means that preaching is a great Comfort to the saved but a great Warning to the Lost. And while Preaching brings edification to the Saved- real preaching makes lukewarm, carnal minded, and worldly people very miserable. So, in God’s Economy- He has determined that the Gospel should be “Preached”.

Now, because we are all sinners- we have two great needs:

1. We need to be forgiven
2. We need to be made Righteous

.. and like a lot of things these days- the modern church primarily speaks of the first one- while almost completely neglecting the second one. But we need BOTH- if we desire to spend Eternity in Heaven with God. You see, God is perfectly Righteous. And in order for any of us to be with God- we MUST be just as Righteous as God Himself! So, in addition to being forgiven- we NEED to be “made Righteous.”

Now the part of Salvation where God forgives ALL our Sins and makes us Righteous- is called, “*Justification*”. And this is the part that comes immediately AFTER the sovereign Miracle of the New Birth.

The word, “*Justification*” comes from a Greek word, (*dikaiosis*; Strong’s # 1344), that means: *to make someone Righteous*. So, when we are justified- we go from a “State or Condition” of sinfulness and guilt before God (Injustice)- to a “State or Condition of Grace and Righteousness” (Justice).

Now both Catholics and Protestants agree with this. Where we differ- is in HOW sinners are forgiven and “made Righteous”. The Roman religious system teaches that sinners MUST go through the “Life-long process” of gradually causing their own, personal, intrinsic righteousness- to be perfected. And, of course, nobody can do that- which is why Rome invented Purgatory- which is where dead saved people are perfectly purified- so they can go to Heaven.

But the Bible doesn’t teach any of that. The Bible teaches that we are “made Righteous” INSTANTLY. And the *catalyst* that *causes* that instantaneous Righteousness- is FAITH. But the Bible also departs from Rome by teaching that the Righteousness that allows us to enter into Heaven and be with God forever- is NOT ours. It is NEVER ours. The Righteousness that grants us entrance into

God's Presence- is the spotless Righteousness of Jesus- that He earned by never sinning the entire time He lived on earth.

So, in Justification- God takes the perfect Righteousness of Jesus and He credits or imputes that Righteousness to us. And that means that the Righteousness that allows us to spend all of Eternity with God- is a *foreign* Righteousness; an *external* Righteousness; an *alien* Righteousness; and an *imputed* Righteousness.

Now, as we have studied- being Born Again is a sovereign Act of God ALONE. God gives us the Miracle of the New Birth- all by Himself- without ANY cooperation from us. But in order to be Justified- in order for a lost sinner to be forgiven and made Righteous- five things MUST happen:

1. He MUST *hear* the Gospel
2. He MUST *understand* the Gospel
3. He MUST *believe* the Gospel
4. He MUST *repent* (turn away) of ALL his Sin
5. He MUST put his Faith, Hope, and Trust in Jesus *personally* and in His finished Work

... and doing these five things is what allows the lost soul to be forgiven of ALL his Sins (Past, Present, and Future) and to be credited with the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is what makes the sinner to be "Fit for Heaven". And this part of Salvation (brought about by and through those five things) is called, "Justification".

Now, of course, we know that in order for a lost person to have both the Desire and the Ability to do those five things- God has to have ALREADY done a sovereign and miraculous Work in that individual. And we call that Work, the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, being "*Born Again*" means that God has- all by Himself- given that wicked sinner- new, spiritual Life. And with that wondrous Gift of spiritual Life- God has given that person eyes that can see; ears that can hear; and a heart that can believe. And it is with that new Desire and Ability that the sinner can do those five things that allows him to be Justified.

But with that new, spiritual Life- God has *also* given that person both the Desire and the Ability to "turn away from" his former life of Sin and Rebellion against God (Sin). And this is the "Gift of Repentance"- without which- NO ONE will ever turn from their Sins.

But one of the most amazing parts of the Miracle of the New Birth- is the "Gift of Faith". And it is this part that gives the lost rebel both the Desire and the Power to believe in Jesus and in His finished Work and be saved. The Fall destroyed not only the Desire to trust in Jesus and believe- but it also destroyed the

Ability to believe as well. So, unless God gives that lost person the Gift of Saving Faith- he CAN'T believe. And he CAN'T believe- because, in his lost condition, he doesn't WANT to.

So as real preaching of the Gospel is carried out- those who have been chosen by God will be sovereignly given that new, spiritual Life. And because they have now been enabled and empowered by the Miracle of the New Birth- they will *respond* to the Work that God has ALREADY done in them by doing those five things. And when they do those five things- they will be forgiven and "made Righteous" (Justified).

But NOTHING happens until the Gospel is preached. And that is *why* defining what the Gospel is; and heralding ONLY that single Message- is so important. Because NOBODY is saved through seeing or receiving a Miracle or a Healing. NOT ONE SIN is forgiven through seeing or receiving Signs and Wonders. NOBODY is "Made Righteous" by being financially or materially blessed by God. NOBODY is saved by receiving a "Word from God". NOT A SINGLE SIN is forgiven by being Baptized. NOBODY is "made fit for Heaven" by partaking of Communion. NOBODY is saved by joining the Church. NOT ONE SIN is forgiven by casting out demons. And NO ONE is made "fit for Heaven" by studying and understanding Reformed Theology.

But what is also interesting is that the Bible DOES NOT teach that lost sinners need to "*Accept Jesus into their hearts*". You can't find that phrase or anything like it *anywhere* in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. That is an entirely Man-made Teaching that is as fabricated and is as misleading and as impotent as anything that the popes have invented. The *closest* thing in the Bible to "accepting Jesus into your heart" is Jesus' Teaching in **Mark 4:20** that says,

**And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.**

... which is talking about "hearing and accepting" the Gospel (Word) as it is preached- NOT Jesus. So, we DON'T "accept" Jesus into our hearts or anywhere else. Jesus accepts us. We hear the preached Gospel with ears that have been sovereignly unstopped (in the New Birth). And what we hear- goes FIRST into our minds- NOT our hearts. And as we have been graced with the Gift of Faith (in the New Birth)- we *believe* the Gospel. And then we trust in Jesus. We believe what the Gospel says about Jesus *personally* and what it says that Jesus has already done for us in living, dying, and rising again. And we trust and believe- "by Faith".

Now, it has been during my lifetime that the Church in America has gotten “neck-deep” in Politics. And so, today- many look at “*Evangelicals*” as being nothing more than a political “voting block” that Republican politicians cater to.

But the Truth is that an “*Evangelical*” is a person, who understands that NOBODY is saved unless they *hear* the Gospel preached. And so, an Evangelical understands that lost people MUST *believe* the Gospel; *repent* of Sin; and *trust* in Jesus and in His finished Work or they will spend all Eternity in Hell. And so, an “*Evangelical*” believes that lost people are forgiven and made Righteous-

1. By what they believe in
2. By what they Trust and Hope in
3. By what they Confess

... and NOT by what they “DO”. All of our “DOING” is carried out AFTER we are saved and NOT as a means to *become* saved.

So, an “*Evangelical*” is one who believes that lost people are “Justified” (Forgiven/Made Righteous) by FAITH; and by Faith ALONE- and NOT by doing Good Works or engaging in Noble Deeds; or partaking of Church Sacraments. And so, “*Evangelicals*” *emphasize* the preaching of the Gospel. And this Biblical Truth- this ESSENTIAL TRUTH is summarized by the English phrase, “*Justification by Faith Alone*” and by the Latin phrase “*Sola Fide*”.

Now 500 years ago- the “*Material Principle*” that ignited the Protestant Reformation was “*Sola Fide*” (How lost people are forgiven and made Righteous). While the “*Formal Principle*” was “*Sola Scriptura*” (the Issue of Who has final Authority).

And Rome answered the “*Formal Principle*” by saying that the Pope, in his Office as the “vicar of Christ”, has “*Final Authority*”. And this Teaching is *part* of their Man-made doctrine of “papal infallibility”. But the Reformers answered that ONLY the Bible has that kind of Authority. And they signified that Truth by the Latin phrase, “*Sola Scriptura*”.

Rome also responded to the “*Material Principle*” by saying that participation in the Sacraments was REQUIRED if lost people are to be forgiven and made Righteous. This is part of the Roman *fabricated* Teaching called, “*Sacerdotal Regeneration*”. But the Reformers said that being forgiven and made Righteous (Justification) occurs “*by Faith*” and “*by Faith ALONE*”- which is summarized by the Latin phrase, “*Sola Fide*”.

So, those, who agree with Rome about those two Issues (and others) are called “*Catholics*”. While those who agree with what the Reformers taught are called “*Protestants*”.

So, I hope you can see that there is NO wiggle room here; no area of commonality; and no way to compromise about these two Principles. Either lost



people MUST partake of the Sacraments to be justified or they are Justified by Faith ALONE. But the word, “ALONE” *demands* that it MUST be one or the other. And either the Pope has that Authority or the Bible does. But both of them CAN’T.

Now, dear friends, these are NOT trivial, unimportant, or silly Topics. This isn’t about personalities or about things that don’t matter. Catholics and Protestants have been separated now for over 500 years because we don’t agree on how lost people are justified. And we are separated because we disagree about who has the Power to “bind the conscience” and to determine “Right and Wrong”. And I would suggest that these are very important Issues

But that also means that one of us is wrong. One of us is guilty of teaching false Doctrine- because we simply CAN’T both be right. So, the ONLY fix to this Separation is that either Catholics or Protestants MUST *repent* and *recant* about what they believe and teach about these two very important and eternal matters. But whichever Group repents- must then *refuse* to ever teach what they are now teaching- ever again. And this will, in effect destroy either Catholicism or Protestantism- forever!

Other than that- there is NO fix for this Separation. One Group is faithfully holding to what the Bible actually teaches about these two Issues- while the other Group is apostate and is teaching false Doctrine. It is just that clear. And it is just that black and white.

And so, I suggest that we begin the process of Reconciliation by studying the inspired Word of the living God and finding out which Group is being faithful to what God actually said in Scripture; and which Group is apostate and deceived. Because holding hands and singing songs while we sway back and forth will NEVER fix this.

Now the Reality is that we have a Protest with MANY Issues where Rome has isolated itself from the Authority of Scripture. But the two Issues of “Who has Final Authority” (*Sola Scriptura*); and “How lost people are forgiven and made Righteous” (*Sola Fide*) are *so* vital and *so* important- that the Reformation would have occurred if only these two were involved.

Now since the Issue of “*Sola Fide*” (How lost people are Justified) involves Salvation- it is called, the very “*Heart of the Gospel*”. In other words, without Justification being “by Faith” and “by Faith ALONE”- you really don’t have the biblical Gospel. Another way of understanding this is to say that people will remain lost and headed to Hell- unless we believe and teach *Sola Fide*. That is how important this Issue is.

Now the “proof text” that summarizes “*Sola Fide*” *best*- is found in **Romans 3:28** where the Apostle Paul was “moved” by God the Holy

Spirit to say,

**For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**

Another crystal- clear Passage is found in **Romans 4:1-5** that says,

**1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?**

**2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

**3 For what does the Scripture [Genesis 15:6] say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."**

**4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.**

**5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,**

The New Covenant is *infinitely* superior to the Old in that because Jesus lived, died, and rose again- lost sinners are NOT made Righteous by striving to do good, noble, or even religious Works. No. We are forever "made Righteous" "BY FAITH" (*Sola Fide*). In other words, wicked rebels are *forever* forgiven and made Righteous- by *believing* in what the Bible teaches about Who Jesus is- *personally*; and by trusting that Jesus' Life, Death, and Resurrection- is ALL God requires to make us "Fit for Heaven".

ALL of our Effort to obey God and His Word; and to be holy; and to love and follow Jesus- does NOT make us able to enter into Heaven. Why? Because that Effort would have to be perfectly sinless to qualify. Trying to earn Salvation or Forgiveness or Righteousness- by and through our Effort to obey God and His Word- REQUIRES *faultless* Obedience; *sinless* Obedience; *perfect* Obedience; and *continual* Obedience. So, one Sin- committed even one time- would FOREVER disqualify us.

But sinful rebels MAY become qualified to live with God forever. How? By believing. By Faith. And, by Faith- ALONE. And this is so true- that anyone who is striving to obey God's Word (any of it) IN ORDER TO EARN FORGIVENESS/HEAVEN/RIGHTEOUSNESS- is spitting in the Face of Jesus; they are trampling the Grace of God under foot; they are fighting AGAINST God; and they have become an Abomination to God! And every one of those people will burn in Hell forever! That is "*Sola Fide*." And that is the very HEART AND SOUL of the biblical Gospel.

So, ANYONE; for ANY REASON- who believes or teaches that

Forgiveness or Salvation; or Righteousness can be EARNED or DESERVED by ANYTHING that we do- is *attacking* the Grace of God; they are *warring* against Jesus and His finished Work; and they are the *enemy* of God.

Okay. That sounds pretty cut and dried. And I pray that this is forever settled in your mind. But then how do I explain what James said in verse 24:

**You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.**

It certainly *appears* that James is contradicting EVERYTHING I just said. Remember, the Apostle Paul taught,

**Romans 3:28**

**For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**

... and yet James says,

**James 2:24**

**You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.**

So, is James *contradicting* Paul? Are James and Paul *fighting* about how lost people are justified? It sure looks that way. In fact, for over 500 years now- people, who have been deceived by what Rome teaches about Salvation, use what James says right here to *attack* the very CORE of Protestant Theology about “*Sola Fide*”- even going so far as to call, the concept of “*Justification by Faith Alone*”- a “Legal Fiction”.

In fact, at the conclusion of the “Council of Trent” (1545-1563)- the Roman “religious system” *formally* and *officially* pronounced an “Eternal Damnation” (Anathema) on ANYONE who,

“... says that the sinner is justified by faith alone... let him be anathema.”<sup>2</sup>

Now keep in mind what an “*Anathema*” is. When the Church of Jesus says, “*Let them be Anathema*”- this means that those people are damned- WITH NO POSSIBILITY OF EVER BEING FORGIVEN! So, when Rome placed this “Eternal Damnation” on the biblical Truth about how lost people are justified- three things happened:

1. Protestantism was forever damned
2. The Rome pronounced an “Eternal Damnation” on the biblical Gospel that the Apostles taught in Scripture

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<sup>2</sup> Cannon 9; The Council of Trent

3. Rome ceased to be a “Church”- for it has isolated itself from the Authority of Scripture

... and that means there is only one recourse for Rome: Repent, Recant, and beg for God’s Mercy.

Okay, that’s Rome. But what about James? Has James done to the biblical Gospel what Rome did? Or is this a glitch in the Bible?

Well, thank God, neither one. James is NOT fighting against Paul; nor is he even contradicting him. There is NO argument between Paul and James. None. In fact, I will show you how that what James teaches here- CONFIRMS what Paul taught. Okay- here goes. Let’s read **James 2:14-17** again:

**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.**

Here, James is NOT attacking “*Sola Fide*” at all. Instead, he is simply describing what Justification by Faith ALONE looks like- AFTER a person has been justified. And this is the very SAME thing that the Apostle Paul taught in **Ephesians 2:8-10**:

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**

**9 not as 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 so that we would walk in them.**

Now I have taught extensively from verses 8&9 over the years- so, I’m NOT going to get into all that today. But allow me to simply *summarize* what Paul is saying in verses 8&9 very quickly:

- 1) Salvation is “BY” God’s Grace- meaning that the “Origination” of Salvation or the “Catalyst” by which Salvation comes to each individual sinner- is the Grace of God. So, individual sinners CANNOT and DO NOT *initiate* their own Salvation by ANYTHING they do for themselves. God initiates Salvation- SOVEREIGNLY- all by Himself- without ANY cooperation from us. And God initiates Salvation “BY” His Grace- NOT human

- Determinism; NOT human Decision; NOT human Choice; NOT the Sacraments. Salvation begins “BY” Grace and by Grace- ALONE
- 2) Salvation is “THROUGH” Faith. What kind of Faith? Saving Faith. From where does that kind of Faith come? Paul said,  
**“and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”** So, the Faith that it takes for sinners to be saved- does NOT come from the sinner himself. Why not? Because we lost that Faith- in the Fall. So, from where does Saving Faith come? From God. How do we get it? God mercifully gives it to us- as a free Gift. And so, those to whom God gives this Faith- will respond- by believing. And those who DON’T believe- have NOT been given this Gift- at least not yet. And nobody CAN believe unless this Gift of Saving Faith has been given to them. But ALL who have been given this Gift of Faith- WILL believe.
  - 3) Then Paul teaches that this Salvation that is “BY” God’s Grace and that is “THROUGH” the Gift of Saving Faith is NOT earned or deserved by or through ANY WORKS. None. Not even Good, religious Works (Communion/Baptism, etc.). He said, **“not as a result of works”**- meaning that Salvation does NOT RESULT from our Works. The Opposite is true. Our Works RESULT from Salvation.
  - 4) And the Reason God created Salvation to be “BY” God’s Grace and “THROUGH” the Gift of Saving Faith- was, **“so that no one may boast”**. Now why was that an Issue? So, that God would receive ALL the Glory for saving wicked sinners and so that we would receive ALL the BENEFIT- but NONE of the Glory. Yet if we are saved because we CHOSE to believe- then, we did what others refused to do- and- by rights- we DESERVE some of the Glory. If our participation in Salvation was ONLY 5%- then we DESERVE 5% of the Glory. And if that is true- then God would be a thief for robbing us of whatever Glory we were entitled to receive. But if God did all the work- then He is *entitled* to all the Glory- and we would be robbing God of the some of the Glory- if we received it.
  - 5) But to what End are we saved by Grace and through Faith? And why doesn’t God take us to Heaven as soon as we are saved? Why leave us here- to be tempted and be able to fail God? Verse 10 tells us: **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”** So, the Reason we are saved “BY” Grace and “THROUGH” the Gift of Saving Faith- And NOT by WORKS- is so we would “walk in” or “daily perform” the “GOOD WORKS” that God “prepared beforehand” for us to do.

And this tells us that Justification by Faith ALONE is true. But Paul goes on to say that the Justification that is by Faith ALONE- ALWAYS produces in us- both the Desire and the Ability to do the Good Works that God prepared for us to do- way before we were ever born.

And so, all that James is doing in verses 15&16- is giving us a practical example of what those Good Works look like.

**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?**

So, the Test of true, saving Faith- is the Good Works that we perform on this earth and in this life- AFTER we have been justified. And, according to James, those Works are, many times, very “down-to- earth” and very practical.

James was NOT teaching that feeding the hungry and clothing the naked- *produces* Salvation. That would be teaching against “*Sola Fide*” and would be promoting a “Works- based Salvation” which the New Testament condemns.

Instead, what James is teaching here is that the Good Works that we engage in- AFTER we have already been justified- proves that the Faith “through which” Salvation was appropriated to us individually- was GENUINE. So, the Good Works DON’T produce Salvation. Our Salvation produces Good Works.

So, while it is absolutely true that Good Works DON’T earn anyone Salvation- it is also true that true Salvation ALWAYS and IN ALL CASES- produces Good Works. So, saved people MUST be engaged- on an ongoing basis- in some form of Good Works- or else James says here- they are probably NOT really saved. And there is NO exemptions here. EVERY genuine believer is to be ongoingly involved in Good Works.

Now like I taught about taming the tongue and tending to widows and orphans- Good Works for believers- is NOT optional. Nobody is exempt from this. And don’t you dare say that, because you are in the Ministry; or because you spend all day studying the Bible- that this Command doesn’t apply to you. Because it DOES apply to you. You are ongoingly involved in Good Works- or you are proving that you are lost and simply deceived about being saved. Now look again at verses 18-20:

**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 shudder.**

## **20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?**

Now, over the years, I have faithfully taught you that there are three things that are important when it comes to biblical Interpretation:

1. Context
2. Context
3. Context

... getting the correct Context about a verse or Passage- means EVERYTHING. You allow me to take a verse or Passage out of context- and I can prove just about anything I want- *including* child sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> So, part of understanding a verse or Passage *correctly*- is to get the correct Context of why the writer said what he said and what was going on around him as he wrote.

And the Context of James' Statement is that during the early days of the Church- there were two great Heresies- that plagued Christianity:

1. Legalism
2. Antinomianism (Lawlessness)

... and both of these are perversions of Grace.

Legalism IGNORES Grace and teaches that we have to do something in order to be saved. And Antinomianism ABUSES Grace- by teaching that, since it is true that we are justified by Faith ALONE- it doesn't matter how we live our lives afterward.

Now it all depends on which one of these evil Teachings are dominant in the Culture- as to how easy or hard it is to reject BOTH of them. For example, if Legalism is dominant- then Antinomianism looks attractive. And that makes it harder to reject. But if the Culture around us is "loose"; if Lawlessness abounds (like the 21<sup>st</sup> Century American Church)- people *wrongly* conclude that Legalism is the fix. That isn't true. Both of these are false. Both are evil and destructive Heresies.

Legalism is NOT closer to the Truth than Antinomianism. Both dishonor Jesus. Both are perversions of Grace. Neither one can forgive a single sin or save a single soul. Lost people are attracted to both of these. And saved people need to reject both. The fix for Lawlessness is the same for Antinomianism. We should flee from both of these Heresies and run into the Arms of God's Grace.

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<sup>3</sup> Judges 11:30-40

The Apostle Paul emphasized Faith over Works- NOT because he rejected the Truth about saved people doing Good Works AFTER Justification (he taught it himself)- but simply because he was doing battle against the Legalists of his day- who rejected Faith and taught that Justification came through obeying God and His Word.

James, on the other hand- was NOT attacking the concept of “*Sola Fide*” (he taught it). James was fighting against the Antinomians of his day. And those Heretics taught that it didn’t matter how a saved person lived their life AFTER Justification. And that is why James taught so severely about Good Works *proving* that the Justification that we received by Faith ALONE- was genuine.

So, rather than seeing Paul and James as squaring off against each other- we need to see them as standing back to back- confronting two different Heresies. They BOTH taught “*Sola Fide*” (Justification by Faith ALONE) and they BOTH taught that people, who had ALREADY been justified- MUST be engaged in Good Works. And so should we.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.



