

JAMES 2:14-26
Faith and Works pt. 1
Week 11

Agree- Disagree – We are saved by faith, not works

Be careful. It's sort of a trick statement because we are saved BY GRACE Through Faith in Christ and His finished work.

The focus of scripture is NOT the faith that justifies; it is the object of faith, the perfect righteousness of Christ.

I know, you didn't come to 9:30 church to have a pop quiz on doctrine.

With that understanding James seeks to focus the question...

"What does life look like when we are gripped by the gospel?"

James assumes the gospel and shows what it does, not what it is.

How does it change us??

A head scratching passage v.24 (you're in good company)

Martin Luther questioned the authority of James. It seems to go against Eph 2; Rom 4-5.

Surprisingly, Luther captured the reality of what James is teaching.

"O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works." Martin Luther

Here is a short summary of the passage for today– Tullian Tchividjian

"DOING becomes instinctive when hearts are gripped by DONE" –

James 2

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. (Deut 6:4) 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 (Gen 22) 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," (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:2) 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 (Josh 2) 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.

Titus 2:

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed

hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

FYI: THIS IS GOING TO BE A TWO PART SERMON.

I was hoping to avoid doing this because it sounds too much like a seminary class but we need to get a baseline theological understanding of the words “faith” and “works”. This week, part 1, will be a bit more on the wonky side.

There is no better resource than J.I. Packer’s little book “Concise Theology”

Chapter on Works

In the New Testament, faith (believing trust) is crucially important, for it is the means or instrumental cause of salvation. It is by faith that Christians are justified before God (Rom. 3:26; 4:1-5; Gal. 2:16), live their lives (literally “walk,” 2 Cor. 5:7), and sustain their hope (Heb. 10:35-12:3).

Faith cannot be defined in subjective terms, as a confident and optimistic mind-set, or in passive terms, as acquiescent orthodoxy or confidence in God without commitment to God. Faith is an object-oriented response, shaped by that which is trusted, namely God himself, God’s promises, and Jesus Christ, all as set forth in the Scriptures. And faith is a whole-souled response, involving mind, heart, will, and affections.

Older Reformed theology analyzed faith as **notitia** (“knowledge,” i.e., acquaintance with the content of the gospel), **plus assensus** (“agreement,” i.e., recognition that the gospel is true), **plus fiducia** (“trust and reliance,” i.e., personal dependence on the grace of Father, Son, and Spirit for salvation, with thankful cessation of all attempts to save oneself by establishing one’s own righteousness: Rom. 4:5; 10:3).

Without fiducia there is no justifying faith, but without notita and assensus there can be no fiducia

(Rom. 10:14).

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ... 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Justification by our works (things we have done) is the heresy of legalism. Justification, as scripture and believers have insisted, is by faith only (“faith apart from observing the law,” Rom. 3:28), because it is in Christ and by Christ only, and depends on what he is as distinct from what we are. **But if “good works” do not follow from our profession of faith, we are as yet believing only from the head, not from the heart: in other words, justifying faith (fiducia) is not yet ours.**

When James says that faith without works is dead (i.e., a corpse), he is using the word faith in the limited sense of “knowledge” plus “agreement”, which is how those he addresses were using it.

When James says that one is justified by what one does, not by faith alone, he means by “justified” “proved genuine; vindicated from the suspicion of being a hypocrite and a fraud.”

Paul denounces the idea of salvation by dead works; James rejects salvation by dead faith. (Packer)

This text shows that Genuine faith is seen by its fruit.

James and Paul not facing each other with swords drawn; they stand back to back facing different foes of the gospel – Alexander Ross

Paul denies works as a basis for justification; James insists that works are an evidence of justification.

Paul deals with justification by faith alone in terms of our legal standing before God. James deals with justification by works (2:24) in terms of evidence or proof of our faith before men. i.e. “You show me your faith and I’ll show you my works.” This is a different issue than what Paul is addressing.

Let look at the question, “What are good works?” James uses the term in a very broad way.

Wcf ch 16 -one of the most practical chapters

A. Good works are only those works identified as good by God and commanded by Him in His holy word.' They do not include other works, no matter how well-intentioned in design or zealously promoted by men

APPL - We must know God's Word. Look at Christ. His obedience was rooted in the Scripture. He was a man of character, integrity and holiness because he obeyed God's Word. This was not 'goodness' in general, but Biblical goodness flowing from a God-centered heart.

A. We must Distinguish between interpretation and application – Trick or Treat / Harry Potter, movies, dancing, card playing, etc

B. God's Word, when rightly understood, destroys any pretense of our own righteousness and puts an end to shallow practice and obedience and destroys any simple surface view of the Christian life.

C. It is all too easy to assume we're 'obeying God' when we follow man- made rules
We're all recovering Pharisees and selective legalists

EX:1997 upon return from France... “Bobbed haired women and men with facial hair are an abomination to God.”

My life may be an abomination but it isn't because of facial hair. We have no need to make up rules in order to see our sin, if we are honest about the true nature of God's Law and our indwelling sin.

WHERE DO GOOD WORKS COME FROM?

A. Believers get the ability to do good works entirely from the Spirit of Christ. WCF 16.3 –

NOT ACTIVISM like the energizer bunny

We are To be Filled with Holy Spirit...Eph 5 Here’s my definition...

To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit come and take what Jesus has done and make it the controlling reality of your heart – make it so real that no matter what life throws at you the result is that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is made manifest.

This involves the practice of ABIDING in Christ and letting His Word dwell richly in us.

WCF continues...

B. However, believers are not therefore to grow spiritually lazy, waiting for some special guidance from the Spirit before doing anything commanded by God. Rather, they should diligently attempt to identify what good works God has commanded in His word and then try their best to do all of them, praying earnestly and daily for the empowering and enabling of the Holy Spirit, Who lives in them.

NOT PASSIVISM - “Well God hasn’t moved me yet, so I don’t have to love my wife or respect my husband or put aside that sin, or obey my parents, etc.”

C. Those believers who do the best that can be done in obeying God in this life can never do more or even as much as He requires. Indeed, they fall short of much which they are bound to do

When we've done all we can, we've only done our duty – Luke 17:7-10

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR PRIDE

APPL - we have no reason to boast or to think we've gone above and beyond the call of duty.

EX: Gerstner: "you've never done your best"

To get back on track when we see the deeds of sin, we need to DWJND – repent. True repentance takes us to the cross where we meet Jesus, and change happens by being with Him.

WHY ARE GOOD WORKS IMPORTANT?

A. That the Word not be maligned / dishonored - God's reputation is linked to our behavior. We have a great opportunity to reflect who He is or to distort who He is.

We want Christ and His Word to be honored by our lives. Love among the body of Christ is one way that unbelievers will know that we are His disciples.

B. Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect WCF 16.2- By them believers show their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance of salvation, edify their brothers in the Lord and ADORN the profession of the gospel.

When we live in such a way that shows that Christ is our treasure, then His name is adorned and glorified.

Our lives will either beautify our profession or uglify our profession.

The biblical idea of being salt and light is that our lives would make Christ look attractive to others?

MATT 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We want PEOPLE ATTRACTED TO Christ BY BEING WITH US.

This happens is a unique way when the world sees how we love one another. John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

APPLICATION for interaction with other believers...

“No word should leave your mouth, no pen should hit paper, and (no one should hit send) until you realize that the one you are criticizing, when you get to heaven, will be dearer to you than your next of kin. And you are not ready to talk aright until that is palpable to your soul.” -John Newton

A cursory reading of James 1-2 shows that a specific area of “good works’ is controlling the tongue. That is amplified in James 3.

As we consider the relationship of faith and works and the impact of good works, I leave you with this...

BE A HUB CAP FOR JESUS - enjolveur

The only purpose of the Hub Cap is to make the car look good. We can adorn the gospel by Spirit empowered obedience.

- The ABC's of a Trust Transfer –
- A - Admit that you can't save yourself and that you need grace – That means there is GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

- B- Believe that Jesus is the only Wisdom and Savior who can forgive your sin and heal your heart
- C- Confess to God that you want to trust Jesus as your savior and Lord.

Come to the Table where our faith is strengthened as we feed on Christ.

--	--