

August 18, 2024

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of James – Pt. 3 (James 1:26-2:26)

An Authentic Faith is an Active Loving Faith

(Faith Without Works is Dead)

Today we continue with God's Good News Story in the Book of James, Part 3. James is considered to be one of the earliest books of the New Testament written. We are introduced to him in the 15th Chapter of Acts where he is heading a Church Council to give guidance to the gentile Churches. He along with the elder leader group pens a short but powerful letter to be read in these church. It is estimated that James wrote his longer letter (the New Testament Book of James) by the mid-40's AD.

The Book of James is about developing Authentic Faith that is characterized by Wisdom, Patience, Obedience, Self-Control, Love & Action.

This type of faith will result in Walking with God in Right Relationship and Living with One Another in Right Relationship.

Another way to describe the book so far is:

Faith Perseveres & Faith Obeys

Today we add 2 more...

Faith Loves & Faith Acts

**Foundational Doctrinal Truths
& Corresponding Actions of Faith...**

The Last 2 Sundays We Discovered That...

- **God is Sovereign Over Our Trials**
Faith Perseveres

- **God Uses Trials & Temptations to Test and Strengthen Our Faith.**

Faith Obeys

Today We Discover Two More Truths & Actions

- **God Loves All People and so Should We.**
Faith Loves
- **God's Love Is Shown in Acts of Mercy & Grace and We Are to Do the Same.**
Faith Acts

Even though I have separated today's truths into two parts, they must be taken together, because James teaches it that way. James interweaves (1) doctrinal truths that undergird and inform and Authentic Faith with (2) The Actions that Reveal an Authentic Faith. These two go hand in hand.

- **God Loves All People and so Should We.**
Faith Loves
- **God's Love Is Shown in Acts of Mercy & Grace and We Are to Do the Same.**
Faith Acts

James 1:26,27...²⁶ *If anyone thinks themselves to be religious yet does not bridle their tongue but deceives their own heart, this person's religion is worthless.* ²⁷ *Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world....*

This passage is found at the end of Chapter 1 in which James gives us directions on dealing with trials, tribulations and temptations by actively ridding ourselves of evil, actively filling ourselves with God's Word, actively remaining in that Word, and actively putting into practice. As **James 1:22** states ***"Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only"***.

Here at the end of the chapter (vs. 26,27) he begins to show us the 1st of several examples of what an authentic, active faith in practice looks like, and also what it does not look like. James weaves together our two key summaries for today >> **Faith Loves & Faith Acts** in these verses.

James introduces a new word to the vocabulary of this book and that is 'Religious' and 'Religion'. They are related but they are slightly different in their form.

Religious <2357> θρησκος *threskos*. **Usage:** religious(1). This form of the word is only used one (1) time (here in James) and is an adjective, which is descriptive in nature. It seems to indicate a pious, reverent, obedient practice of worship, honor and respect toward some deity or cause. It could also be phrased as 'the practice of your faith in action'... the "DOING OF OUR FAITH"

Religion <2356> θρησκεία *threskeia*. **Usage:** religion(3), worship(1). This noun form is only used four (4) times in the Bible, once in Acts 26:5 (referring to the sect of Pharisees), once in Colossians 2:18 (with an expanded and alternate translation of 'Worship') and two times here in James 1:26&27.

BibleHub.com gives this definition of "religion" *"an underlying sense: reverence or worship of God or gods), worship as expressed in ritual acts"*.

It would be nice to be able to sit down and talk with James as to why he introduces this word rather than using the word 'Faith' as he does in the very next verse in **James 2:1**... ***My brothers and sisters do not hold your FAITH in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.***

Faith = <4102> πίστις *pistis*. **Usage:** faith(238), faithfulness(3), pledge(1), proof(1). Faith is used 243 times in the New Testament.

But I believe it is because he wants to emphasize the 'activity or practice' of faith in a way that is worshipful, reverent and honoring, in this case to God. It makes sense in the light of James desire to challenge Christians to be authentic and active in the practice of our faith. James seems to be forcefully indicating what Authentic Faith is... it is faith that is active and obedient to God's Word. Ones' 'Religion' which is the outward practice of ones faith, should be authentic to God's Word by putting into action your faith.

In the case of **James 1:26,27**...²⁶ ***If anyone thinks themselves to be religious yet does not bridle their tongue but deceives their own heart, this person's religion is worthless.*** ²⁷ ***Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world....***

Your religion (faith in practice) includes bridling (i.e. controlling) your tongue, and showing care, concern and mercy to those who are in need, the helpless...examples given here are orphans and widows. This, by the way, reinforces one of the key models of the early church...Common Care & Concern. We learn from this that we as the 21st Century Church, should be actively practicing our religion by putting our faith into action caring for those who are in need.

Points No. 1 & 2 from this passage are:

1. Authentic Faith Is Characterized By Controlled And Loving Speech.
2. Authentic Faith Is Demonstrated By Caring Sacrificially And Respectably To Those In Need.

James then continues this theme and expands it by bringing in the ‘un-religious’ attitude and practice of favoritism. This may seem out of place, but if you think about it, we often overlook those in need because we actually have a sense of disdain for them and may categorize them as lazy or not some one we want to ‘socialize’ with as we may with those who are rich, healthy, powerful or beautiful. In a sense we ‘dishonor’ those who are not as well off as we would like.

Listen to what James says in

James 2:1-10...*My brothers and sisters do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and is dressed in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is*

wearing the bright clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called? ⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as violators. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all.

Point No. 3 is added in this passage:

1. Authentic Faith Is Characterized By Controlled And Loving Speech.
2. Authentic Faith Is Demonstrated By Caring Sacrificially And Respectably To Those In Need.
3. Authentic Faith Does Not Work On The Basis Of Favoritism, But On Genuine Love That Reflects An Obedience To God’s Law & Word.

Jump to verse 14

¹⁴ What use is it, my brothers and sisters, 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," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith also, 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 acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless?

Now move to verse 26...

²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Point No. 4 is added in this passage:

1. Authentic Faith Is Characterized By Controlled And Loving Speech.
2. Authentic Faith Is Demonstrated By Caring Sacrificially And Respectably To Those In Need.
3. Authentic Faith Does Not Work On The Basis Of Favoritism, But On Genuine Love That Reflects An Obedience To God's Law & Word.
4. Authentic Faith Must Be Put Into Practice, If Not, It Is Useless & Dead.

A Phrase To Ponder...

Faith in Our Hearts is Evident in the Fruit of Our Lives.

(Platt. P. 39)

Our Religion (Faith In Action) Is Not The Means Of Our Salvation. It Is The Natural, Authentic Expression And Evidence Of Our Salvation.

***Putting Our Faith into Action Will Enable Us To...
Walk With God in a Right Relationship, and
Live with One Another in Right Relationship.***

The following references were utilized in preparation of this message:

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- ...**Constable**, Thomas L. *Notes on James, 2014 Edition*.
<http://soniclight.com/d/f/constable/notes/pdf/james.pdf>
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- ...**Townsend**, Jim. *New Testament Highlights*. David C. Cook., Elgin, IL.
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Following is the full passage of Chapter 2.

James 2: 1-13...*My brothers and sisters do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and is dressed in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called? ⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as violators. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do murder, you have become a violator of the Law. ¹² So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. ¹³ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What use is it, my brothers and sisters, 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," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith also, 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 acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac 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 credited 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. ²⁵ In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works also 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