

Joyful Life Bible Studies

JAMES 2:21-26

Lesson 10

FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. THE FAITH THAT WORKS is the title of Pastor Chuck's brief commentary on James. Explain the meaning of this title in relationship to James 2:14-20.
 - a. In what way does James 2:14-20 relate to the *heart of the book of James*? 1:22
2. Note and mark the paragraph divisions of this week's study. Briefly state the key thought of each paragraph:
 - a. James 2:21-24
 - b. James 2:25,26
3. Abraham and Rahab are used in James 2:21-26 to illustrate the principle of James 2:14-20. These two examples of *genuine faith evidenced by works* present a striking contrast of character, culture, and class. Observe this by writing the two word description following their names in these verses:
 - a. Abraham _____
 - b. Rahab _____
4. *These disparate, incongruous examples compel us to recognize that **all believers**, no matter what their nationality, status, circumstances or maturity are to back up their profession of faith with works consistent with their claim. See this from the following verse and begin your study of James 2:21-26 with a prayer expressing your desires in response to your study.*

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus
to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

-Ephesians 2:10 NIV

SECOND DAY: Read James 2:21,22

1. Observe the two rhetorical questions in James 2:21,22. How was Abraham's faith *justified by his works* (demonstrated to be genuine)? Genesis 22:1-19; James 2:21b

- a. It has been suggested that for a clearer understanding of James 2:21 and 24, we might read the phrase this way: Was not Abraham our father *shown* justified by his works. *Justified* means: *declared righteous* (just-as-if-I'd never sinned). According to Romans 4:1-3 when was Abraham *justified*? See also Genesis 15:6.

(1.) When were we *justified* (declared righteous)? Romans 4:5

2. Forty years after Abraham *believed* in the Lord (Genesis 15:6) he was confronted with a crisis, that through his obedience, confirmed his faith. James states in verse 21 that Abraham's offering of Isaac is a *work*. What does the writer of Hebrews 11:17a (17b-19) declare about this?

- a. What does James want us to see in James 2:22 that reconciles these two statements? (*perfect* means *complete*) See this from the NIV: *You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.*

(1.) How does our obedience to God's commands demonstrate our *faith* to be genuine?

3. Why do you think James is insisting that believers understand clearly the relationship between *faith* and *works*?

- a. What does II Corinthians 13:5 tell us to do? (*reprobate* here means *counterfeit*)

- b. Some genuine believers might tell you that they were beginning to doubt their salvation because they were weak in works. How would you encourage them? See I John 3:(19-22)23,24.

Pastor Chuck says:

*Both in Abraham's day and the present,
a man can only be justified through true faith in Jesus Christ
which will manifest itself in our Christlike works.*

THIRD DAY: Read James 2:23,24

1. Abraham's offering of Isaac verified Genesis 15:6. He *believed* God. He believed and acted upon God's promise. Hebrews 11:17(18,19) *His belief was not merely in what God said but his faith was centered in the very character of God. And his trust in God's promise was credited or counted (imputed) to him for righteousness. It has been said that Genesis 15:6 finds its ultimate significance and meaning in Abraham's life of obedience. Think of the following statement in relationship to James 2:23: Had there been no works, Abraham would not have been justified; the reason would be that the absence of works would indicate that he had no real faith. With this in mind explain why there is no contradiction between Romans 4:3 and James 2:21.*
 - a. How does Abraham's faith in God stimulate you to a greater degree of trust? Use Romans 4:19-21 as an inspiration for your answer.
2. What does James want us to *see* or clearly understand through his illustration of Abraham's faith? James 2:24 Answer in your own words.
3. How does Ephesians 2:8-10 help you keep your theology straight about *faith* and *works*?
4. What does James 2:23c say Abraham was called?
 - a. From Genesis 22:18 and John 15:14, why do you think he was called this?
 - b. *Obedience is the requirement for friendship with God. Think of this in relationship to your life. How does the believer's life reflect he is a Friend of God? Give a practical example.*

*This is a faithful saying,
and these things I will that thou affirm constantly,
that they which have believed in God
might be careful to maintain good works.*

-Titus 3:8

FOURTH DAY: Read James 2:25

1. After walking with Abraham, the great man of faith and the Friend of God, we're not quite prepared for our encounter with Rahab, the harlot. If you have time, do a brief *Jericho Today* newspaper report on her and the events in Jericho from Joshua 2:1-24; 6:(1-21)22-25. Use the journalist's questions who, what, when, where, and why (how, also if you desire) as a guideline for this. If you have not the time, using the above scriptures, do a brief write-up on Rahab and the events recorded in these verses. Notice she was a Gentile.
 - a. From Joshua 2:(9-11a)11b record what Rahab *believed* about God that moved her to hide the spies.
 - b. What does Hebrews 11:31 add to this scenario? Notice Rahab is commended for her faith, not her immorality.
 - (1.) What do the following verses reveal about Rahab's life after being spared?
 - (a.) Joshua 6:25b
 - (b.) Matthew 1:(1)5,6 (Rahab-Rachab)
 - (c.) Whose mother did she become? Ruth 4:21,22
 - (2.) Even though her earthly biography describes her as *harlot*, how do you think her heavenly biography describes her?
2. Rahab's action in sheltering the spies stemmed not from fear but from her faith in God. How is this an example for you?
 - a. Whose lives were spared because of her *faith in action*? Joshua 2:(15)16; 6:23-25
3. What token did the spies give Rahab to save her family? Joshua 2:(12c)18
4. The scarlet thread of Rahab's story assured salvation for her household (Joshua 6:17). The scarlet thread of redemption through Christ's blood winds all through the scriptures. Selah. What color thread does the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:21a clothe her household in?
 - a. How might that speak to you about the *work* of prayer for your family?

*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her own works praise her in the gates.*

-Proverbs 31:30,31

FIFTH DAY: Read James 2:26

1. James summarizes his exhortation concerning *faith* and *works* in this last verse of chapter 2. Seriously consider his statement in verse 26. What parallels do you see in *the body without the spirit* and *faith without works*?
 - a. If you picture *faith without works* as comparable to a corpse, you readily grasp the emphasis of James' teaching in verses 17,20 and 26. Why is *faith without works* depicted as *dead*?
2. What does Titus 1:16 reveal about some who profess to know God?
 - a. What do we learn about *doing works* from Matthew 7:21-23?
3. Think about I Timothy 2:(9)10 when you're getting dressed each day. With what is the godly woman to *adorn* herself? Use other versions if you desire.
 - a. What does this mean in your life on a daily basis?
 - b. List the *good works* recorded in:
 - (1.) I Timothy 5:10 use other versions if you desire
 - (2.) Acts 9:36,39b
4. Select a few of the following verses, all if you have time, and state what they reveal about *works* that are consistent with our faith:
 - a. Titus 2:(11-13)14
 - b. Titus 3:1b
 - c. Titus 3:8
 - d. Titus 3:14
 - e. Hebrews 10:24
 - f. I Peter 2:12

- g. Circle one of these verses to meditate on. Write it out on a card or post-it-note. Place it where you can see it often. Which scripture did you choose and where did you place it?
5. What comfort and counsel do you find in Revelation 2:2a,4, 5?
6. With what attitude are we to serve the Lord? Psalm 100:2a
- a. What does this say to you about a complaining, uncooperative, or sour disposition in our *works*? See this from God's perspective in Deuteronomy 28:47,48 (aren't you glad we are under grace and not under the law).
- b. How do you maintain a joyful spirit in the doing of your *works*?

*Let none hear you idly saying "There is nothing I can do,"
While the world around is dying and the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly, let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly, when He calleth, "Here am I," send me, send me."*

-Daniel March

SIXTH DAY: Review James 2:21-26

1. How did Abraham and Rahab's belief affect their behavior?
- a. If our belief (faith) does not produce *works* what should we recognize about our *faith*?
- (1.) *Works* are what we *do* in response to our salvation. Why can we NEVER be saved (born again) by *works*?
2. Summarize the relationship between *faith* and *works* in your own words.
- a. What is the difference between one who does good works but does not have genuine faith and the one who does good works as a result of his/her genuine faith?

3. Abraham's faith held nothing back from God. Rahab's faith held nothing back from human need. What example is there in this for you?
 - a. Which of these two examples speaks the most powerfully to you today? Why?
4. Think about this: Do my *works* reflect my faith? What particular thought or scripture from this lesson will help you with this?
 - a. What might distract or hinder a genuine Christian from (godly) *works*?
 - b. What do you learn about *works* from Colossians 3:17,23?
5. Complete this lesson and chapter 2 by reading I Corinthians 3:12-15. Comment on how these verses speak to you.
6. How do you want James 2:21-26 to affect your life?

*© matchless honor, all unsought,
High privilege, surpassing thought
That Thou should call us, Lord to be
Linked in work-fellowship with Thee!*

-Anon.

