

James 02

by John W. Bramhall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God's goodness and obeying His word in order to be fruitful for Him and overcome temptation.

Duration: 59:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 15:14-15, 2 Corinthians 3:2, James 1:19-22

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Obedience To God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of proving our Christian faith through practical evidence in our daily lives. He refers to the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:2, where he describes believers as living epistles known and read by all. The preacher highlights the dangers faced by Christians in the world and encourages the audience to study and meditate on the word of God. He emphasizes the need for obedience and action, stating that faith without works is meaningless. The sermon concludes with an exhortation to be swift to hear and slow to speak, emphasizing the importance of listening to and obeying God's word.

Transcript

As we continue the study of the Epistle of James, may we mention how appropriate it has been to have James describe to us practical Christianity in encouraging God's children always to let patients have their perfect work in the midst of our trials. We have noticed in our preceding lesson, in James chapter 1, that though we experience testings and trials, we can never attribute to God that he is the source of evil temptations. Now, as we continue in this chapter of James, chapter 1, commencing at verse 17, the beloved apostle declares, in contrast, that we only receive goodness at the hand of the Lord.

The Lord is good if the testimony of many writers in the word of God and James also now dwells upon the goodness of God. Every good gift and every perfect gift, like James, is from above and cometh down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Verse 16.

How reasonable it is to believe that God will never tempt us to do evil, when he is a God who sends every good and perfect gift, and with an unchanging character. His blessings upon his children are from heaven above, and he is the Father of light. He is not the Father of darkness.

Not one minute degree of change, not one variation, not even a shadow of turning, can ever be found in him, blessed be his name. And what James, in substance, is declaring is the Lord is good, and if there are

any individuals who can testify to this fact, certainly it can be the children of God. Furthermore, to suggest that God would tempt us to do evil is also preposterous, for has he not made us by the new birth his children? For know what James continues to say in the 17th verse, of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first group of his creatures.

One of the best antidotes to trial and temptation is to remember how God made us his children, and why. First of all, James declares of his own will he begathers. Does not this speak to us of the new birth? Did not John the Apostle write in his first chapter of the gospel, John chapter 1 verses 12 and 13, but to as many as received Christ, to them gave he the power, the right, the privilege, the authority to be called the sons or the children of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God? My beloved friend, may I ask you kindly, have you been born again? Are you a child of God? Now, James goes on to tell how God brought to pass this new birth.

He begathers with the word of truth. The divine instrument that the Spirit of God uses to effect the new birth is the word of God. Peter agrees with James concerning this when he writes in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 23, being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever, it is the word of God which is the divine instrument by the Holy Spirit used when the gospel is preached, telling us of the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ, presenting the message of life eternal, offering life eternal to every sinner who will believe upon the Lord Jesus and who will receive him.

We ask again, my beloved listener, have you done this? When, oh how we can indeed remember the words of the Lord Jesus, except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot see or even enter the kingdom of God. And we thus recognize that the Spirit of God is the one who regenerates the person who believes upon the Lord Jesus. The regenerating power that he uses, typified by the water, is the word of God, as Peter writes of it in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 23.

The word of God is that corruptible seed, and as James writes about it, it's the word of truth. But please note a third thing, a third fact in the 18th verse. Not only what God has done to make us his children, not only how he has done it, but it is so very important to note why he has made us his children by the new birth, that we should be a kind of first fruit of his creatures.

We are to be definitely fruitful to him and for him in this present scene of life. What a responsibility that he has thus brought us to himself that we might be fruitful for his glory. Now, may we capitulate briefly the leading facts we've covered so far in this first chapter of James for our blessing.

First, we can say the chapter is dealt with enduring testing or temptation, trials and trouble, and we should count it all joy when they come, and be happy in the knowledge blessed is the man that endures temptation. And if we need wisdom, and which we surely do, let us go to God in prayer in every trial to thus find that needed wisdom, and understand the need for enduring the testing to his glory, and let us realize that we have a God, as we have noticed in our closing verses so far, that is nothing but a good God, and let us indeed never make a mistake about this. The Lord is good.

Think of the words of Nahum, Nahum the prophet, chapter one and verse seven, when he said, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him. How can God be accused of tempting us to do evil when he makes us his children by the new birth, through the precious word of truth, for the purpose of making us firstfruits of his creatures, producing divine fruit for him in our lives?

How we should thus recognize that James indeed seeks to encourage us to be fruitful for the Lord. Now, let us go on and note in verses 19 through 21, what James declares regarding what I think, what I believe we can say, is the best antidote for temptation, how to face it, and how to overcome it.

Note that verse 19 and 21, they both begin with the word wherefore. Because of the preceding verses and their truth, here is a positive presentation of responsibility, a positive course of action that should strengthen, and will strengthen us in all the testings and trials of life. Wherefore? Wherefore? Now, note what verse 19 says, and verse 20 together.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Now, here we have an injunction, an exhortation, first to be swift to hear, and may I suggest that this is the leading thought and the leading theme of this next section. Swift to hear! But what to hear? To hear what? There can be but one answer to that question.

To hear the word of our God. How can a Christian be fruitful to God and for God in the midst of temptations and trials of life, unless he or she pays attention to the word of God? I hope that you notice the swiftness in which God wants us to show towards Him and His word. How many of us are swift? Do we show any speed? Do we have any concern to hear the word of God? First of all, in our private devotion, and the reading and the meditation of God's word, are we swift to listen to His voice? God speaks to us through His word.

His word is His voice to our hearts. Are we listening? Let me quote a verse from Isaiah chapter 50, verse 4, a prophetic and a truly prophetic fact in the daily life of the Lord Jesus when He was upon the earth, saying, "'The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned or the instructed.' Before our Savior ever used His tongue in the daily walk that was His upon the earth, and to speak, He found it, first of all, more important to listen to His Father's voice." My beloved Christian friends, so should we.

Oh my beloved, far greater than speaking, for the Lord is listening to the Lord. But not only in private devotion should we be hearing and listening to His voice, but what is the reason that so many Christians seem to fail to hear the word of God in public when opportunity is given? It's a strange fact that we are much more fast and swift to speak than we are to listen. Surely we are convicted by this, even the preachers, for how much more important is the responsibility to be swift to hear.

How often the Savior, when He was upon the earth, said this expression, "'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,' and how important this factor is when trials and temptations come across the path of life. It is God's word that alone can guide us through these troubles safely." Now, we should not only note that we are to be swift to hear, but also slow to speak, and slow to react. Is this not so true of us that when troubles come we're very prone to let off steam very quickly, to blow our top, as we may often say, to complain, and to grumble? Yes, we may even get angry because of trouble.

And what happens when we do get angry? Does it help us? Does it justify God? Does it work out for His glory? Never! For James says the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. When we do complain, when we do murmur, when we do grumble, we only dishonor God. We do not honor Him.

But, if we would be swift to say, "'Lord, what lesson, what lessons have you to teach me in, and through, and by this trial?' and then search His word for our comfort, for counsel, for encouragement, how much

better it would be for us. Yet there is, if there not, another practical application of the words of James, as he writes, "Be swift to hear, be slow to speak, be slow to wrap.' For not only is the counsel needful when God permits various testings in our lives, but also when we may be even subjected to unkind and even unjust criticism, and even condemnation by others. Are we not quick? Are we not prone to let the flesh rise up in what we call righteous indignation against the offender, and we feel compelled to give that person a good piece of our mind in retaliation? Ah, there's been many a quarrel extended, and many separations of friends and relatives, all because we permitted that unruly member the tongue to let fly with bitter words of hatred.

Yet we need always to remember these words that James has written, not alone in our relationship with God, but even to with one another. "Be swift to listen to one another, be slower to speak, and slower to wrap.' One long ago wrote the appropriate statement I never forgot. Think twice before you speak, and then speak to yourself.

All this has a bearing on the theme of James chapter one, the trials of faith, the testing of our patience. The evidence of such patience will be manifested when we are swift to hear, and not swift to speak, or swift to become wrapped. Surely we can recognize the character of Christ.

The image of God can be reflected as we thus pass through the testings and trials of life in this manner. Oh, we think of the great hymn, O patient spotless one! Our hearts in meekness strain to bear thy yoke, and learn of thee that we may rest obtain. O Jesus, thou art enough, the mind and the heart to fill, thy patient light to calm the soul, thy love its fear dispel.

O fix our earnest gaze, O holy Lord, on thee, that with thy beauty occupied we elsewhere none may see." And, as we continue, let us just be quick to realize this, as we have followed it in this manner to the glory and to the help of our God. How precious to realize it! But, now we come to the second occasion where James uses the word wherefore in verse 21, reminding of our responsibility in relation to the testings and trials of life. Wherefore, lay apart, lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls.

How important, again, is the emphasis that the word of God should be within our hearts? The word of God within our hearts is the safest protection for God's children, to enlighten the mind, to purify the heart, and restrict the inclinations of the flesh, and strengthen us to do the will of God. We must take in the word of God. It must be implanted in the heart and in the life of spiritual strength at all times, and especially it is vital in the temptations and the testings of faith.

The apostle John, in his first epistle, chapter 2, writes of young men, saying, ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you. First John 2, verse 14, he also adds, ye have overcome the wicked one. My fellow Christians, are you and am I taking in the word of God into your heart and mind? There is not only salvation for the soul found through the word of God, but the word salvation is a wide meaning to be saved from danger.

We face many dangers as Christians going through this scene. Let us read the word, let us study the word, let us meditate upon it day and night, and do as James exhorts, receive it with meekness, laying aside all that which is filthy and gnawny, and taking the engrafted word for the deliverance through the trials and difficulties of the past. But also, to complement this fact, to prove this truth, there will be the evidence that follows in verse 22, but be ye doers of the word, not hearers, only deceiving your own self.

What an important conclusion this is, for if there is no obedience to keep the word of God, what good does it do to hear it? Does not this strike a heavy blow with the conscience? Is it not sadly true that we can be hearers of the word of God only, and never doers of it, never carrying out in our daily life its truth, never obeying its precepts? Alas, this is a sad fact in many Christian testimonies, and our hearts and consciences need to be searched under the powerful, convicting rays of the word of God by the Holy Spirit. One thing is very certain, to profess to know God's word, but never live up to it, never deceive anyone but our own self. To what does James liken such a person? Read his words that follow in verses 23 and 24, for if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's likened to man, a man beholding his natural face in the glass, for he beholdeth himself, and he goeth his way, and he straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest obstacles for Christians to be doers of the word is that when they hear it or read it, too frequently we show too quickly that we are exceedingly ready to forget it. Oh, I'm often persuaded that in our gathering the moment that the sermon, the ministry is finished, we're apt to begin forgetting what we have heard. The word does not stay with us, and this is no doubt frequently the case, when even after any searching sermon has been preached, generally the message can be forgotten when the Amen is uttered.

Reminds me of the story that I heard concerning a preacher. He preached the same sermon for a great number of weeks. Well, after many weeks of listening to the same message, you can imagine that the congregation began to complain, and this they did greatly, and then the pastor bluntly told his congregation, when you start living out the sermon I preach, then I'll give you another one.

Well, I wonder how long we would have to wait for the next one if every preacher did that. I'm sure it would be a very long wait before we heard the next sermon. Let me just reflect very seriously about this with you.

As a minister of the word of God, and after so many, many years in the ministry for which I thank God for his grace within it, I'm deeply troubled today as to the effectiveness of one's preaching. The outward evidence of Christ-like results in the lives of those to whom one ministers the precious truth. My beloved, I believe that every congregation of believers, wherever gathered, should give more attention to carrying out the message which God may have given through his service.

Beloved, there is no question of doubt we fall far short, greatly short, of James' exhortation. Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only. Let us note very carefully what James declares.

An earnest gaze let us get as we follow on in the reading the blessing that he declares we'll follow if we are doers of the word. It's in verse 23. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

I raise the question, how many Christians come to the preaching of the word of God, and the teaching of his truth with the intention, Lord, I'm not only coming to hear the word, I'm coming to know what I should do with it. That's the man, that's the woman. Who comes in that particular manner, who will get the blessing not to be a forgetful hearer, but to be a persistent doer.

And may I point out, it relates, and it illustrates, and it describes a person who really looks deep into the word of God. Know what James says, he looks into the perfect law of liberty, and the expression in the Greek idiom is, he stoops down intently to look into that word. Just like Peter did in John 20, as well as in Luke 24, when he went with his companion John, they raced to the tomb of the Lord Jesus that was

reputed to be empty.

But it was Peter who stooped down to investigate if the tomb of Jesus was really empty. Read the account. Peter and John both ran to the sepulchre.

John looked into it, but Peter did more than that. He entered into the tomb, and he made intense search and proved, yes, it was empty. Beloved, we can raise the question, how do we search the scriptures when listening to the word of God? Are we intent on doing what the word of God is declaring us to do, and to be? What a challenge! You may raise the question, what is this perfect law of liberty? It's only the word of God.

Could be nothing else. The law of liberty is the word of God, and the Christian who follows it in obedience, that's the Christian who has true liberty. Said the Lord Jesus, the truth, if the truth shall make you free, then are ye free indeed.

You know, my beloved, may I say, certainly we can realize the word of God is the basis upon which, and from which, you and I must base our testimony of life. And again, let's reflect with James, with emphasis. We're not to be just hearers.

The word is given that we may carry it out, and that will be true freedom indeed. The closing verses of our chapter, verses 26 and through 27, they continue to testify to the genuine evidence of the practical Christianity. Please let me note them with you very carefully.

The Spirit of God writes the word. Look at them carefully yourself. Now, let me just plainly declare what they cover, and they cover evidences that are genuine of a practical Christian that is a doer of the word, as well as a hearer.

First of all, says James, that man, that person will bridle his tongue. Oh beloved, what a testimony! Oh, what a testimony! Later on in the epistle, James has much more to speak about the tongue, but can we not notice something? And I hope we do. I wish to note it myself.

As the teaching of the epistle continues, and the depth of it seems to become deeper, is not James certainly developing experiences in Christian practical Christian living that will thus be proved by the character and the conduct of God's child? And one great testimony, and the ability of being a patient Christian, Christlike, is to be able to bridle the tongue. James later says in the following chapter that that we hold in the heart, we hold in the mouth of the horse and the mule, they're held in with it and bridled. Remember the words of the psalmist in Psalm chapter 32? Be not as the horse or as the mule, whose mouth must be held in with it and bridled.

Beloved, may God help us to know how to bridle our tongues. That's one of the evidences of a good, practical, consistent, patient Christian. One breathes the prayer, Lord make me like this.

Second, you'll find in these same verses, not only is the evidence of a bridled tongue, but the evidence of a clean life. He lives a clean life. Oh my beloved, how the godliness of the life is important.

Teach me to live and the cleanliness of the life. Remember the prayer the apostle Paul mentioned in First Timothy chapter two, and it's the assembly prayer meeting that is in view in that chapter, and how he exhorts the men. I would that men, not men and women, it's the Greek word for the masculine man.

I would that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy and pious hands. What does he mean, clean hands? My beloved brother, in the prayer meeting, God wants the men that pray to be clean in life, and James is stating the evidence of practical Christianity is manifested by the cleanliness of the life. And then third, that Christian in his and her evidence also manifest love toward others, and even visits and cares for those who are in need.

That's true religion. Visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, in love toward others, ministering truly. Here is the meaning of the word religious.

The only place in your New Testament you have the word religion. Once in the whole New Testament, and in its true character, it's a controlled tongue. It's a clean life, and it is a life of sacrificial service.

Oh, how we should realize these are the testimonies regarding the manifestation of true faith in the midst of temptation and trial. Christian character and conduct will thus be produced. Oh God, help us to indeed realize this.

How many times I've said in the past when you read the epistle of James, it's Christianity in overall. In other words, it's Christianity at work. May God help us all to manifest true Christianity in practical testimony.

Beloved friends, we now come to the second chapter in the epistle of James for our consideration, following what we have noted regarding chapter one and its theme, where the endurance and the trial and testings of faith were thus revealed. But, as we come to chapter two and approach the chief subject of the whole chapter, it is a twofold one. In verses one through thirteen, the theme is this, faith that reveals itself in love, which is unquestionably a true living faith.

Second, from verse fourteen through twenty-six, it is faith that reveals itself in works. That is true Christian faith. Consider, first of all, the section before us, faith that is proved by love, from verses one through thirteen.

In verses one through seven, we find that true Christian faith in love will never show partiality to any person or persons in the assembly of believers. Literally, you may read verse one in the following way, My brethren, do not practice your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, by showing partiality. Then follows by James a description of such an act of partiality, as you may read in verses two and three.

By way of example, two men come into the gathering. One is a rich man, the other a poor man, as indicated by their clothing. James accuses the saints of the synagogue or assembly of favoring the rich one and giving him a place of prominence, but at the same time looking in contempt upon the poor brother and giving him an inferior place.

If you really note what James says, and do it carefully, in verse three, the rich man gets a seat, but the poor man has to stand. This verse virtually was the sin of judging, and undoubtedly being committed in the synagogues by those early Christian Jews, as James suggests in the fourth verse, showing such partiality and being judges with evil thoughts. Yet, is it not remarkably true what James declares in verse five? Have not God chosen the poor of the world, the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and to be heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him? Did not the Lord Jesus declare when he was upon the earth when the rich young ruler turned away, rejecting his call? Verily I say unto you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19.23. Has not the apostle Paul also referred to the same fact in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 26, reminding us that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called? The Savior, when he was upon the earth, warned of the dangers of riches, and so have the apostles. They are snares. Riches can become a snare to lead the heart from God, but let us not fail to realize that this does not always mean it is true of every person.

For, thank God, there are a few, even in the word of God and through the centuries, who have not permitted their wealth to keep them from Christ, but have followed him. Yet, the warning concerning the love of money must be heeded by all of us. But, note very carefully the James accusation against the same saints to whom he writes in verse 6. He tells them, but ye have despised the poor.

It is very evident that they were actually showing this in impartiality, and so despise the poor. How needful it is that we realize there is no distinction to be manifested in the fellowship of Christians. The truth of this is very precious.

The one level for all believers in God's family, whether by nature, by earthly standards, they are rich, or whether they are poor in this world's good, they are to be held upon the same level, and have the same love, one for another, and to show no partiality in any direction. For, to show partiality to one or the other would be sin. It is commonly true, not only in the time when Jesus and when James rather wrote, but even today, that the rich appear to oppress the poor, as the apostle states in verse 6. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat, or the courts of law? There are exceptions to this, we know, but in general this can be true.

In a later chapter, James especially condemns the unjust treatment by the rich upon the poor, and he warns of a future day of divine retribution. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called, continues the apostle. But, the particular lesson that James is emphasizing for us is this.

Follow the royal law of love toward both the rich and the poor in your congregation. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and if it is done ye do well, says God. Now, to summarize this lesson, true faith in Christ will never show partiality in respect of one believer above another, and in relation to the saints to whom the apostle addresses this epistle, it is unfortunate they were doing this.

They were showing partiality. What words of condemnation are now written by James in verse 9? But, if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. The portion of scripture just covered presents a searching challenge to Christians today.

Do I love some Christians above other Christians? Oh, cannot that be easily done? For different reasons. Do I show respect to persons because of some personal like, or some personal dislike? The words of the beloved apostle Paul in Philippians 2, in verse 2, are so very appropriate for all believers to prayerfully consider and obey. Said Paul, fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love of one accord and of one mind.

Let us take the lesson deeply to our hearts, we who know our Lord Jesus Christ, that true Christian faith must prove itself by love to one another, in honor, as Paul wrote, preferring one another, as he has written elsewhere. Oh my beloved Christian friend, may you and I indeed manifest this true love to one another in all the congregations of the Lord's people we may ever be gathered in. Now, after revealing this sin of partiality, and in showing respect to persons in this chapter 2 of James, the apostle from verse 9 through 13 reminds us, in substance, that it is a sin to break even one commandment of the law, and not only that,

but to break one makes us as guilty as if we had broken the whole law.

Now, what James is actually seeking to prove is that it takes only one sin to make a sinner. Verse 10 particularly stresses this fact, saying, for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Why is James so meticulous about just one sin? Well, are there not many persons who seem to boast that they keep the law? Decidedly there are, but have they really kept it perfectly? Never.

Says James, if only one point has been broken, the verdict is you're a guilty sinner, and oh my friend, it's a chance you may be a person that is convinced that you're doing your best in order to earn salvation. Please do not take the place of denying that you're a sinner. You may not be as guilty as some.

That can be, but never say that I have not sinned. Now, James is not putting the Christian under the law, but he does insist that, though we are not under the law, but under grace, there are moral laws which still abide, even under the new covenant of the gospel. We are to so speak, we are to so live as those who will be judged, not by the law of Moses, but by a greater law, the law of liberty, the law of love, written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the word of God.

Then James brings us to the second division of our second chapter, verses 14 to the end. This is a section that some unfortunately think that James is contradicting the teaching of Paul in regard to the doctrine of the of justification. This is definitely not the case, for if you carefully read Paul's teaching of justification in Romans 4, as well as in Galatians chapter 3, he tells us how we can be justified, and note carefully, before God, meaning to have a right standing before God, while the Apostle James is telling how we can prove our justification not before God, but rather before men.

Always keep this distinction in your mind and heart, my Christian friend, and you will never have difficulty understanding the subject of justification from the writing of Paul or the writing of James. Now, what James is telling us is that it is perfectly, perfectly reasonable for the world of the unsanct persons to expect a change in the life of a person who professes Christ as their savior. We know from Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 that a sinner is saved by grace without works, but a genuine true profession of faith will lead to good works and prove that one is a true Christian.

Christian evidence before the world is what James is demanding, and properly so. Note the 14th verse of this chapter. What does it profit my brethren though a man say he have faith and have no works? Can that faith save him? Literally, the closing phrase of the verse is, can that kind of faith save him? Professing faith that has no works.

Very frankly, James is saying that what we say with our lips does not prove the reality of faith, but what we do with our life. We do not demonstrate Christian faith by great outstanding achievements, but by doing practical deeds, even little things, day by day. Look at the apostle as he refers in verse 15 and 16, and what he writes does it not imply the practical kindness of even giving food to a destitute person, to one who is starving with hunger? Surely the small things of life are so important, and if we do these small deeds of kindness we shall be proving our profession of Christ.

James concludes this responsibility by saying, even so faith if it hath not works is dead being alone. Faith that does not produce works is not a living faith, it is dead, says James. Read the challenge in verse 18.

Yea, a man may say thou hast faith and I am works. Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. The apostle is virtually saying, don't tell me what you believe, show me what

you believe.

How true are the words of a little gospel chorus sung years ago in Sunday school? It's a grand thing to be saved and know it, but it is better to be saved and show it. Why talk about believing in Christ when you do not live it? You say you believe in God? James says so do the demons, they believe, and also he says they tremble, they tremble with fear. They know that their day of judgment is coming, they've got a reason to tremble.

So, James's conclusion is this in verse 20. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? The only way faith can be expressed in the Christian life must be by practical loving obedience to the word of God. Even, we thank God, even the, even the devil, you might say, has dead faith.

His demons believe, they acknowledge faith in God, and you've got many people who won't even believe in God, but the devils believe. But I'll tell you very frankly, though they believe in God, they're not saved, because there's nothing to show it. How often that is true.

Oh, let me consolidate the important truth of this lesson. It is a challenging one. The responsibility of proving by practical evidence our Christian faith, even the preachers.

One servant of God faithfully wrote and said these words, your sermon may last 30 or 40 minutes, but your live preachers all the week. The beloved apostle Paul wrote to his converts in Corinth in 2nd Corinthians 3 and verse 2, and he said, ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. My beloved fellow believer, others read our lines, and may it never be said of you nor of me, your life speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.

Now, the closing section of James chapter 2, verses 21 through 26, the beloved apostle brings before us from the Old Testament two living examples of faith that were proved. First, in the life of God's servant Abraham. Second, in the life of a Gentile heathen woman by the name of Rahab.

The illustration of Abraham is taken from Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 19. You may know from the life story of Abraham how anxious he was to have a son, and God promised that he would. The son was to be born of Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

Before that son was born, God had made this promise, and Abraham's faith in the divine promise brought him salvation. Know what God said in Genesis chapter 15 when he made the promise to Abraham in verse 6. It says, and Abraham believed God. He believed the Lord, and God reckoned it to him for righteousness.

These words are re-quoted in the New Testament in Romans chapter 4 and verse 3, and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Yes, we must say that Abraham was saved by grace through faith, not at once, even as we read of today in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. But then James goes on to record how that Abraham proved by his words the genuineness of his faith, as we read in verse 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by words when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? From the story recorded in Genesis 22, we can realize that Abraham's faith had matured so greatly he was not afraid to obey God.

And though he may have wondered at the request to slay Isaac, his son, in whom were all the promises of the future generations, if he had any wonder about it, the account doesn't indicate it, for it was instant obedience upon Abraham's part that is recorded a quick departure he made to the place of sacrifice with

Isaac. Hebrews chapter 11 verses 17 through 19 indicates that Abraham's faith was so developed and matured that he believed God could even raise Isaac from the dead. In short, very briefly, Abraham proved his faith by his words.

This emphasizes one of the most important principles of Christian evidence. Obedience to God's word is, without controversy, a convincing evidence of Christian faith. Faith is made perfect, brought to maturity, in Abraham's act of obedience.

May I also point out the amazing result of Abraham's faith as revealed in the word of God? He's given one of the greatest compliments in a person could ever receive. In 2nd Chronicles chapter 20 and in Isaiah chapter 41 and verse 8, Abraham is called the friend of God. What an honor! No other person in the Old Testament has been designated as such, but then our New Testament has just as great an honor of offer to God's children even today, found in the blessed words of our Savior, the Son of God.

Did he not declare to his disciples and to us, ye are my friends if you do whatever I command you? Oh, what words are these? He says, I call you no longer servants, for the servant knoweth not what is matched to doeth, but I call you friends for all things which I've heard of my father I've made known to you. John chapter 15 verse 14 and 15. My beloved Christian friends, all that you and I would seek to practice every day, living in faithful obedience to God and his word, it will indeed prevent the unsaved from criticizing us and our faith, and it will also present to them the evidence of a close relationship with God in life, as well as to those around us, and give the evidence of genuine, real faith in Christ, and testifying to all of our great salvation by the very works that we are performing for God's glory.

Then let us look at the second Old Testament illustration of faith which James records. Another worthy example. This time it's not a man, it is a woman.

It was one who was not even a member of the nation of Israel, not even a descendant of Abraham, or even Gentile woman, and one of an immoral character, Rahab the harlot, as you may have read in the book of Joshua. But, listen to the words of Jane, verse 25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them another way? Yes, she was a notorious sinner, yes indeed, but what abounding grace that God showed to this sinner who believed his word.

You may read the story of it, and you should if never you have, in the second chapter of the book of Joshua, when the messengers or the spies that Joshua had sent into the city of Jericho to spy out the land, when she hid them, she confessed them and she had heard the report regarding Jehovah, how he had brought them out of the land of Egypt, his power to deliver them from peril, and the armies of peril, and bring them across the Red Sea, and overpower their enemies in incomplete destruction. She heard it! She heard the evidence of the power of their God, and it impressed and convicted her of the reality of this Jehovah God. She felt assured in her heart that what he had promised her was real, and she told the spies, your God will do it.

But also, I want you to note something, she believed before the two spies before the two spies came into her home, she had believed it before they ever showed their faces at the door of her house. She believed the report that she had heard about God, and it was her reception and her protection of the two spies that proved what she believed, her faith in God. She risked her own life, and she knew it, to identify herself with Israel, and because of her faith, she proved by her works she became a delivered person from the judgment and the destruction of Jericho, the only one together with a family who took refuge under her

home, and in a house to be delivered from the great destruction of the city of Jericho.

It was the example of a faith that believed God, and showed it, and believed what he said, and proved it by her works, and we must confess with joy that her name has become recorded in the earthly family of Christ our Savior. You read the genealogy of our beloved, blessed Lord Jesus, in Matthew chapter one, and you'll find in the fifth verse that Rahab the caller is mentioned as one of the great ancestors of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of Mary. Now, may we not summarize the lesson that James has been bringing before us? He has been telling us, now you see that faith works to show that a man is justified, not only by the declaration of his faith alone, but by work, and in the final closing argument that the apostle writes in verse 26, he summarizes it all by saying, for if the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without work is dead also.

My beloved, it is an actual impossibility to take a dead body and ask that body to do anything, to say anything, to move even a fraction when the spirit has left the body. It's dead, lifeless. Now, what James is describing, that there can be some whose faith is absolutely lifeless, it's dead, it's not living.

Oh, how many today have a dead faith instead of a living faith in the Savior, and a living faith that is definitely proved by the evidence of the life. May we raise the question carefully, do any of our listeners have just a mere lit profession of Christianity alone? A profession that gives no practical evidence in life that Christ is really your Savior? Or, may we say you need to be born again? For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

But believing in the head is not enough. This must be done with the heart, and then there will be fruit. Many years ago, the ladies at the close of a Bible study asked me this question.

Mr. Bramall, we have a man in our city that professes to be a Christian. Most of us know when he made the profession, and we have watched him since he made that profession, and we've never seen one change in his life. We have contended with him that we do not believe his profession of faith was genuine, and that he was not born again, because not one change in his conduct which was sinful has been noted.

We've pled with him, but he says to us, I'm just as much saved as you are. The questioner said to me, Mr. Bramall, what can we say to him? Thinking very quickly, the Lord gave me the words of 1 John, chapter 2, I believe, and verse 3. If any man say that I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, that same is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Now, you would never think that the Apostle John would call anybody a liar, but I tell you he does when he knows his truth, and he particularly directs his challenge and his charge against a man that says, but he never does what he says he believes.

Do we not have many like this in professing Christendom? They say, but they do not. That was exactly what the Lord Jesus accused the Pharisees of doing. Saying, but never doing, and he called them hypocrites.

He condemned them justly. Oh, my beloved, James may seem to be a little rough, even John in his statement in his Pacifica, but oh, it's so true, and James is genuinely bringing before us that true faith will manifest itself in love toward the people of God and all, and also manifest itself in works. May we ever remember faith without works is dead, but may you and I build a life of good works upon our profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Works can never save me, but works must follow faith. Faith must be the commitment, and works will be the truth. God grants that you and I, my fellow believers, may prove our faith by our good works in the name and for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Father, bless thy precious word to our hearts, to our lives, that we may prove as Christians we are genuinely thine, by our works in Jesus' name for his glory. Amen.

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