

“Why We Believe Saving Faith Is a Working Faith”
(James 2:26; vv. 14-26)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. In our last Evangelistic message, we considered why we believe
 - a. That salvation is entirely by grace,
 - b. That those who teach there's something
 - c. You must do to be saved
 - d. Besides trusting in Jesus Christ
 - e. Are dangerously wrong.

2. We believe it's by grace
 - a. Because this is clearly what the Bible teaches: Paul writes, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - b. We believe it must be this way because grace and works are mutually exclusive.
 - (i) Grace by definition
 - (a) Is something freely given.
 - (b) It can't be earned,
 - (c) It can't be worked for –
 - (d) It must be free.
 - (e) To try to earn it is to destroy it.

 - (ii) That's why when Paul heard
 - (a) The Galatians were being circumcised
 - (b) In order to save themselves –
 - (c) Because this is what
 - (d) The Judaizers were teaching them –
 - (e) He warned them that to go down that path ‘
 - (f) Would destroy them.
 - (g) “Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:2-4).

 - (iii) Salvation – or more accurately, justification –
 - (a) God's declaration that you are not guilty, but righteous
 - (b) And that you may freely enter heaven –
 - (c) Is purely by God's free grace.
 - (d) And that it might be by grace alone
 - (e) It must be received by faith alone.

- (iv) To put it more simply:
 - (a) Jesus did it all!
 - (b) We do nothing!
 - (c) He gets all the credit!
 - (d) You and I get none!

B. Preview.

1. This morning,

- a. We're going to look at the opposite heresy –
 - (i) And both of these are heresies;
 - (ii) Either one can destroy you –

 - b. The belief that since your justification
 - (i) Is purely by God's grace,
 - (ii) Works must be pushed
 - (iii) Entirely out of the picture:
 - (a) To say you must obey Jesus Christ in any sense
 - (b) To enter into heaven at last
 - (c) Is legalism,
 - (d) Work's salvation,
 - (e) The destruction of the Gospel.

 - c. Are there people out there who believe this? Yes there are.
 - (i) The College I attended
 - (a) Was full of both professors and students
 - (b) Who taught and believed this.

 - (ii) For years many of the more prominent
 - (a) Bible teachers on the radio believed this.
 - (b) This is the position called "Easy Believism,"
 - (c) Or "Anti-Lordship Salvation,"
 - (d) By those who disagree.

 - d. Over against this, we must stress just as strongly:
 - (i) That though it's true that we're saved by grace through faith alone,
 - (ii) We are not saved by a faith that is alone.
 - (iii) True saving faith will always be accompanied by works.
 - (iv) If it isn't, it's a dead faith that can't save.
 - (v) As James tells us, "Faith without works is dead" (2:26).
- ### 2. Let's look at two things:
- a. First, what kind of works James tells us must accompany faith.
 - b. Second, how this is consistent with justification by grace through faith alone.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, what kind of works is James telling us must accompany a living and saving faith? Not surprisingly, he says works of love.
1. First the kind of love that reaches out to a neighbor –
 - a. That does something to meet his or her needs.
 - b. James writes, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 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? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself” (vv. 15-17).
 - c. It’s a love that goes beyond just well wishing –
 - (i) That’s more than just feeling sympathy for someone
 - (ii) Because of their particular plight.
 - (iii) It’s a love that actually moves us *to do* what Jesus commands,
 - (iv) “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39).
 2. He’s talking second about a love that is willing to make the greatest sacrifices for God.
 - a. The Lord told Abraham to take his only son Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering.
 - (i) This was the son God promised to give to Abraham,
 - (ii) The one he had waited for his whole life
 - (iii) The one through whom God would fulfill His promises.
 - b. God put His finger on that son
 - (i) And told Abraham to let him go.
 - (ii) Abraham didn’t even ask why: He just did it.
 - (iii) He was willing to do it because he loved God –
 - (a) More than anyone or anything else,
 - (b) That moved him to do whatever God asked.
 - (iv) He was willing to do this because he trusted God.
 - (a) He knew God wouldn’t ask for anything
 - (b) That wouldn’t ultimately work together for his good.
 - (c) He also knew
 - (1) God had said through Isaac
 - (2) His children would be named,
 - (3) And so if he sacrificed him,
 - (4) God would raise him up again,
 - (5) *Even from the ashes!*
 - (v) Abraham’s submission showed he had a true and living faith –
 - (a) The kind of faith that justifies.
 - (b) James writes, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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" (vv. 21-23).

3. He's talking, third, about a love, that is willing to put your own life on the line, if need be, because of what God said.
 - a. Rahab received the Hebrew spies that came to her in Jericho.
 - (i) When soldiers came looking for them,
 - (ii) She hid them on her roof
 - (iii) And told the soldiers they had already gone.
 - b. She believed the Word of God
 - (i) That the Lord was giving that land to His people,
 - (ii) And so she was willing to risk death,
 - (iii) Rather than hand them over.
 - (iv) And because of this, she gained her life.
 - (v) James writes, "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?" (v. 25).
4. There other aspects to saving faith,
 - a. But James points to those which are visible –
 - (i) That can be seen by others.
 - (ii) "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'" (v. 18).
 - b. A living/saving faith produces works –
 - (i) It creates more than nice feelings towards those in need – it reaches out to meet those needs.
 - (ii) It does more than make us believe that what God says is true –
 - (a) It moves us to act on that belief,
 - (b) To give up what is most precious to us, even our own lives,
 - (c) Because we're sure God means what He says.
 - c. Saving faith is a working faith – a faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6).
 - (i) If you have it, it will transform your life.
 - (ii) That's why God sent His Son into the world –
 - (a) Not just to save us from the guilt of our sins,
 - (b) Not just to save us from hell,
 - (c) But to save us from the power of sin,
 - (d) So that we might love God and our neighbor.
 - (iii) After telling us that salvation is by grace through faith
 - (a) And not by works, so that none may boast,

(b) Paul goes on to say, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

B. This brings us to our second point,

How can the view that you must do good works

Be consistent with the fact

That salvation must be by grace through faith alone?

1. The answer is simple, and yet there are so many who don’t understand.
 - a. The works that James and Paul say must accompany a living and saving faith
 - (i) Don’t earn or add to your salvation/ justification,
 - (ii) They merely show that you have it.
 - b. Another way of putting this is
 - (i) Though these works are absolutely necessary,
 - (ii) They are not meritorious –
 - (iii) They do not earn heaven.
 - c. Salvation is free –
 - (i) You can’t buy it.
 - (ii) Your works don’t buy it.
 - d. But your works can and do *show*
 - (i) That you have the kind of faith
 - (ii) That receives the righteousness of Jesus Christ
 - (iii) So that you can enter heaven.
 - (iv) They are *the evidence!*
2. Again, notice what James says, “Show me your faith without the works, and I will *show you my faith by my works*” (v. 18).
 - a. *Faith that justifies can be seen by the acts of love it produces.*
 - b. Paul tells the Galatians, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love” (5:6).
 - (i) When the Lord cleanses your heart by His grace,
 - (ii) Your life will be transformed.
 - (iii) When He cleans the inside of the cup,
 - (iv) The outside will also become clean (Matt. 23:26).
 - c. James isn’t saying that it’s enough
 - (i) To say you love God and your neighbor.
 - (ii) It must work its way out in your actions –
 - (a) You must really love God with your whole life
 - (b) And your neighbor as yourself.

- (iii) James asks, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?” (v. 14).
 - (a) The answer is, No, it can’t.
 - (b) He says, “For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (v. 26).
 - (c) Dead faith can’t save you –
 - (d) Only a living faith can:
 - (e) One that produces works.

3. In closing, let me ask you:

- a. Do you believe you have savingly trusted Jesus Christ?
- b. Do you believe you are on your way to heaven by His grace?
- c. If that’s true,
 - (i) Then His love must be in your heart,
 - (ii) And these works in your life.
 - (iii) Are they?
- d. If all you have is the belief you’re saved
 - (i) But your life hasn’t changed,
 - (a) Your faith is dead
 - (b) And so will you be one day
 - (c) Unless you repent and believe.
 - (ii) If these works aren’t there –
 - (a) And James doesn’t mean perfect works,
 - (b) Because none of us will be perfect this side of heaven –
 - (c) But if they’re not there at all –
 - (1) Then come to Jesus
 - (2) As He offers Himself again to you in the Gospel.
 - (3) Trust Him as your Savior,
 - (4) Submit to Him as your Lord.
 - (5) If you do, He will save you.
 - (6) He will give you the desire and ability to do these works.
 - (iii) If He has given you this desire,
 - (a) Seek Him to strengthen His grace in you through the means of grace
 - (b) So that you can more clearly see His love at work in you.
 - (c) This is perhaps the best way to know you’re really His –
 - (d) When you begin to live like Him.
 - (e) May He grant that every one of us here this morning
 - (f) May live like Him through His grace. Amen.