

Lessons From James

Belief + Works = Faith

(Ja 2:14-26)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning.
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series on "Lessons From James."
 - a. We looked last week at "Hearers & Doers Of The Word."
 - b. This week we will examine what James is saying which is "Belief + Works = Faith."
3. Remembering back to the introduction.
 - a. I mentioned that Luther and others, with Martin Luther leading the way, have tried to discredit James as from God because it goes in stark contrast to his view of Romans and the faith only doctrine.
 - b. Now denominationalism through the years that has held to the "faith only" doctrine have since giving up on trying to remove James or discredit it but rather say "Luther was mistaken on what James was teaching."
 - i. "James's words have sparked a tremendous debate. Is James really denying salvation by faith? Is he really suggesting that salvation can be secured only by producing good works? Is James out of step with the great apostle Paul, who so loudly trumpeted and heroically championed the doctrine of salvation by faith?... Kent Hughes helpfully explains, 'Paul's teaching about faith and works focuses on the time before conversion, and James's focus is after conversion'" (Ellsworth, R. (2009). Opening up James (91). Leominster: Day One Publications.)
 - ii. As we can see there has been a change in philosophy. Are they right though?
4. Let us see.

I. Justified By Faith

- A. Notice the similarities.
 1. **Ro 1:17** "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The **just** shall live by faith."¹
 - i. "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The **righteous** shall live by faith."¹ (emphasis mine)
 2. **Ja 2:21, 23** "Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar...23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for **righteousness.**" And he was called the friend of God." (emphasis mine)
- B. Luther had this to say concerning **Ro 1:17**
 1. "Thus I drove myself mad, with a desperate and disturbed conscience; persistently pounding upon Paul in this passage, with a parched and burning desire to know what he could mean. At last, God being merciful, as I meditated day and night on the connection of the words, namely—"The righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith"—and there I began to understand the 'righteousness of God' as that by which the righteous man lives by the gift of God, namely by faith. And

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Lessons From James

this sentence, "the righteousness is revealed," to refer to a passive righteousness, by which the merciful God justifies us through faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.' At this I felt myself straightway born again and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself. From that moment the whole face of Scripture was changed..."

(<http://goo.gl/jA6bA>)

- i. As one can see Luther came to the conclusion that **Ro 1:17** was talking about faith only, as he put it "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." (<http://goo.gl/3Svis>)

C. Does faith alone and James add up

1. Notice again the similarities.
 - i. The just/righteous shall live by faith.
 - ii. Abraham was called righteous because of belief and justified because of works.
2. Faith alone cannot add up with James' teaching and here is why...
 - i. First the only time faith alone is found in the Bible is here in **Ja 2:24**.
 - a. "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."
 - b. What does justified mean here?
 1. "to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent:— free, justify (-ier), be righteous." (Strong, J., S.T.D., LL.D. (2009). Vol. 1: A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible (23). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.)
 2. "denotes "the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal"" (Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). Vol. 2: Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (338). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.)
 3. "the act of clearing someone of transgression—'to acquit, to set free, to remove guilt, acquittal.'" (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (556). New York: United Bible Societies.)
 - c. It should be noted that context deems this word as righteous or justification however the same word is used in **Ro 1:17** is used in **Ja 2:24**. Hence why "just" is found and "justified" is found.

Lessons From James

- ii. Second biblical faith is always defined as belief plus obedience.
 - a. James shows it cannot be belief alone.
 - 1. **Ja 2:19** "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"
 - 2. **Jn 3:16** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **should** not perish but have everlasting life." (emphasis mine)
 - 3. **Jn 1:12** "But as many as received Him, to them He **gave the right** to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"
 - b. Notice it takes more than belief. Belief should get you to heaven, because it gives you the right to become a Christian. However there is more that is needed.
 - c. If faith isn't belief alone than what is added to belief to make it biblical faith...works or obedience.
 - 1. **Jn 14:15** "If you love Me, keep My commandments."
 - 2. **Mt 7:21** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."
 - 3. **Jn 14:23** "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."
 - i. **Ep 2:19-22** "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a **dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**" (emphasis mine)
 - d. Thus belief plus obedience equals a dwelling place of for God created by the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. **Ep 1:13** "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"
- iii. Third I never said belief saves is never found in the Bible.
 - a. I want to make sure I am not miss quoted by someone saying I said the Bible never says belief saves. I said belief alone is never said to save because it doesn't.

Lessons From James

- b. Just like the Bible never says repentance alone saves or obedience alone saves...it takes every step of salvation to save, no one step alone will save.
- D. What does all that mean
1. It means that neither Paul nor James is saying one is saved by faith alone.
 2. It means that people need to stop trying to justify faith alone when the Bible never says it.
 3. It means that God requires works ie obedience to save.
 - i. **Ph 2:12** "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"
 - ii. **Jn 6:28-29** "Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may **work the works of God?**" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "**This is the work of God, that you believe** in Him whom He sent.""
(emphasis mine)
 - a. Notice belief is a work.

II. Justified By Grace

- A. What about what Paul wrote concerning salvation is not by works
1. Isn't what you have said contradicted by Paul and thus God?
 - i. **Ep 2:8-9** "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."
 2. The short answer is "no there is no contradiction."
 - i. By saying biblical faith is belief + obedience we are not saying one can earn salvation by merit.
 - ii. In other words we are not saying one can "do enough" to earn heaven.
 - a. This is what Paul is saying here in **Ep 2:8-9**.
- B. Saying we can't earn salvation is different than saying we must be obedient
1. First let it be said I have never taught that one earns salvation. We can never do enough to earn our salvation from God.
 2. That doesn't mean we cannot be obedient enough for God to grant us salvation.
 3. God require we "do" certain things to become a Christian. He then requires us to "do" certain things to go to heaven.
 - i. We are required to study God's Word for salvation.
 - a. **Ro 10:17** "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - ii. We are told to have faith in Jesus as our Savior.
 - a. **Jn 3:16** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
 - b. **Jn 14:15** "If you love Me, keep My commandments."
 1. We see this is before one become a Christian based on verse 23.

Lessons From James

- iii. We are told to repent or give our life to Christ.
 - a. **Ac 17:30** "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"
 - iv. We are told to confess Jesus.
 - a. **Mt 10:32** "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."
 - b. **Ro 10:9-10** "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
 - v. We are told to be immersed for the forgiveness of sins.
 - a. **Mk 16:16** "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
 - b. **Ac 2:38** "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ESV)
 - c. **Ac 22:16** "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - d. **I Pt 3:20-21** "because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (ESV)
 - vi. We are also when saved required to be obedient as well.
 - a. **I Jn 1:7** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."
 - b. If we are not obedient we will fall from grace.
 - 1. **Ga 5:4** "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."
- C. God's grace saves through faith
- 1. Notice how obedience is a part of salvation through faith.
 - i. God has given us the free gift of grace which is Christ.
 - a. **Ro 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (ESV)
 - b. **Ti 2:11** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"

Lessons From James

- ii. As seen above we must go get it to receive it. This is seen clearly in the scriptures.
 - a. **II Th 1:8** "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- iii. Faith is required for heaven.
 - a. **He 11:6** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."
2. So if we take a hold of the free gift through belief and obedience we will be saved.
 - i. **Ep 2:8** "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"
3. We can also see that Paul is not saying that works of every sort are not in consideration in **Ep 2:8-9**.
 - i. **Ep 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (emphasis mine)

CONCLUSION

1. The truth is people can try and manipulate scripture all they want, but the true open heart will seek truth rather than seeking desire.
 - a. The truth is biblical faith is belief + obedience.
 - b. Don't be pulled into false doctrines that man spouts forth. Don't even believe this sermon take it and study it to see if it is so.
2. Question: Am I doing that which I was created for?
 - a. If so continue there in and grow abundantly always.
 - b. If not make that right today as today may be all we have.
3. Invitation
 - a. God's Plan of Salvation
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**