

## James 4

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James 2:13-2:26

No doubt you have heard critics of the Bible speaks of contradictions in the Scripture. The passage before us today is a favorite one for critics because James appears to contradict Paul here.

The operating principle in this passage is something that Philip Melancthon (a protégé of Luther), Calvin, and others have stipulated throughout the centuries: We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Good works necessarily accompany our salvation.

James is not really contrasting faith and works, as if these were two alternative options in ones approach to God. He is, rather, contrasting a faith, which, is inherently defective because it produces no works.

### 1. EMPTY CONFESSION

James puts it this way: *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?* THIS MAAAY BE ONE OF SATAN'S GREATEST TRICKS. He wants people to think that they are Christians when they are really not. The problem lies not with the CONFESSION itself, but from the implication that it does not go beyond the verbal to touch the heart and life.

If I told you I was a wonderful soloist, but every time I was asked to sing, I had an excuse, you would begin to wonder.

If I told you I was a scratch golfer, but every time you wanted to play, I refused, you would have your doubts.

What about a man who goes out of town on a business trip and takes off his wedding ring?

What about someone who claims to be a Christian and then gets drunk?

### 2. FALSE COMPASSION

One way our false faith will be revealed is by false compassion. James says people are in need, but our response is cold and uncaring.

THE BODY AND THE SOUL ARE INTERTWINED. Well-fed people can go to hell and starving people can go to heaven. Spurgeon once said, "If you offer a hungry man a tract, be sure to wrap it in a sandwich."

James wants to be sure we are getting this so he gives us a real life example. To me, Rahab is an odd choice considering all the other possibilities. She is a woman, a Gentile, a minor character in God's narrative, and a prostitute. Yet – she is said to have great faith – she hid the spies in Joshua 2. James 2:25 says *And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?*

We will look at that word JUSTIFIED in a minute. But listen to Luther: "O for a busy, living, mighty, active, thing like this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them."

### 3. SHALLOW CONVICTION

EVEN SATAN BELIEVES.

- (1) Demons are orthodox. The world is filled with people whose minds are filled with "God thoughts." Many of these God thoughts can be very orthodox and respectable. Turn to Matthew 7:31-45. I used to read that and think that it was a great distinction between Christians and pagans. But pagans don't talk like this!
- (2) The second point that James brings out here is that demons also have an emotional response to their orthodoxy. Their orthodoxy produced action! Belief always issues forth itself in some form of behavior. "LORD< LORD, LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE DONE!

So if "talk" coupled with "action" is not enough, then what is?????

### 4. A FAITH THAT LIVES

- (1) Alive toward people. By this, he obviously means what he has referred to in his example of Rahab – CONTACT WITH FAITH. The difference between just helping people and sharing life with people which will help them is FAITH. In other words, if we don't do what we do for God and His glory it is not of faith.
- (2) Alive toward God. James takes us to Abraham to show us what he means.

*2:20 do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our Father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the alter? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works."*

I told you we would come back to the word **justify**. One meaning of JUSTIFY is "to declare right." Another meaning is "to prove or demonstrate" (as in justifying a bank statement.)

Paul hammers at the first in Romans. James hammers at the second in this letter.

Being ALIVE TOWARD GOD CAN ONLY HAPPEN WHEN YOU SEE HIS BEAUTY.

Abraham had this relationship, so much so, that he carried out God's command to take his son, his only son Isaac, on top of the mountain to sacrifice him there. When God stopped him, we read the postscript to that here in James (vs. 23) – HE WAS CALLED A FRIEND OF GOD.

He knew the beauty of God, acted on it, and rested in the smile of God.

ARE YOU THERE? CAN YOU SACRIFICE YOUR MOST PRECIOUS THING ON THE ALTER TO JUSTIFY YOUR LOVE TO GOD?