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T R I N I T Y  
B I B L E C H U R C H  
D A L L A S

The Sermon

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James 2:14-26

"Portraits of Saving Faith"

August 27, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

We'll be looking at James 2:14-26 and discussing the saving nature of faith, the reality of genuine, saving faith, as we look at several portraits of faith that the apostle James shows us in this passage. So, I'll read the text and then we'll jump into it.

James chapter 2, beginning in verse 14. James writes these words: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

"But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! 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 altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness' – and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 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? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead." This is the very word of the living God, and my prayer is that each of us would receive it with humble hearts to do what it says.

Well, I want you to think about a question that is really the most important question I think you could ask yourself in this life: "How do you know that your faith is a saving faith? How do you know that your faith is genuine?" I think it's got to be the most terrifying reality in this universe that there will be in judgment many who stand before God thinking themselves justified, thinking themselves saved, ready for the gates of heaven to open for them, only to hear those words, "Depart from Me; I never knew you."

There are many in this world who are barreling toward a Christless eternity, but they don't care; and that will be a terrifying day for them. But to be deceived to think that, "I am among those whose inheritance is heaven," only to hear those words, "Depart from Me; I never knew you," what a terrifying reality; and yet, it's a reality that the Scripture speaks of often.

My mind goes to John chapter 2 when the crowds are following after Jesus, impressed by His ministry and His miracles. And do you remember what it says at the end of that chapter? It says, "They believed in Him." That's the word for "faith." But Jesus, looking at the crowd says to them, "I don't believe in you. I have no faith in you," because their faith was not a genuine faith.

There's another terrifying moment in Acts chapter 8 where there's a magician, Simon the magician, who hears the teaching of Philip, hears him preaching the gospel, and it says he believed. He joined the church; he was even baptized. But it's only a few verses later where he has a confrontation with Peter, and Peter says to him, "May your money go to hell with you. You have no part or lot in this matter." A man who professed faith, was baptized, a member in the church, and yet did not possess a genuine saving faith.

What a terrifying thought to think, "Could I wake up and stand before God in judgment and be told to depart when I thought I had lived my life believing in Him?" So the question this morning is, "How do you know if your faith is genuine? How do you know if it's the real deal?"

The Atlantic in June of 2019 produced an article with the title "Movie Prop Cash is Fooling Cashiers." You guys know what movie money is, it's fake money that they used in movies that when the explosion happens and money goes everywhere. That's not real money, it's movie money, it's fake. And it used to be very highly regulated by the FDA so they knew exactly how much had been produced so that it wouldn't go into circulation.

Now if it did go into circulation, movie money is very obviously fake. If you look closely, one twenty-dollar bill, instead of the White House on the face of it, has a shopping mall in the Ukraine. Or some will have like pink letters that say, "For counting purposes only." But the rest of it is, I mean, pretty one for one correlation.

And so the Atlantic saw this problem arising because the FDA stopped regulating movie money, so it was entering circulation. So you can actually go on Amazon and for ten bucks – don't do it – but you could get like ten grand in cash. I'm giving some of you guys bad ideas – because you can actually use the money. And most people don't check. The Atlantic says, "Give a cashier at Walmart a three-dollar bill, you'll get change." But most people just assume money is money, it's real; but not everybody.

In 2017 a Georgia man was killed when he tried to buy seven kilos of cocaine with \$230,000.00 of movie money. In 2018 a teenager here in Texas was killed when he tried to use \$200.00 of movie money to buy some weed. Why? Because drug dealers care about their cash. So here's a tip. Taking notes? If you're going to use movie money, don't buy cocaine with it, buy like a hamburger, okay.

You know, the same could be said of faith. We often just assume that our faith is real. We check a box of certain facts that we believe and we assume we're good to go. But you realize that what Jesus says in Matthew 7 is that many will say, and that includes us today, "There will be many who say, 'Lord, Lord,' and they will hear, 'Depart from Me.'"

James is concerned that we don't make a foolish assumption about our faith. If money is serious, faith is more serious. If fake money will get you busted in a drug deal, try using fake faith to get into heaven, and you will find yourself waking up in hell. It has consequences. And James poses to us the most critical question that we could ask ourselves, and it's this: "How do you know that your faith is real? How do you know that it is the real deal, that your faith will gain you entrance into glory?"

James cares, and so should you. And to help us answer this question, James exposes counterfeit faith while also showing us genuine faith. And the way he does it is really interesting in this passage. He gives us three biographical sketches of different characters who lived in Scripture and we discover in Scripture. So he shows us three people; and it'd be like having them come up on stage and say, "Okay, Person Number One, if you could come up." He gives a biographical sketch, tells us a little bit about their life, and then dissects their faith. Now I'm not going to ask for volunteers, and you'll see for obvious reasons, because the first person he introduces us to is a demon. So I figure there's no good way to have a demon volunteer come up here.

He introduces us to a demon, He then introduces us to a Pagan, and thirdly, a prostitute. And here James the brother of Jesus Christ is going to teach us a lesson on faith by showing us the life of a demon, a Pagan, and a prostitute. So, why don't we meet Person Number One this morning, a demon.

Let me read verses 14-20: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but doesn't have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to

them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

"Now someone will say to me, 'You have faith and I have works.' Well, show me your faith apart from your works, I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?" James introduces us to a demon.

Now a few things about a demon, this demon even. He would have been there at creation. When God created the world the demons were there. Job 38:7 says, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," sons of God being another term for all of these angelic realm. Demons witnessed Genesis 1:1; they were there, they saw creation.

This demon would have been in heaven. Scripture often talks about the demons being with God in heaven, even being called before His throne. In 2 Chronicles 18:18, God calls all of the angelic, the good and the evil, before His throne to speak to them." And so you just think of what a demon has witnessed and beheld with his very eyes. They dwelt in heaven.

You know, we often hear of heaven; and for the Christian, the hope of heaven is one of the greatest encouragements you can have in this difficult life, isn't it, knowing the glories of heaven are coming. Well, this demon has been there, he's seen it all in all of its resplendent beauty. He was in heaven.

Just think of what he would have heard in heaven. You think the singing of the saints is beautiful – and it is – but the singing of heaven. We see in Isaiah 6 the angels singing of Yahweh, right, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is filled with His glory." The demons would have at one point engaged in that singing, and have heard it.

If you think of the demonic during Jesus' public ministry, it's interesting; they interact with Jesus incarnate often, conversationally; they talk to Him. On His first day of Ministry, Mark 1, Jesus encounters a demon-possessed man, and the demon cries out and calls to Jesus. And it's fascinating, in these conversations between Jesus and the demonic, they know who Jesus is. There's no questions. Even we as people, we're trying to figure out, "Who is this guy? Wow, He speaks with authority. This isn't a normal rabbi; maybe He's sent from God."

Remember Nicodemus: "Well, we know You come from God, because nobody could do this stuff that You do, Jesus." Well, the demons were already there, they knew He was God. Just look at how they refer to Him: "Son of God. Holy One of God. Jesus, Son of the Most High God." The demons know who Jesus Christ is, and they had no choice but to obey Him.

Have you ever thought about the demons crying for mercy? "What have You to do with me? Have You come to cast me out before my time?" Jesus had total authority over the demonic. And even His disciples who had delegated authority from Jesus, the demons could not resist them; they too were cast out by the power of Jesus' name. And so the demons know that Jesus was divine, the demons know that Jesus has authority, and our first character, this demon, would have had remarkable theology.

Has that ever been a thought to you that the demons believe everything about Jesus that you believe? Same thing. If we were to ask a demon to write a systematic theology, apart from John MacArthur's, it would be the greatest systematic theology. They know details of triune relationship that we probably haven't even considered yet. They've been there, they've seen it, they've beheld it. Remarkable theologians, subservient to Christ's authority; that's faith.

That word "believe" where James says, "Even the demons believe, *pisteuó*, is faith. That's faith. The demons have faith. But what does their faith produce? Notice verse 14, "What good is it if someone says he has faith but

doesn't have works? Can that faith" - now notice James says that's faith, but it's a certain kind of faith - "Can that kind of faith save him?" No, because it's a useless faith. It's verses 15 and 16, that example of being actionless. It's words without action.

So this illustration shows us about someone asking for food or clothes, and you won't give it to them because your faith is a reverence with your lips, but it demonstrates no love in your action; and that faith is dead, he says in verse 17. He also says it in verse 26, "It's dead." It's useless, it's good for nothing, it's dead.

And again, we think of the demon and the amount of faith they possess in the knowledge of God. It's useless for them. They will never be saved. Second Peter chapter 2 tells us that the demons are held in chains until the judgment. Jesus tells us that hell was made for Satan and his angels. Their fate has been sealed regardless of what they know. So this faith, what is it producing?

In verse 17 James uses this term "foolish." Well, he says - oh, I'm sorry, in verse 20: "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?" What he's trying to say is this kind of faith is a foolish faith.

Now let's just think about foolishness for a minute, because foolishness is not the same thing as ignorance, is it? I think we've all had that unfortunate experience, that unfortunate public experience where they went double on the Windex that morning at the grocery store, and you walked headlong into the glass pane thinking this thing is going to open, right? That's not foolish, that's unfortunate. I mean, you didn't see the glass. But what foolish would be is to get up, dust off the embarrassment and walk into it again, right, because you know better. You know there's a glass pane there.

James says the kind of faith that is of an intellectual knowledge only and has not descended down into the action, the response, the appropriate

response, which we'll discover, of trust and entrustment and love, is a foolish faith, because it knows better, but it refuses it anyway.

And we just think of the demon; how foolish of the demon. He was there on the day of creation when God spoke and the universe comes into existence. He knows the power of Yahweh. He knows the sovereignty of Yahweh. He's not deceived about the legitimacy of Christ's reign. He saw the King on the throne descend to the earth to take on human flesh, to rescue mankind from sin. He witnessed it all, and he still thinks, "I'll go up against You. I'll go head to head." When Satan defied God in heaven all the angels that looked at Satan and looked at Yahweh and said, "I'm team devil," how foolish, because they know better, they know better.

A helpful illustration of this is right here in the text. Notice what James does in verse 19: "You believe that God is one; you do well." Now James' audience was the diaspora. So it would have included many scattered Christians who were previously of Jewish descent. So they're under persecution because they were former Jews who now are followers of the way. And so James quotes to them the most well-known text in the Jewish Canon, Deuteronomy chapter 6, the Shema. You remember the Shema? "Hear, O Israel: The Lord, the Lord your God is one." This is the basis of God's national people, this is their motto. This is the foundation of their very religion, this text; and James quotes it here.

But notice something. I mean, if you know the Shema, that's not the whole thing, is it? James only quotes the first half of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord, the Lord your God is one." But what's the second part? "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." That is intentionally left out, because the demon knows the theology of God's ontological existence, the essence of His being. A demon knows God is one, but he has no response of love for that God. And James paints a portrait of false faith, and he says, "Oh great, you know a bunch of stuff. Oh good, you know theology; wonderful. But even the demons know that, and they tremble in fear."



That's false faith. It's movie money. It mimics the real thing, but it's lacking something. There's got to be something more to genuine faith; and there is, there is. Genuine faith is holistic faith, meaning it involves your entire person; and to prove it, James introduces us to another character. He introduces us to a Pagan.

In verse 21 he introduces Abraham: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?" Quick little biosketch of Abraham. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees as a heathen. He worshiped the moon as his god. And even after meeting Yahweh, he's not a particularly impressive guy. He's known to be a little sketchy with the truth: "Oh, this woman, she's my sister. Good luck, sweetie." Twice Abraham goes to a foreign city, which he knows would be hostile to him, and because his wife is beautiful, he lies to the king and says, "Here, you take her as your wife, she's just my sister; just don't kill me." Abraham, what a guy. Don't put that on your Christian Mingle profile, gents, like, "Might lie, say you're my sister if I'm in trouble." Not very impressive.

You know that we have no laws written by Abraham? There's no song composed that we have written by Abraham. He's not an author of Scripture. He doesn't give us any prophecies. He's a simple, rugged, Bedouin-like shepherd who is worshiping the moon, until he met God; and yet, we call him father Abraham. God, in Isaiah 41:8, refers to him as, "Abraham, My friend." "God, my friend."

He's a spiritual pillar in redemptive history. Melchizedek, that great priest-king, the eternal priest-king blessed Abraham. Priest-kings don't bless anyone, they're blessed; but Melchizedek blessed Abraham. God reveals Himself in Matthew 22 as the God of Abraham. Yahweh associates Himself with Abraham; He's not ashamed to call Himself the God of Abraham. Jesus points to him in John 8:39 as the father of all those who have faith. You have faith? Abraham's your father.

Paul mentions him nearly 20 times, building a large portion of his theology in Romans based off of Abraham. Peter points to him. The book of Hebrews

mentions him 10 times, twice in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11; twice Abraham's mentioned. Why? Why this Bedouin-like shepherd who's got a proclivity for shifting the truth, why is he this bedrock foundational element in the nation of Israel's history? In all of spiritual redemption he is the father of faith that God says, "I'm the God of Abraham." Why? You want to know why? It's very simple: because when God spoke to Abraham and gave him a command, Abraham obeyed. That's it.

When God spoke to him, Abraham acted on that word. When God spoke, in other words, Abraham took those words as fact and based his life upon it. So when God revealed to Abraham that, "I will make of you a great nation," Genesis 12:2, but then ask Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac through whom that nation would come, Abraham obeyed.

I know you guys just went through the book of Genesis. I want you to think back to that moment in Genesis chapter 22 where God's word comes to Abraham telling him to sacrifice his only son Isaac on the altar – a brutal ceremony ripping away his only son's life. The very next verse, do you remember what it says? After hearing God's word – so you have quotes in your English Bible, "Take Isaac up the mountain." The very next words are, "The next day Abraham arose." He got up, took his son and began the journey.

Now I know it's easy for us to sort of displace ourselves from maybe the 3-dimensional reality of Scripture because we read it on the pages of a book, we know how it ends. Abraham for us is just a name, just a word, and we forget that he was a real man with emotions and a heart of love for his child. He was a dad, like many of you in this room. Can you feel what he would have felt in those moments?

How do you think he slept that night? He receives the command of God and says, "Okay, tomorrow I'm going to take my son." How is that night's rest? Just think of him looking at his little boy, knowing, "In about three days you're going to be taken away from me by my own hand. But God told me to do it." Think of the journey up the hill. I mean, Isaac didn't know. He

knew what they were doing, they were going to worship. But Isaac knew the ceremonial requirements of worship, so he's going, "Hey, Dad, you forgot the sacrifice. Why aren't we taking the sheep? Why aren't we taking the lamb?" And he says, "Not now, boy, God will provide."

But in his mind, Abraham is racking his brain, "How will God provide? I know He will because He told me that I would have a nation through this boy, but He's just told me to sacrifice him. So I don't get it, but I'm going to do it." Can you feel what Abraham would have felt?

Hebrews 11 gives us insight into those moments. Hebrews 11:17, listen to this: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son. He was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.'" Now he's in this terrible dilemma. But notice what the author of Hebrews says in verse 19: "He" - Abraham - "considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."

That gives us insight into Abraham's mind. Maybe you and I are thinking, "Well, we've read this story, so Abraham thought, 'Now last minute I'll be like this, and then God will like say, "Hey, Abraham, there's a ram," and I'll go, "Oh, no way.'"" And he was thinking like, "There's no way. But there's no - it's not going to" - at some point He's going to impose, like there's going to be another Bedouin shepherd who's like, "Hey, what's up? I've got these free sheep. Would you like free sheep? No way; there's the sacrifice."

No, he wasn't thinking that. He was thinking, "I guess God will raise my son from the grave because I'm going to obey Yahweh. It's what I'm going to do, because Yahweh told me to do this." He believed God, so he acted.

You see how holistic that is? Was not Abraham our father - we're back in James now - justified by works when offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see, verse 22, that faith was active along with his works, and faith was

completed by his works, and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness, and he was called a friend of God."

Now verse 24: "You see a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." Now I know because you're so well-taught here at Trinity that that sentence ought to create some tension, because we love sola fide, salvation by grace through faith alone. And James says, "No, no, no; works and faith."

Well, before that tension is released, James introduces us to a third person: a prostitute. Look at verse 25: "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?"

Okay, quick biosketch of Rahab the prostitute. Born into a pagan city, Jericho, which God saw fit to destroy; totally pagan; and within that pagan culture and city, Rahab was the bottom of the depravity barrel. She was a prostitute selling her body for sex. Her sin was in her name. She would never shake that moniker, you know. Even in Hebrews 11, it's Rahab the prostitute.

Imagine if one of the defining sins of your former life stayed with you in your title. Every time you sign up for a ticket on the American Airlines, it's not, "Dr., Sir, Ma'am," it's, "Well, the arrogant Thomas." She would never shake it.

Josephus the Jewish historian tries to do Rahab a favor. When he recounts her story he calls her the innkeeper. She wasn't an innkeeper, she ran a brothel, yet she's listed in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith. You know, there's another list she's mentioned in. Does anybody know what it is? Matthew chapter 1, the genealogy of Jesus, by the way, alongside three other outcast women: Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba. And yet she's a critical link in the genealogical chain of the Messiah. How? Why?

Well, this story of hers found in Joshua chapter 2. And if you'd like, you can turn there just for a moment; but I think it's worth reading, because I want to show you something about Rahab's faith. We know the story. Israel has been called to enter the Promised Land, and to do so they need to go through Jericho and conquer Jericho; and so they send spies into the land to kind of understand the situation in the city. And these spies, we do not have to impose immoral motives to them. They go to the brothel, and the reason they go to the brothel is because anyone's accepted at the brothel.

And so they go there for safe haven to spend the night before going back to the camp. And we read this in Joshua 2:8, "Before the men lay down, Rahab came up to them on the roof and said to the men, 'I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for Yahweh your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.'" Now pause there.

We've seen that kind of faith before, haven't we, the acknowledgment of who Yahweh is. He is God above. He's God of the heavens and on the earth beneath." Who else knows that? Well, the demons know that, because they were with Him when He created it. She acknowledges what even the demonic know, that Yahweh is God. And by the way, in that acknowledgement it's demanding that she rejects the polytheistic culture of her paganism. What she's saying there is, "All of our gods are not gods. There is one God and His name is Yahweh. He is God."

But let's read on, because her faith doesn't stay there. Look at verse 12: "Now then," she says "please swear to me by Yahweh that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

Rahab not only acknowledged the reality of God as the only God, she then entrusted her life and all of her loved ones to Him. Do you see what happened? She believed, and so she acted.

A friend of mine sent me a videoclip a few years ago from the opening scene of a movie. Now, the movie I don't think is a great movie; I haven't seen the movie; but if you do on an email a complaint, sent it, it's [stevlawson@trinitybiblechurch.com](mailto:stevlawson@trinitybiblechurch.com).

So, I haven't seen the movie, but I saw the opening scene; he sent me a YouTube clip. And it's a movie that I guess the thesis of the movie is there's this young man named Alex who gets premonitions of bad things that are going to happen, but his premonitions allow him to avoid these disastrous events. And the start of the movies happens. Alex, he's like college age, he's with like eight or nine of his buddies and they're going to Paris for vacation; and he sits down on the plane, and before it takes off he starts getting this premonition that the plane is going to explode; so he starts losing his mind and making a big commotion. And his friends are telling him, "Be quiet, Alex. Stop. You're going to get us kicked off." They want to go eat baguettes and croissants and like live the good life in Paris. But he's going, "We've got to get off this plane. This plane's going to explode."

So eventually, so much commotion that the police come on and drag Alex and his friends off the plane. They're in the terminal angry, as all get out, at Alex. But during that commotion, the director cuts to a young woman who's sitting near Alex on the plane listening to all of it; she grabs her bag and slowly follows them off the plane. Well, as they're arguing in the terminal and the police are there, the plane in the background goes up. And what happens? It explodes, and everyone dies.

So they look at Alex and they're questioning him, "How did you know?" And so the police are going around talking to all the people who got off, and they ask the young girl. They say, "You weren't kicked off the plane. You don't even know these people. Why did you get off the plane?" And

you know what she said? "I heard what Alex said, I believed him, so I got off the plane." Friends, that is faith: you hear the word, you believe it, and so you get off.

Could she have said she believed it had she stayed on? "Oh, I believe this plane's going to explode." Absolutely. "No, I'm not going to get off the plane, I want to get to Paris." "Yeah, but the plane's not getting to Paris, it's going to explode." "Eh, well I'll take my odds. I mean, I think it's going to explode, but I'm going to stay here." That would be foolish, wouldn't it? Isn't that what James says about the faith that doesn't act? How foolish are you? So, Rahab; was she justified by her actions? When she recognizes who Yahweh is and then entrusts her whole life to Him for salvation, that's faith.

Now here is where people want to claim that James is against the apostle Paul, because Paul says, "Salvation is by faith alone," James says, "It's by works." But I think the solution to that debate is simple, because faith, as James is teaching us, is more than having the right theological ideas of God. For James, faith and works are not two separate realities; and by the way, neither are they for Paul. They are two side of the same coin, namely the conversion of the whole person to God. This is Christianity: it's the conversion of your mind, but also of your heart, and your will, and your body, and your bank account, and your calendar, and your life, and your goals, and your aspirations. It's all of it.

I'll give you another illustration. Some years ago when skyscrapers first – I guess they created the technology for what looks like glass skyscrapers where the whole thing is glass. Maybe some of us are old enough to remember when the first one came out; I don't know when it was exactly. But you could imagine being like the first accountant on the 89th floor, you know, when they're like, "Here's your new building, Steve." And you're like, "I have to go in that? It's see-through. It's going to blow over."

And there's actually an account of a manager; all of his employees were terrified and would not work because they were terrified of the glass walls. So he gathers them all together in the room and he explains to them the

dimensions of the plexiglass and how secure it is and how many beams are securing it and bolstering it, and they were like, "That's great; we're not working here." And so convince them, he backs up about 20 feet and he sprints full speed and hits the wall, and it shatters. No, I'm kidding, it didn't shatter. He bounced off; come on.

He bounced off and he's fine. And so everybody went to work, because it's secure, because they saw it tested. And what James is teaching us here is that faith is holistic. Sure, you can look at the person and work of Jesus and go, "Yeah, I believe He was real. Oh, no, no, no; the gospel, I understand it. I'm a sinner; Christ is my Savior, because He performed what I could never perform, perfectly keeping the law. He stands in the place of the wrath I deserve from a holy God, who instead of judging me, judges Him; and then in His death, defeats death, rises from the grave, conquering death to promise eternal life to all who believe in Him. Yeah, I get it." "Okay, but have you entrusted your soul to Him?"

Guys, we're in Texas; everybody gets the gospel. I mean, it's like apple pie, baseball, and Jesus. We've all heard it. Yeah, but have you entrusted your soul to it? Has the gospel been real to you to cause you to act upon it, or has it stayed in your mind? Yes, faith begins with a rational ascent to the facts and a belief in the fact, but it doesn't stay there; it descends into the heart, and from the heart into your hands. It's why Abraham offered up Isaac. It's why Rahab offered up her life and the lives of her entire family. Do you think it made perfect sense to them in that moment? Well, as we've seen, of course not. But they had faith. They trusted God on the basis of who was giving them these promises. The character of God was trustworthy, so they entrusted their entire lives to Him, because real faith acts, real faith that manifests itself in a life of trust and obedience.

Now as we close in the next couple of minutes I want to bring this home to us and ask you, "What about you? What about your faith? What kind of faith do you possess?" Many of us, it's easy to assume that if we believe the right truths we're good: "I've accepted the realities of Christ. Look at me, I'm at church; I'm good." But we can divorce faith from works; and if we do, we're in perilous danger.



James has introduced us to three characters to show us that true faith is demonstrated in obedient response to God. Even when we can't fully understand what He's asking, we trust Him and obey. Real faith is active; it produces something; it gets off the plane. And, friends, it begins with you believing what God says about you.

There are some of you here who perhaps you actually haven't believed the gospel. You may think you do; but the gospel requires something of you, and it requires you to believe something about you, namely that you are a wicked rebel who has turned your heart away from your Creator, who has, like a demon, looked at the odds and said, "Yahweh or me? I'm betting on me. I can defeat Him." And you haven't actually believed the reality of what God says about you, that even your most righteous works are like filthy rags to a holy God. But there's nothing you can do to save yourself from the depravity of sin into which you were born. And what Jesus is coming to you to tell you is that, "Friend, unless you believe that you are sick, in need of a Savior, you'll never look upon the Savior with any amount of trust or desperate belief."

Some of you don't believe the burning building that it's actually burning. "Eh, maybe the flames will die down and I'll find a way out." But as the fireman sits there four stories down and says, "Jump, it's your only hope. The flames are engulfing the whole thing," "Eh, is it really that bad? Am I really that depraved? Do my sins really deserve the wrath of a holy God for all eternity? It's a little much to ask." Friend, you need to understand and believe what God has said about you, that you are a rebel against a holy God; and unless He reaches down to rescue you, you will not be saved. Turn to Christ and cast your soul upon Him to rescue you from your sin.

Now, I get it. James could be a little discouraging here with that, and this message could leave some of you saying, "Goodness, I just have to be really good, like really sanctified and holy and courageous. I'm no father Abraham, I'm no stalwart of the Christian faith." Well, actually you are. If you fall in line with the characters that James brought out, I think it's intentional that James says, "Okay, you know what? I'm going to teach you

about the nature of true saving faith, so let me call a few characters to show you what faith is. Hey, where's the pagan Abraham? Oh, and where's that prostitute? Let me use them to demonstrate faith." You know why? Because faith doesn't have to do with the impressive nature of your own intellectual power capacity. Faith is for everyone, everyone who would look away from themselves to a great God and believe what He says about you and about Himself and about the way you can be saved, and simply fall into His arms trusting Him; and this extends to the life of the Christian, the life of faithfulness, as you continue to trust Him.

Christian, trust and believe doesn't simply bring you into the household of faith. No, you continue in the household of faith in faithfulness as you continue to trust God. "I don't know what He's doing in my life exactly. And the finances aren't exactly adding up. But we're going to trust Him, and we're going to give faithfully to the needs of others. We're going to, like James says, give to those who are in need of food and of clothing, and trust that He says He'll provide for us. We believe it, and He'll provide for us." Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is a life of simple trust.

I saw in Instagram this week a video has been circulating. There's a guy who goes around and interviews people who are kind of doing jobs that we would just ignore. And he goes up to one guy in New York City who's collecting trash, and for the first like two-and-a-half minutes of the interview he's just telling him about how they get trash and where they take it and how they make money from it and all this sort of thing. And then the interviewer asks him a question. He says, "Tell me about your relationship with God." And the guy's countenance totally changes. He talks about how God chose him based on nothing good in himself. He says this, he says, "He cares for me," speaking of God, "because He chose me in Christ. I'm seated at His right hand in heavenly places. I'm seated there right now, whether I deserve it or not."

And so the interviewer asks him and says, "So, is that hope for the future of heaven something you hold onto now?" and listen to what this man collecting trash on the streets of New York City says: "It's difficult, but I've seen so many spiritual things in this life, that I firmly believe with all

my heart that God is real; and therefore, I believe His promises in the word, and I stand on them. I don't deserve it, but thank God for His grace."

Friends, that's faith. That's Abrahamic faith. That's Rahab-like faith. God is who He says He is, and so I believe everything He says, and I stand upon His word. Faith: looking to Yahweh away from yourself and trusting in Him alone.

My friends, the call is for you to look to Christ, to turn away from your self-dependence, and, like Rahab, like Abraham, that weak man who became the father of faith simply because when God spoke, he believed it; so he woke up and he started walking up the mountain. It's simple, but friends, it'll save your soul. Trust in God; follow Him. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, I ask that not a single soul would leave this building this morning not having placed their faith in Your Son for salvation. And may those of us, Lord, who have come to Christ, may we walk with greater trust, looking away from ourselves and our own wisdom and trust in You and Your word on the basis of who You are and what You have said. Help us, Lord, to be those who believe, not in our minds only, but in our hearts and our wills and our actions, in Christ's name we pray. Amen. [End]

Well, friends, it's been a pleasure being with you this morning. And as you go, may the Lord go with you and strengthen you in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.