

Faith Works: Living What We Claim to Believe

Faith Sacrifices

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FAITH SACRIFICES James 2:20-24

What good is it if we claim to have faith in this world but have no deeds? Can such faith really save us? Faith if it is not accompanied by action is dead. God, we pray that you would bring faith to life in us. We pray that we would not settle for dead faith that is useless in this world, and useless in our eternity. We pray, God, that our faith might be active, that our faith would be to great effect in the world today, that it might be said of us that our faith caused us to care for the brother or sister without clothes and daily food. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to James 2. We have quite a night before us in the Word. We are about to tackle one of the most difficult passages in all of the New Testament about salvation, and, at the same time, we are going to talk about how we, as a faith family, are going to absolutely change the world, so that's what the next few moments are going to unfold. James 2, and while you're turning to James 2, let me also encourage you to find Romans 3—James 2:14, Romans 3:28. What I want to do is I want to show you two passages of Scripture side-by-side tonight in order to help us understand James 2, specifically verses 20 through 24. We're going to start in verse 14 in James 2. We'll recap what we have read from last week and then go from verses 20 to 24, which is what we're going to camp out on tonight. So, James 2:14, find and hold your place in Romans 3:28.

James 2:14:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.'

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-24).

Now, camp out for a second on that last verse, James 2:24, "*You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*" Now compare that with Romans 3:28, where Paul is writing and Paul says, "*We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*" Okay, put those side—by—side. Paul, a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. James, a man is justified by what he does and not by faith. What do you do with that?

This is where this passage in James has caused all kinds of discussion and debate about salvation. What is James saying here? Martin Luther...That's why he called this book "the straw epistle," and even said at one point that sometimes he wants to throw Jimmy into the stove. How do we understand salvation, when James 2 says this and Romans 3 says this? And here's what I pray by God's grace we'll see tonight. This is the way I picture it. I want to show you a picture, not of Paul and James standing toe—to—toe with one another, contradicting one another on the gospel. Instead, I want to show you a picture of Paul and James standing back—to—back with one another, both defending the exact same gospel, but attacking different enemies of that same gospel.

What you've got is Paul viciously attacking the idea that we can work in order to earn favor before God. It's legalism. It undercuts the gospel, and Paul was fighting against it. On the other hand, you've got James fighting against an easy believism that was reducing faith to intellectual ascent that was no higher than what demons have when it comes to faith. James is fighting that; Paul is fighting this, both of them, though, defending the same gospel. It makes me wonder which one are we fighting, and I think the answer is both.

I'm sure there are many people in this room tonight, who, whether you would admit it or not, still think that what you do can earn you favor before God, and as your shepherd, I want to fight with everything in me against that idea. There are others, maybe in this room, who have faith that is the same level as demons. You believe that God exists, you believe that Jesus died on the cross, but this makes little difference in your life. You equate that with faith or even salvation, and, as your shepherd, I want to fight against that with everything in me, and I want to show you how James and Paul are both defending a glorious gospel of grace and faith and works. How do they come together? That's what I want us to see. I want us to see this in James.

You know what's interesting? James here uses Abraham as his model of faith. When you go over to Paul, guess who he uses? Abraham. They both point to Abraham, which helps us to see, there's a unity here. We're looking at one man's life and we're seeing a picture of faith from two different perspectives, addressing two different contexts.

Now, here's the deal. When I was in Germany a few weeks ago, I was around some guys and they were talking about wanting to play a pickup game of football, and I thought, "Man, it's been a long time." I was playing flag football for a while and haven't done it in a long time, so I thought, "Yeah." And they asked me, "Do you want to play?" I said, "I am in." And so we're walking down to the field, and we get down to the field to play football, and to my surprise, I do not see two goalposts and a brown ball. Instead, I see two goals with nets in them, and a white and black checkered ball, and I realized that these Western Europeans have a very different understanding of football than I do. They don't know it, but what they're playing is called soccer, and I really wasn't that interested in playing a soccer game that day. I wanted to play football. Same word, different meanings attached to that word. This is true in all of life, in our communication, and it's true in Scripture. There are words that in different contexts mean different things.

So, what I want us to do is come to this passage in James, and I want us to go verse—by—verse and I want us to pause at every verse and see key words, and step back for a second and ask, “What does this word mean in all of Scripture, and what does James mean when he uses this word?” and we’ll see in some cases James and Paul use words exactly the same. In other cases, they use words differently.

Two Pictures of Faith

And so that’s what I want us to do, starting in verse 20, “*You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?*” We’ll stop here. The first key term is faith. I want to show you two pictures of faith. Remember, we’re not going to camp out here long because we were here last week, but what James is doing in this passage is he is not contrasting mature faith and immature faith. He is not contrasting dynamic faith and lukewarm, cold faith. He is contrasting faith, and that which claims to be faith, but is not faith at all; it’s dead, it’s useless, it’s empty. Literally, when he says, “You foolish man,” he’s saying, “You empty man. You hollow man.” And he’s talking to this imaginary person that he’s having a dialogue with, who claims to have faith but has no deeds, and he says over and over again, “Your faith is dead. It’s empty. It’s useless. It does nothing.” What James is contrasting is faith with so-called faith; it’s not really faith at all. And so I want you to see two pictures of faith here.

Dead Faith...

First, dead faith, which does not save. Dead faith, the kind of faith the demons have, which is really not faith at all, but he’s using this imaginary person who claims that this is faith, and he’s saying, “No, it’s not. It’s dead. Intellectual ascent to belief in God—even the demons have that.”

Living Faith...

This is dead faith and it does not save, and he’s contrasting that with living faith, which does save.

And it’s interesting, outside of this passage, where James has this dialogue with this imaginary person, all the other places in James where we see faith mentioned, it’s referring to this living faith. It’s a faith in “*our glorious Lord, Jesus Christ,*” James 2:1. It’s faith that perseveres under trial in James 1. It’s faith that not just listens to the Word, but obeys the Word. It’s faith that is not friends with the world, but is friends of God. That’s the picture of faith we’ve got throughout the book of James.

The same kind of picture we have of faith in Paul’s letters. Would Paul ever say demons have faith? No. For Paul, faith is a living, breathing trust in the lordship of Jesus Christ. Dead faith and living faith. Now this is really important, especially when we get down to verse 24 in a little while, to keep in mind. James and Paul are both saying that faith that claims to be faith, but has no deeds—mere intellectual ascent, is really not faith at all. It’s nothing. It’s dead faith. Living faith is breathing, active trust in the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Two pictures of faith that lead to verse 21, “*Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?*” Second key word, righteous.

Two Pictures of Righteousness

Now, we're going to brush this with a broad stroke, as well, because this word, righteousness, in the Old Testament and New Testament is multifaceted. I want to show you two pictures. They're not the only pictures, but two pictures of righteousness in Scripture, particularly when it comes to salvation and what James and Paul are talking about.

Positional Righteousness...

Number one, first picture, is positional righteousness, how we stand before God. This is what happens at the initial point of salvation, when you trust in Christ for salvation. At that moment, by God's grace, you are made right before God. It's a great word here, imputation, where God literally imputes the righteousness of Christ. He clothes you in the righteousness of Christ. When you trust in Christ—think of this: you, a sinner, by trusting in Christ, immediately are declared right before a holy God, and clothed in the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's good. That's really good that we have positional righteousness, how we stand before God. Clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have peace with God.

Practical Righteousness...

The second picture of righteousness is practical righteousness, how we live before God. Once we're declared right, does that mean we're perfect and righteous in every single thing we do? No. We're growing in righteousness. We are pursuing righteousness. Paul talks about that in 2 Timothy 2:22, that we pursue righteousness and we demonstrate righteousness in the way we live.

Now, they're not totally disconnected. The fact that we're clothed in the righteousness of Christ is manifested in the way we live. We live differently as a result of the righteousness of Christ that clothes us. What we need to see is that sometimes Scripture refers to righteousness as positional righteousness, how we stand before God, which happens at the moment of our salvation. Then, practical righteousness is how we grow in righteousness, how we live before God.

Two Pictures of Works

Two pictures of faith, two pictures of righteousness. Now, verse 22, "*You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.*" The next key word is works, or actions. It's translated to actions here. Same word, oftentimes translated into either works, actions, or deeds. "Ergon", in the original language of the New Testament, translated those different ways at different times—works, actions, or deeds—two pictures of works.

Now, this is where we step back and we look at how, particularly, James and Paul use works. What I want to show you is that sometimes works are used negatively in Scripture when it comes to salvation, and sometimes works are used positively.

Works Fueled by the Flesh...

Let's start with the negative. Negative picture of works. Scripture speaks sometimes of works fueled by the flesh, which do not honor God. Works that are fueled by the flesh, which do not honor God. This is the way Paul often talked about works. When he talks about works of the Law, when he talks about it in Galatians he's saying, "You're doing these works. You're being circumcised, following these rituals, abstaining from these foods," he talks about at different points. "These works of law that you are doing, fueled by the flesh in order to earn favor before God, fueled by your pride...That you actually think there is something you can do to earn favor before a holy God." This does not bring honor to God. It's legalism, and we must guard against it with everything in us, working in order to earn favor before God. Works fueled by the flesh, which do not honor God.

Works that are the Fruit of Faith...

But this is not how James refers to works. James uses this word – works, actions, deeds – 15 different times in this book, and every single time he uses it, he uses it positively, not negatively; not as a bad thing, but as a good thing. What we see is Scripture sometimes speaks of works fueled by the flesh, which do not honor God; other times, and when James talks about works, he's talking about works through the fruit of faith, which bring great glory to God. Works that are the fruit of faith, which bring great glory to God. When James talks about works, he's talking about God—glorifying obedience, mercy to the poor, care for the impoverished; love for the needy. These are good things that flow from faith in a merciful God. Faith in a loving, compassionate God produces that kind of work toward others, and it's good. It brings great glory to God.

Paul talks about works like this sometimes, as well. Romans 1:5, he talks about the obedience of faith. In 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul talks about works that are prompted by faith. In 2 Thessalonians, he talks about works that are produced by faith. Even in Galatians, the letter Paul writes to confront legalism, in Galatians 5:6, he says what "*counts is faith expressing itself through love*." It's faith working itself out through love, demonstrating itself through love. So, the picture is Scripture sometimes talks about works that are the fruit of faith, which bring great glory to God, so here's what we need to realize.

When James talks about works, he is not advocating works done in the flesh to earn favor before God, and when Paul speaks against works, he's not speaking against works that are the fruit of faith, which bring great glory to God. This is key. Both of them see faith and works in a healthy way, working together. These kind of works that are the fruit of the faith, they bring great glory to God, and both of them use Abraham as an example.

Now, how does this work? I wish we had time to really dive in depth into Genesis but we're not going to have time to turn back there. Just write down two main passages, Genesis 15 and Genesis 22, and let me summarize what happens, because James quotes here from Genesis 15, which Paul also quotes from all over Romans, and then he references Genesis 22. In Genesis 15, what happens is God enters into covenant with Abraham; brings Abraham, who had no seed, no heir between him and Sarah, no heir coming from his line, he brings Abraham outside, tells him to look up in the sky at all the stars and says, "So shall your offspring be. Your descendants are going to be like the stars of the sky." Now, Abraham had no heir. We find out in the days to come it looked for a long time like he was going to have no heir, but Genesis 15:6 says, "*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness*." It's what James quotes from here. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Now, time passes between Genesis 15 and Genesis 22, some say up to 30 years. What happens is God gives Abraham a son in Isaac, and then, one day, God says to Abraham,

"Take your son, the son of promise, and go up on the mountain and sacrifice him." What does Abraham do? He does exactly what God told him to do. He obeyed God. He takes his son, the son of promise, his only son up onto Mount Moriah, raises the knife to sacrifice him, and at that moment God, through an angel says, "No. Now I know, I see." It said at the very beginning of the chapter God did this to test Abraham's faith, "I see that you fear me." He obeys God, even when it means a great cost, even when it may not make sense, and God provides a substitute sacrifice in Genesis 22, so Isaac does not die.

Now, here's the question. Did Abraham's faith begin at Genesis 22? Clearly not. His faith started here when he believed God in Genesis 15. What James is saying, the reason he did what he did in Genesis 22 is because he believed God in Genesis 15, so I want you to see the relationship here.

First, faith creates works. Why did Abraham take his son to sacrifice him on a mountain? Because he believed God. His faith created that work, a sacrificial work, an obedient work. His faith created that. Why else would Abraham take his son to offer him as a sacrifice? The only way he would do that is if he trusted God. Faith created that work, and then, the beauty here in James 2:22, *"His faith was made complete by what he did."*

Faith creates works, and works complete faith. That word, complete, literally means "to bring to maturity", "to grow up", "to bring to its intended goal". And the picture is works are showing the goal of faith, good works. The fruit of faith, created by faith, done to bring glory to God, complete faith. This makes sense practically in our lives. The more we trust God the more we obey God. We realize this. Every time you or I disobey God, it is because of a lack of trust in God. Every time. Every time we sin, it goes back to lack of faith, lack of trust in God. We think we know what is better for our lives, so we disregard what He has said; we do what we desire, what we think is best. The more we trust in God, the more we obey God. Faith creates our works, and then, the more we obey God, isn't it a reality that the more we obey God the more our faith matures, the more we grow to trust God? The longer we walk with Him and see His faithfulness to us, the more we trust Him, and works mature or complete faith.

Now, this is the good picture of works, how works are really, really good things. It can be a bad thing over here—works fueled by the flesh do not bring honor to God. But they can be a great thing—works that are the fruit of faith, bring great glory to God. Think about it. In some of the most basic of Christian actions, you coming here tonight, you gathering together in a worship gathering with the church. This Christian work that you have done tonight, if you have done it, if you have come here to earn favor before God, to put on a face before man, if the flesh has fueled you coming here, and you think that by doing this you are checking off a box that is going to earn favor before God, then no matter how zealously you sing, your work does not bring honor to God.

On the other hand, if what drove you here was the fact that you believe God, and you love God, and you trust God when He says, "Do not forsake gathering together with the brothers and sisters. Go and sing spiritual songs and study, listen to my word taught, and fellowship with other believers," because you know that in doing that it's the fruit of your faith that drives you. And in doing these things tonight, your faith, your works, will complete your faith, will mature your faith, and your faith will grow as a result.

Think about quiet time, concentrated time in prayer and Bible study. Bad thing or good thing? Bad thing if you think that by doing this religious exercise you are earning favor before God. If, in your pride, you think this is making a mark for you before God, bad thing. Work done in the flesh does not honor God, but a great thing if, in your heart and faith, you

love God, and you delight in God. And you want to be with God in prayer in the prayer closet, and to be in His word because you're delight in listening to Him because you know that everything else in this world cannot compare with His beauty and His greatness and His grandeur, and you want to experience Him day after day after day. Now, our quiet time is a really, really good work.

Caring for the poor, like we are talking about, whether it is bringing foster children into your home, whether it is radical experiment that we were talking about, if we do these things as a church in order to earn favor before God, fueled by the flesh, that does not honor God. But if we simply believe God when He says, "This is religion that I accept as pure and faultless, and I call my people to spend themselves on behalf of the hungry and the poor and the needy," Isaiah 58. When we trust in God and, as a result of our trust, we go out of our way to sacrifice and spend our lives for the sake of needs that are important in the heart of God, then that is a great work that brings great Glory to God. I love what Luther says here. It's ironic because Luther sounds like he's James here. Talking about faith, he says, "Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, 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 them and it's constantly doing them." God, take this faith family and bring about great work for the glory of your name, radical work for the glory of your name that is the fruit of faith; faith that creates the work, work that completes the faith. Good works done to the glory of God. That's what James is talking about when he talks about works. Good thing. Two pictures of faith, two pictures of righteousness, two pictures of works.

Okay, this leads us to verse 24, where things get rough. We'll start from the back and move our way forward. "*You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone*" (Jas. 2:24).

Let's start from the end of that verse, "*You see that a person is justified...not by faith alone.*" What does James mean here? Now, let's think back for a second to the two pictures of faith. James, throughout this passage here, James 2:14-26 is contrasting dead faith with living faith. He's contrasting faith that is living, breathing, active, trusting in God through Christ, and dead faith that claims to be faith, but it's really no faith at all. It's intellectual belief. That kind of faith does not save. So, when he says a person is justified not by faith alone, which kind of faith do you think James is talking about? Clearly, he is talking about the dead faith that he's been confronting all throughout this passage. He's saying nothing different in verse 24 that he's not already said in the verses that preceded it. He's saying, "This faith, called intellectual demonic belief in God, is not justifying faith." That does not justify. This faith that you claim is alone and apart from deeds, it's dead, it's empty, it's useless, and it doesn't save.

It's the same thing Paul would say. Paul would say, "Demons justified for their faith? Absolutely not." What James is saying is what he said all throughout this passage. When he says, "Faith alone," he's not referring to living, breathing, wholehearted trust in God through Christ. He's talking about this imaginary so-called faith that's really no faith at all.

Two Pictures of Justification

So, that helps clear things up a little bit, but we've still got a problem at the beginning of the verse, verse 24, when he says, "*You see that a person is justified by what he does,*" and

in some sense here, it seems that James is saying works play into our justification, and that leads us to two pictures of justification.

Now this is not in your notes, but just really simply, to be justified is to be declared right. To be declared right. When it comes to salvation to be justified is to be declared right before God, so the question is how can you and I be declared right before God? That's the ultimate question. How can you and I be declared right before God? By faith or by works? And how you answer that question is eternally important because the gospel hinges on the answer to this question. How can we be made right before God?

This is where I want us to think about how James refers to Abraham and how Paul refers to Abraham. We don't have time to go back and look all throughout Romans 4, but what Paul does in Romans 4, when he talks about justification in Abraham, he is focusing on the initial point of Abraham's belief in God. His focus is on Genesis 15:6, "*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness,*" and his whole point is he's trying to show these people that are trying to earn favor before God, he's trying to show Abraham was declared righteous before God before he did anything. It was before he was circumcised, it was before he had Isaac, much less went to offer his son Isaac on the altar. He had done nothing but believe God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. That's what Paul is trying to emphasize for us here.

James, on the other hand, is not supremely focused with this initial point here in Abraham's life. James is looking at the whole picture. It spans over years, leading up to Genesis 22, and what Abraham did as a result of faith that created works, just like we've seen. So, James is looking at Abraham's life focusing on a totally different perspective than Paul is by what he focuses on in Romans 4. And in this picture, I want you to see two pictures of justification. Two pictures of justification.

Initial Justification

Number one, this is often what we see in Paul, it's certainly what we see Paul focusing on in Romans 4, initial justification. The inception or the beginning of the Christian's life. This is Paul's whole argument in Romans 4, that when, by faith, you turn from your sin and yourself, and you trust in Christ for your salvation, at that moment you are declared righteous before God. God clothes you in His righteousness. That's why he says right at the beginning of the next chapter, Romans 5, "Since we have been justified," it's something that has happened to us. We have been justified at this point in time. It says, "Since we have been justified, we have peace with God." Now, since we have been justified, it's happened. It's the initial point of justification, and Paul is emphasizing this because of the danger he wants us to avoid. Paul wants us to avoid thinking that works are a necessary basis or means of our salvation. To people who are thinking either their works are the reason why they could be justified before God, or their works are how they attain righteousness before God, Paul says, "No. Believe God." Believe God, not in the sense that demons do, like James is talking about here, but believe God; trust in Him as the sovereign Lord and King of the universe, who's has paid the price for your sins and risen from the grave.

That's what Paul means when, in Romans 3, when he talks about being justified by faith alone, and justified by trusting in God. The moment we trust in God through Christ, we're declared right before God, but James is not talking about justification in exactly the same way. Definitely related, but remember, James is looking at a much bigger picture. His focus is not on this initial point. James is focusing on a much broader picture, including his obedience and his actions in Genesis 22, and this is a picture that we see oftentimes in Scripture when it comes to justification. We see in Old Testament and New Testament, we

see even in the teachings of Jesus, a picture of justification that – follow with me here – in some sense takes works into account. Now, we’re going to see how, but when you go to Matthew 12:37, this is a verse that I quoted two weeks ago, and Jesus says, “*By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*” That word, “acquitted”, literally means “justified”. By your words, you will be justified, and there’s a picture there that at the coming day of judgment, by your words you will be justified, acquitted, or by your words you will be condemned, and this is what James is focusing on. We’ve already seen how he leans on the teachings of Jesus, but even in this chapter right here, in verses 12 and 13, James is fixing our eyes on coming judgment, “Live as those who are going to be judged one day, and at the judgment, it’s going to be shown whether or not your faith was real, or this dead, cold, demonic faith. If your faith was living, it’ll be evident on judgment day.”

Final Justification...

So, what James is emphasizing is not as much this initial justification, that point in time when we were justified before God. Instead, what James is focusing on is more on final justification, and this is key. As opposed to talking about the inception of the Christian’s life, James is talking about the confirmation of the Christian’s life on the final day, when what was declared initially will be declared openly.

What James is confronting here is very different than what Paul was confronting back in Romans 4. James wants us to avoid thinking that works are not necessary as evidence of our salvation. Follow with me here. James wants us to avoid thinking that works are unnecessary as evidence of our salvation, the key word there being evidence. James is not saying that works are the basis for justification, that when we stand before God in heaven, the ultimate question will be, “What did you do?” and if you did enough, you’re in. Instead, what he’s saying is what he has said throughout this passage, “Faith creates works, and works, on the day of judgment, will be evidence that the faith was real.”

Think about Abraham, Genesis 15:6, “*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*” Well how do we know Abraham had living faith? How do we know it wasn’t just intellectual ascent? How do we know he had faith, and James says we know when we look at Genesis 22, and he was willing to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. This work can only be the fruit of faith in God. His faith was made complete by what he did, and he is justified in that sense by what he does. Not as the basis for his justification, but as evidence of the faith that created radical work, radical obedience to God. Final justification. James wants us to avoid thinking, “Okay, well I believe, so my works don’t matter at all.” They do matter, because works help us see if our faith is real. The reality that James is saying is there is coming a day when you and I will stand before God, a holy God, at the day of judgment, and on that day, the question here that James is asking is, “Is there any evidence of faith in your life?” Is there any evidence of faith in your life on that day? How do you know if your faith has been real? Was there any fruit, and if there was no fruit, then was there really faith? Because faith always bears fruit. We saw that last week.

So, here’s the deal. Follow with me here. When Paul says a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law, what he is saying is – take these words into account – what he is saying is a man is justified by wholehearted trusting in Jesus Christ for his salvation, and not by works that he does in order to earn favor before God. And James is in the background saying, “Amen.” When James says a man is justified by what he does and not by faith alone, he is saying a man is not justified by cold, intellectual belief in Jesus that rises nowhere above the level of what demons have. That does not save him. He is saved by a faith that produces radical obedience, like Abraham in Genesis 22, and Paul is in the

background saying, "Amen to that." Now, I'm guessing it's quite possible that somewhere in this whole picture I have lost a couple of people, and I realize that totally.

Two Truths to Remember

So, if you got lost a few words back, then here's where I want to bring it all together. Two truths to remember. "What did you just say?" Okay, two truths to remember. Just walk away with these two truths based on all that we've just seen.

Salvation is by Faith

First truth, salvation is by faith. We do not come to salvation by works done to earn favor before God. We come to salvation by faith. By initial faith in Christ, we are made right before God the Father. If you were to ask James or Paul, "How can I be made right before God?" the answer from both of them would be the same. First, Christ is the basis of our salvation. James 2:1, "Believe in our glorious Lord, Jesus Christ." Christ is the basis of our salvation—the basis, the ground. Christ has done the work. He has conquered sin. He has risen from the grave. He is exalted on high. You have nothing, no work in you to add to the greatness of what He has already done. Christ, His person and work, He is the basis of our salvation. "Well, if Christ did this on the cross in His resurrection, then how is it applied to my life?"

Second, faith is the means of our salvation. Trust in what Christ has done. This is how you're saved. Turn from yourself and trust in Him as savior of your sins and Lord of your life, and you will be made right before God, the Father. Oh, brothers and sisters, this gives us radical confidence. Like James 1 says, God gives you birth through the word of truth. You don't ever have to fear a thing in this life anymore. You do not have to fear death itself. You have been made right before God. What can this world do to you? Nothing. By faith, you have been made right before God, the Father. This gives us great confidence. Salvation is by faith, first truth.

Faith Works

Second truth, faith works. Faith works. When Christ gives you birth, He gives you life. You're alive to Christ. You walk with Christ and your life bears the fruit of Christ. Look at Abraham. Yes, by initial faith he was made right before God, the Father, but there's more to it. This was the beginning of a journey where he walked with God, his friend. Catch this. By faith in Christ, brothers and sisters, you are made right before God, the Father. By continual faith in Christ, you walk with God as friend. What an incredible picture. A friend of God. God help us to see this. There is an easy believism rampant in so-called contemporary Christianity that assumes you can be made right before God, the Father, by praying this prayer, but then you have no need to live with God as friend thereafter, and it's not the gospel. How could you be made right before God, the Father, by what Christ has done on the cross for you, and then turn away from God as friend? It's impossible. You walk with God as friend. You enjoy God as Father and as friend. This is faith. He's our Father and our friend. That's good stuff.

God, our Father and our friend, and so this results in radical obedience. This kind of faith, when your faith is in God as Father and God as friend, then you have nothing to be afraid of when it comes to His commands.

When your faith is in God as Father and as friend, you have no need to fear obeying His commands. They are good, and you can delight in them and run in them, and work to the glory of your God. Why? Because we trust Him wholeheartedly. This is why Abraham sacrificed his son, because he trusted God. Oh, people of faith, trust God. Trust Him. Even when He says things that make no sense to us or to the world around us, or even to the church world around us, trust Him.

We trust Him wholeheartedly and we follow God sacrificially. We sacrifice it all in obedience to His commands. One person said, "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; faith is obeying in spite of consequence." Why else would this room, before we gathered in here at 6:00, why else at 4:00 would this room be filled with families considering bringing children, who are walking through very difficult times, into their homes not knowing what will happen? Why would families do that? Because they trust God wholeheartedly, and they are following Him sacrificially. Why would we say as a church, "Let's sacrifice it all"? All the stuff that our church culture says is important, why do we sacrifice it all in order to spend ourselves for those who are in need? We do it because we trust God wholeheartedly, and we are following God sacrificially, and sacrifice makes sense when you follow this God. Sacrifice makes sense when you follow the God who has shown Himself worthy of trust by providing His one and only son.

Now last week we said, what if we took a year as a church, and as individuals and families in this church, and we said we are going to sacrifice our money radically to spend our lives and His church on urgent spiritual and physical need around the world? I told you that I was going to come back this week with a proposal for what this might look like for us as a faith family, and I want to share that with you in a moment.

But before we do that, I want us to reflect on the basis of our salvation in Christ, and what it means for you and I to have faith in Him, a living faith at this moment in Him. In just a moment, we are going to take the Lord's Supper together, and the ultimate question in this room is, do you have faith? Do you have faith? Not intellectual belief, not ideas that make no difference in your life; do you have trust in God as your Savior and Lord and King in a way that radically changes everything about your life? Do you have faith in Him? Have you trusted in Christ for your salvation? Has He given you life? And if you have, then in a moment I want to invite you to fix your mind and your heart in a focused way on the cross of Christ symbolized in these elements: The body and the blood of Christ, and the bread and the cup, and consider every area of your life where you are not at this moment trusting God wholeheartedly. Where you are not following God sacrificially, where your heart is not yielded to Him. Confess your desire to trust Him. Confess your sins, and let faith create that work in you tonight.

If you have never trusted in Christ coming in here tonight, I want to urge you to let this be the holy moment in your eternity, where you are made right before God by trusting in Christ; by saying tonight in your heart, "I cannot do it. I cannot earn my way to you, God. I need Christ to do the work for me through what He did on the cross and in His resurrection, and tonight I trust in Him. Give me birth, give me life through the word of truth, that I might be declared right before you," and He does it. God does it by His grace through faith, and it radically changes everything. I invite you to trust in Him tonight, and then to let this be your first celebration of a new life in Christ.

The Radical Experiment

Okay, Radical Experiment. I mentioned last week that over 26,000 children die every day of starvation or preventable diseases. You realize that is the equivalent of 100 planes filled with children falling from the sky and crashing every single day? If one plane in the United States of America falls from the sky and crashes, it makes news headlines all over the world. We're asking, "What happened? How did this happen?" We're learning about the passengers. We are learning about how this could be prevented again. What if it were 100 every single day? Where are the headlines? Where are the hearings, acts of Congress, and the uproar that would be there if this were happening with planes every day? The reality is it is happening with children every day, and we must do something about it; our faith in us compels us to.

So, the challenge is for one year as a church to go through our spending and to ask of every single line item in our budget, "Is it more important for us to spend this amount of money than it is for us to feed a starving child?" And then, as individuals and families, to take one year and to sacrifice every possible dollar we can in order to give every bit of money we can to urgent, spiritual, and physical need around the world. Why would we do that? Because we have faith, and faith trusts God more than it trusts stuff and things and comfort and the world, and we follow God sacrificially, and it just makes sense. Faith.

Now, I mentioned last week that if we were going to do this, it's going to take the whole body doing this together because it affects all of us as a faith family. And so I said I was going to come back this week with a proposal for what this might look like, to present it to you now, just like we do with other major decisions we make as a body, where it's presented to you now and we're going to have two weeks to pray through, think about, and discuss this. Two weeks from now, Sunday, October 4, to have an opportunity to affirm whether or not we, as a body, believe the Lord is leading us to do this, and so that's what I want to do. When you leave tonight, there will be copies of this proposal that you can pick up on your way out, and I want to give you an overview now.

Three main points of this proposal. "In love to God, in light of the needs around the world and obedience to scripture, the elders and stewardship team of The Church at Brook Hills propose that the church body affirm the following actions pertaining to the radical experiment: (1) We will immediately begin radical saving as a church during the remainder of 2009 for the sake of urgent, spiritual, and physical need around the world. The focus of this radical experiment is 2010, but it would make absolutely no sense for us to spend it up in the rest of 2009 preparing to give radically to the poor in 2010. And so there are some things that are in our budget that cannot be changed—they're already in the works—but immediately, October 4, to immediately begin radical saving and sacrificing in order to free up as much as possible to spend on behalf of urgent, spiritual, and physical need around the world."

Last week, you started sending in ideas through the cards you filled out. I cannot wait for you to see the ideas, so many creative things, and next week we're going to talk more practically about some of these things, so many creative things. A lot of uniformity on some things, but really clear, apparently, that we could do differently in the way we gather together for worship and the way that we do this or that ministry, so that's the first picture—immediately begin savings. We're compiling every single one of the things you wrote on a list that will be distributed to every single respective leader that has anything to do with that area.

Second, the elders, staff, stewardship team, ministry team, personnel ministry team and campus planning team—basically, that’s the different teams that kind of work together on budget stuff—will work together over the next two months on a 2010 budget that saves every expenditure possible for the sake of urgent, spiritual and physical need around the world. Basically, that is saying we, as a church, want leadership to put together a 2010 budget that reflects minimum on ourselves in order to spend maximum on spiritual and physical need around the world. This gives us two months to figure out what in the world this looks like, and much like we do with the budget at the end of every year, at the end of November we present a budget to the church and have that two weeks to pray, think through, discuss that, and then have an opportunity to affirm that. And so, basically, it’s saying let’s get to work on radical 2010 budget. That’s the second part.

Now the third part is where it gets really good right now, and there’s a little bit to unpack here leading up. Some of you may have seen that our giving as a church to this point is below our budget. We have been giving, as a church, below our budget. But the good news is that staff, leaders, have been conserving as much as possible, outside of radical experiment stuff, economic situation, everything, and as a result, right now we have taken in a little over \$500,000.00 more than we have spent. So, we have by the grace of God, at this moment for 2009, a little over \$500,000.00, so the question is what do we do with that? Conventional wisdom has been, “Well, you save it for a rainy day.” You look at these economic times we’re in and you save it because you don’t know what’s coming, but that makes no sense in light of James 2, to save for a potential future need when you are surrounded by dire present need, so I began thinking, “What can we do?” and this leads to the third part of this proposal. There’s a lot to unpack here, so follow with me. We will immediately designate up to \$525,000.00 to specific projects with Compassion International in order to meet urgent, spiritual, and physical need around the world.

Now here’s how this part of the proposal came about. As elders and leaders, we started thinking, “Okay, if we’re going to sacrifice in order to spend on children who are dying, then we need to be giving toward that which we are sacrificing for.”

So, how can we best do that with urgent need right now, but do it responsibly? There are responsible ways to give to the poor and there are irresponsible ways to give to the poor, and so we want to be responsible. We want to respond with urgency, though, so we started thinking, “How can we do that?” Now many of you are familiar with Compassion. There are about 500 families in this church who have sponsored Compassion children through child—sponsorship programs. It’s a great picture. But you may not be aware of child survival programs that Compassion has.

What they found was their child—sponsorship program, in order to be sponsored in their sponsorship program, a child has to be around five years old. What they found was that in many of the areas they were working in, children were not making it to age five, or if they were, their bodies were so malnourished and their brains were so deformed that it was too late to really offer good care. And so they began these child survival programs, where they will go in, and for about \$250.00 a year, you can provide for a mother or a child, together about \$500.00 a year, you can feed a mother/child unit. Not only feed them, but provide medical services and care, from the prenatal picture all the way through the first couple years of their life, and give them sustenance at a time where, otherwise, they would have none.

And so, we began talking with the folks at Compassion, even went out to Compassion, to Colorado Springs, to meet with some of the folks there and began talking with them about that. And as we were praying, God began to lead our hearts toward India. Here’s why...

India—India is economically the world's most impoverished nation. 41% of the world's poor live in India, 41% in this one country. Not only is it impoverished, but it is lostness exemplified. We're talking about sheer numbers, not percentage but by sheer numbers there are more lost people living in India than any other country in the world. India is where lostness and poverty collide together in massive need.

And so we began talking with Compassion and we said, "Do you have any child survival programs that need to be sponsored in India?" And what they do is, these child survival programs, what will happen is oftentimes a church will partner together with another church or a couple other churches together to sponsor one of these. You put the math together, it's about \$25,000.00 for a child survival program, and so different churches will partner together to sponsor one program. And so we said, "Well what needs are there in India?" and they said, "Well we have 21 different child survival programs spread throughout India." I'll show you here a map on the screen that shows you the 21 different child survival programs in India. And so we began looking at this map, and we started thinking, "Okay, 21 areas where they are nourishing moms and kids and families that are not living otherwise, 21 of them; \$25,000.00 for each of them. That is \$525,000.00. God has, by His grace, given us a little over \$500,000.00. Let's say, 'Brook Hills, we're going to take India.'"

It's like Jeopardy, "India for \$525,000.00, please." We're going to take India, all those child survival programs for the next year. We'll do that now while we pray about what else we're going to do in the days to come.

Now, that's the picture, and this does not mean that we're only going to India for the next year, or the only place we're giving it. There's a whole global disciple-making strategy that we'll unfold in the days to come. Even now, as this throws some wrinkles in it, but it is giving and going all over the world, but there's certainly an emphasis here, and we began really praying through it. I want you to see this, I want to know this, and when you leave today, you will get this proposal. On the back, there's 12 reasons that we, as leaders, have said why Compassion in India, because I want you to see that it's, obviously, extremely important, when we begin sacrificing to spend, that we spend wisely on that which brings the greatest glory to God.

12 Reasons to Take India

Twelve reasons, and I'll just throw them out really, really quick, for why we camped out on this picture.

1. Gospel-centered—there are many organizations that give to the poor apart from the gospel, even so-called Christian organizations that are not gospel-centered. This gospel-centered.
2. Church-focused, which minister to the poor through the local church, not apart from the local church.
3. Integrity—you'll see in their stuff online that you can go to on our Web site—radical experiment—that shows you the picture of Compassion, top 1% of charities year after year after year, with integrity in handling finances.
4. Connectivity. Obviously, a far-reaching network right now already in place.
5. Reliability
6. Sustainability—you know how sometimes you go into an impoverished region and you drop a pebble? It's like dropping a pebble into a lake, and it makes a little ripple for a second and then it's gone and it's like nothing happened. This is a picture that is sustainable, that continues in these communities in the days to come.
7. It's tangible—we're helping identifiable needs now.

8. Scalable—we can adjust giving to match a variety of different needs.
9. Relational—obviously, we are already involved in a variety of different ways with what God is doing around the world through this kind of ministry.
10. Personal—our faith family can be personally involved through this ministry. Why not send some of our ladies to India alongside these mothers in the days to come, and leaders alongside these church leaders in helping build them up.
11. Possibility to open the door to future ministry and church planning alongside local churches in India for the sake of the gospel among the lost.
12. Urgency that is there, people that are dying, and a country with 41% of the world's poor and very little exposure to the gospel.

So, that's the proposal. Here's the deal: The next two weeks, you'll have an opportunity to pray through and think through that. There is more information on the web site, if you want to go to that. What I want to do is something similar to what we did last fall with the *Radical* series. Next Sunday night, after this worship gathering, we're going to have a Q&A dialogue and then, the Wednesday after, from 6:30 to 8:00, we'll have a Q&A dialogue as we think about this as a church and as you begin to think about what does this look like in your individual life and your life as a family. I want us to have some time where we can think through some of those things together, and so we'll do that at the end of the worship gathering next Sunday night, and then the following Wednesday. And then, Sunday, October 4, we'll have an opportunity to affirm whether or not we believe the Lord is leading us to do this.

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