

The Doctrine of Saving Faith, Part 4

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-293

Well, tonight we close, for the moment anyway, the doctrinal series and take a break in the summer. And we have been doing a number of studies in the great doctrines of the Bible. We actually started out many months ago with the doctrine of perseverance. We moved through some of the other wonderful doctrines, the doctrine of sovereign election, things like that, the doctrine of redemption and we find ourselves talking about the doctrine of faith, what the Bible teaches about saving faith. And we have said a lot already and we come to the final in a four-message look at saving faith. It certainly isn't the only time we consider this, we do consider it very often because the issue comes up in many, many portions of Scripture. Not long ago when we were going through 1 John, 2 John and 3 John, we were facing the issue of the legitimacy of saving faith, what it really is again and again. And here we come, this evening, to a passage that we looked at last Sunday also, a two-part series to wrap up our study of saving faith, James chapter 2...James chapter 2. And I want you to turn to that portion of Scripture. We began looking at verse 14 and we'll move our way down through to the end of the chapter, verse 26.

By way of just getting us started a little bit, let me say that one of the most important and frightening truths of Scripture is that there is a faith in God, there is a faith in Christ, a believing of the Bible, believing of the gospel that does not save from eternal judgment. It is possible, as we heard tonight in the testimonies of those being baptized, to believe in God, to believe in Jesus, to believe in the Bible, and yet not be rescued, not be forgiven, not be justified, not be regenerated, not be on your way to heaven. It is possible and it is common. False faith, dead faith, non-saving faith, a very common reality, something like a corpse in a casket, all dressed up, made up, looking lifelike with no internal life principle at all, no breath and no movement, a mannequin with a painted smile. James wants us, as do many other Bible writers, to be certain that no one is deceived by a false faith. As we noted last time, he has already begun discussing this. Back in chapter 1 and verse 22 James said, "Prove yourself doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude themselves." There are those people who are deceived. Down in verse 26 he says, "There are those who deceive their own hearts, who possess a worthless religion." And now in chapter 2 he comes back to that same subject and addresses it more definitively in verse 14 and following. And here he talks about dead faith. In fact, in verse 17 he says, "Faith if it has no works is dead." In 20 he says, "You foolish fellow, faith without works...again...is dead or useless." Verse 26, he ends the section, "So also faith without works is dead."

James is defining faith, a kind of faith that cannot produce life, hence it is a dead faith, a lifeless faith, a non-saving faith. Faith, as we know, is a gift from God, saving faith. It is a gift from God that produces in us a transformation, a regeneration, a new birth. You heard it said also in the testimonies in Baptism, a new heart, a new spirit, a new life, a love for God, a love for Christ, a love for truth, a longing to obey, a hatred of sin. Faith that saves equals spiritual life. And it can only be seen by spiritual life, by spiritual movement, by evidences of real life. If there's no spiritual action, then faith is dead. And so James is setting forth this crucial teaching because we need to be warned about this non-saving faith. It is not just a static event, it is not something that happens in a moment never to have an impact beyond that moment. We are saved by grace unto good works, Ephesians 2 says, that we should walk in them. We are saved from sin, transformed in the inside, transformed in the inner man in order that we might produce righteous deeds by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that is what James is saying. Certainly as a pastor whose been in ministry a long time, 36 years, I have seen again and again and again the reality of dead faith. I have seen people who on the outside have all the verbal evidences and verbal commitments and they show up and they go through the motions, some of them, for many, many years at Grace Church, only then to crash and burn or disappear or give evidence of never having truly believed at all. I've seen people whose lives demonstrate no righteous action, no righteous deeds, no love of holiness and virtue in the things of God. I've seen it a lot. I've seen it with people who are around a long time. I've seen it with people who are around a brief time. And it's always critically important for us to examine ourselves to see whether we're truly in the faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5 tells us to do that.

And the background, as I told you last time, James is writing to some people who were in Judaism. And Judaism was so legalistic, there were so many rules and so many laws and so many ceremonies and so many things you had to do that you defined your religion by those things. Christianity looked like a kind of a better route, you know, an easier approach. It was all about grace. You could set aside the traditions. You could set aside all the ceremonies. You could set aside the rituals. You could set aside all the fastidious law keeping and you could just come in by grace and for many Jews there was an appealing element to Christianity because you could abandon all of that. It was sort of like a free ticket. You know, confess Jesus and that was it. And so you could go from living under the terrible burden and guilt and the unrelieved pressure of the Law to living free in Christ, a welcome change. And James wants to make sure that nobody assumes that that's the way it is. You don't go from trying to keep the Law to being indifferent to the Law when you become a Christian, you go from trying to keep the Law to loving to keep the Law. You go from being unable to keep the Law to being able to keep the Law. You go from under the horrendous burden and guilt of violating the Law to the freedom and joy of knowing that the violations of the Law which you incur have already been paid for by Christ. But there is no less a responsibility to the Law. On the other hand, for the first time you can and you will obey God's Law, His true Law, His Law written in the Word of God and you'll do it with joy because it's the longing and the desire of your heart. So James says, "We're not offering some antinomianism, that is anti-Law. We're not offering some kind of free-wheeling live any way you

want salvation. Where there is saving faith, James says, there will be evidence of it and the evidence will be righteousness. New life will demonstrate itself in action.

Last time we looked at the character of dead faith in verses 14 to 20, the character of dead faith. And you will remember that James said there are basically three elements or three features that define the character of dead faith. It is an empty confession, verse 14, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but he has no works? Can that kind of faith save him?" What good is a faith that's only verbalized? You say you have it but there's no works, there's no product, there's no evidence, there's no life.

It's as simple as that. If you've been regenerated, you have a new nature. You have a new disposition. You have a new life and you will manifest that new life. James has already pointed out, as we mentioned last time, that it will show up in righteous things like patience endurance in trials, like purity, virtue, humility, a love for God's Word, obedience, submission to the purposes of God, control of the tongue, compassion on others, abstinence from the world, impartiality. These are the things which Hebrews 6:9 talks about that belong to salvation. The saving work of God produces in the soul repentance and a turning from sin and a love for God and a love for Christ, a hunger for righteousness, a desire for the truth of God, hatred for sin and all of those things.

And so, James begins by saying, "Empty confession is characteristic of dead faith." It's a sayer, not a doer, to borrow the words of Jesus in Matthew 7, the Sermon on the Mount. It's also a sayer and not a doer as James pointed out in chapter 1.

Secondly, he talks about not just empty confession but false compassion in verses 15 and following, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" That is useless. That is a false kind of compassion when you run into somebody who is in destitution and immediate need who does not have what they need to eat nor what they need to stay warm and be protected from the elements. And all you've got to say to them is go in peace, I hope you can figure it out, work it out, I hope your luck changes, etc., etc. What good is that kind of verbiage. That verbiage doesn't provide anything. It doesn't clothe them and it doesn't feed them. Even so, verse 17 says, faith if it has no works is dead being by itself.

This is really an illustration of dead faith, but we can borrow from the illustration and say that typically dead faith is characterized not only by a false confession, but a false compassion. One of the things that marks true believers is compassion. Back in chapter 1 verse 27 says, "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father to visit orphans and widows in their distress." Those who do not know Christ may make a profession of Christ, it will show up in the attitude they have toward those in need. And so he reiterates in verse 17 a faith that has no works is dead, it exists alone.

There's a third element in this dead faith, shallow conviction...shallow conviction. Verse 18, "Someone may well say, 'You have faith, I have works. Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works.'" In other words, it's a simple point. How are you possibly going to show your faith without your works? You can't. You can say you have it, you can't show it. There's no way to demonstrate faith without works. Faith can only be shown by works. Then he goes on to say, "You believe that God is one, you do well, the devils also believe and tremble. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless." This is claiming orthodoxy, claiming to believe the right thing. He says you're no different than the devils. You're no different than the demons. Demons are orthodox, they know Jesus Christ to be who He is. In fact, you can read in Matthew 8:29, Mark 1:23 and 24, Mark 5:7, Luke 4:41, many other places, Luke 8:28, you can read over in to Acts 19 where the demons knew Paul and they knew Jesus but didn't know the sons of Sceva. In all of those passages, demons acknowledge Christ. They acknowledge Him as the Son of God, as the Messiah, etc. Their Christology is sound. Demons have a sound Christology. Their understanding of eschatology is very sound, too, because they even ask Jesus about whether or not the time has come when He is going to effect judgment upon them. They understand God. They call God the Most High God. They understand judgment, they know that they are set for torment in the future. And they know the church and they know who...who the church is and what the Lord wants to do in His church and they do everything they can to fort that. They even know the way of salvation, but demons don't believe savingly. They do, however, shudder and tremble, it says. Faith of demons does not save, but it causes them to shake because they know judgment is coming.

And so, those who have dead faith have a shallow conviction, a shallow understanding if they don't shudder like demons. And so James tries to help us to understand what dead faith is. So we could sort of sum it up by saying it this way, no amount of knowledge of the gospel is proof of salvation. No amount of belief in the truth is the proof of salvation. No amount of fear regarding judgment is necessarily proof of salvation. No amount of guilt for sin is necessarily proof of salvation. No amount of desire for salvation is necessarily proof of salvation. Many have knowledge and are not saved. Many believe the truth and are not saved. Many fear judgment and are not saved. Many feel guilty and are not saved. And then many even desire salvation. Jesus said there will be many who desire it and won't find it. Many even attempt to lift up Christ and to exalt Christ and are not saved, genuinely saved. And I think we all understand that, although it sounds strange to say that.

Go back to Matthew 21:9, "The multitudes going before Him when He entered Jerusalem, those following after were crying out, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest.'" And you remember what happened a few days later, don't you? Their hosannas turned to crucify Him. All of these things do not necessarily nor any one of these things does necessarily prove spiritual life. Spiritual life is only manifest in one way and that is

through works, righteous deeds. And I want you to look at that. We see the character of dead faith, now I want to show you the contrast of the character of the living faith in verses 21 to 26, let's put that behind us. James is structuring his thought here as if he moves from one side of the issue to the other. He is in a debate. He is interacting with a Jew, perhaps, a hypothetical Jew in some assembly somewhere who is arguing that a faith with no works is still a saving faith and, boy, there are lots of people who argue that. I wrote endlessly on that subject in the book The Gospel According To Jesus, the follow up book, The Gospel According To The Apostles, two books, I don't know, approaching 600 pages arguing with people in evangelicalism who believed with all their heart and have published it again and again that faith with no works, faith with no fruit, faith that becomes unbelief, faith that turns to reject the gospel and reject Christ is still saving faith. If you're interested in that kind of discussion, I recommend those books. The issue is still among us and it's a powerful influence on a shallow gospel and a failure to call people to a true and genuine faith.

Now in order for us to understand the contrast here, the character of dead faith, the first part, the character...the contrasting character of living faith, he looks at three illustrations, okay? So this is illustrative material and we're just going to take a little time to remind ourselves of these three illustrations. He proves his point from Jewish redemptive history. Since he's writing to Jews and since this issue came up, most likely as I told you, because some Jews may have been viewing Christianity as a much easier way to go than Judaism, a free ticket, just believe in Jesus and live any way you want...which is still around, as we well know. Because they're coming from a Jewish context, he wants to go back into Jewish redemptive history and draw his analogies and his comparisons and illustrations. And he begins with that father of the Jews, Abraham, that greatly esteemed and revered man.

And so, in verse 21 comes the analogy and the illustration from Abraham. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his son, on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works and as a result of the works, faith was perfected and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness and he was called the friend of God.'" Now there have been through the years people confused by this passage. And what confuses people is the statement in verse 21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works..." In fact, this was a bone in the throat of many, many theologians and Bible teachers early on in the life of the church and continues to be some source of confusion to some.

But let me clarify it for you. Let's look at Abraham and see if in fact his saving faith was manifest in works. And so he is identified as our father, Abraham. We are, as believers, Gentile believers, not the physical seed of Abraham, but in a sense we are the spiritual children of Abraham, we have followed his faith. In Romans 4:11 Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised." In other words, it says there that among even the uncircumcised, Abraham is like the father of the faithful. That is to say he's like the prototypical sort of inaugural first

faithful man. There is a sense then in which we spiritually become children of Abraham by faith.

Down in verse 16 of Romans 4, "For this reason it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all." And Paul, of course, is writing to Gentiles in Rome. He is our father by faith. "As it is written, a father of many nations have I made you."

So he is in a real sense, of course, physically the father of Israel, the father of the Jews. In a spiritual sense he is the representative of man, he is, in a sense, the one who established the life of faith for all to see. He is the classic ancient illustration of saving faith, the classic ancient illustration of saving faith. So let's look at him. Let's look at the prototypical man of faith and ask this question...was not Abraham our father justified by works? And at that particular point, those who are ascribing very tightly to Pauline theology want to choke. And if you go down to verse 23 you read, "And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." And there we see that he was justified or reckoned righteous not by works but by believing. And we feel much more comfortable with that because that sounds more like Romans chapter 4, doesn't it? And there again in that same text which I just read a moment ago, we read, "If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God." There it says he was not justified by works. Here in James it says he was justified by works and therein lies the dilemma. In fact in Romans 4:3 it says, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." And James which I just read in verse 23 also records that because, in fact, that is exactly what it says in Genesis 15:6 that he believed so that by faith he received righteousness. In fact, Romans 4 goes on to say, "The one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness." And he says again in verse 9, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." Verse 13, "The promise to Abraham and his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law but through the righteousness of faith."

Now look, either he was justified by faith or justified by works, which is it? Which is it? It's not that difficult to understand, frankly. It's a very important thing to understand but it's really not that difficult, it all depends on who you're talking about. Let me split it down for you very simply. Abraham was justified by God through faith. That is to say, to be justified is to be declared righteous, to be stated as righteous. That came from God indicated in Genesis 15:3 through 6. Because Abraham believed God, God granted him righteousness. God's righteousness was credited to him by his faith. Like all of us, he was bankrupt before God in his spiritual account. He could do nothing but ask for forgiveness and a righteousness that was alien to himself to be imputed to him, or credited to his account. And because he believed, God credited righteousness to his account as if he was a perfectly righteous individual. In fact, it was the very righteousness of God and God could do that because Jesus would one day bear the penalty for the sins of Abraham. And so, on the basis of their

being a perfect sacrifice for Abraham's sins, God's righteousness could then be imputed to him, his sin being paid for. The sole condition of salvation in the life of Abraham then was that he believed God and that is universally the sole condition of salvation if you're talking about being justified before God, or that is being declared righteous by God.

But the issue here in this text is not being declared righteous by God. It may seem strange but the issue here in this text is being declared righteous by man. It's a different issue. It's a different issue. We know how God justifies sinners. But the question here is how can we determine who is a sinner having been justified? We know God justifies the ungodly and the sinner by faith, He can do that. He can see the faith. He gives the faith. He produces the faith. That's part of the gift. He imputes the righteousness. He credits it to their account and they're saved. The question is not...how does God justify? The question that James is discussing is how do we declare others to be truly righteous? How do we do it?

You have to understand, you have this discussion...if a man says he has faith, verse 1...if a brother or sister is without clothing and one of you says to them, verse 16...and verse 18, someone may well say. This is all about what people say and what people claim and what people affirm. The question here is how do we know for ourselves as well as for others around us? Abraham believed God and the pinnacle of Abraham's faith, as we all know, is just an incredible, incredible trust in God when he took his son Isaac up on the mountain to become a living sacrifice, really faith of an astonishing and amazing kind. We see Abraham's faith. God gives him the faith supernaturally. God knows his heart. But when we're asked, was Abraham's faith real? Can you declare that Abraham is righteous? The answer comes yes by his works. I can't see faith and you can't see faith. I can't see saving faith, I don't know that. I can't know the heart. Jesus knew what was in the heart. God knows what's in the heart. We do not know what is in the heart. Works are the only way that faith can be verified. And that's exactly what he's been talking about. If a man says he has faith, verse 14, and has no works, is that sufficient faith to save him? What does it matter what you say if you have no works? If you have no works, your faith is dead. We have every right to justify your claim to be a Christian by looking at your life. There's no good in saying I have faith but no works. That's why James says in verse 18, "I'll show you my faith the only way I can show it, by my works." You heard that again and again in the testimonies tonight in Baptism. I have a love for the Lord, a desire to serve the Lord, to honor the Lord. I have a love for the Word, etc., etc.

Justification before God is by faith. Justification before men is by works. Abraham's faith existed, He could see it. God knows everything. God even granted that faith as a part of His gracious gift to Abraham. But Abraham's faith becomes manifest and I can weigh in on Abraham's behalf because of his works. Go back to verse 21. "Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his son on the altar?" James says, "Wouldn't that be enough proof to tell you that his faith was

the real thing?" Genesis 22, that incredible story of God coming to Abraham and saying, "Okay, you have finally the son of promise, you have this heir that has been born to you and Sarah in your old age when you were a hundred and Sarah was ninety. You have this child and in this child is all the divine promise, all that's in the Abrahamic Covenant of a future nation that will number as the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven. It's going to impact the world and this nation is going to be blessed and all the wonderful things that God promised is all wrapped up in this one lonely, only child." And now God comes to Abraham in Genesis 22 and says, "Take this child up to Mount Moriah, put him on an altar and kill him for Me." This is a tremendous, tremendous. It must have been an utterly overwhelming command beyond comprehension that he would even think about doing this. In Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac." Took him up there, laid him out on the altar, got ready to lift up his knife and plunge it into his heart and then burn him. "Abraham when he was tested offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son, it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.'" He was offering up the end of his dreams and hopes, the end of God's Covenant. In some ways from a practical standpoint, this would have negated everything God said, everything God promised. How could he do it?

The next verse, Hebrews 11:19, "He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead." He believed God to the degree that he would kill his son because he believed God would raise him from the dead. Why? Because God wouldn't have a choice. Because God had promised him that son and promised through that son a great nation. And if God took the life of that son, God would give back the life of that son. And Abraham, frankly, believed God to the degree that he was ready to see that miracle happen. Tremendous faith. He had seen God bring life out of the dead womb of Sarah. Abraham was not perfect. He had his times of doubt when he tried to protect Sarah in Egypt by lying, saying she was his sister. When he tried to help God in the flesh by getting his handmaid pregnant. But he was still a man of great faith in spite of his failures and it reached its pinnacle in this act of sacrifice. God never promised him a resurrection, but God made him an unconditional and eternal promise and he knew that if he took the life of that son, God would keep His word and He would have to raise him from the dead.

James was right in verse 23. "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." That's right. He was justified before God by faith. But James also says, "He was justified in our eyes by his works." That is to say his true salvation becomes manifest, his faith is manifest when he offered up Isaac, his son on the altar. The word justified can be a forensic word. The word justified can mean to acquit. It can mean to treat as righteous, that's how it's used by Paul in Romans. But the word justify can also mean to vindicate. It can also mean to show, to display. And here it has that sense. Righteousness is displayed by works. God declares him righteous by faith and we all declare him righteous by manifest righteous behavior. And so in verse 22 you see that faith was working with his works and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. Faith was completed. Faith was..the word means...brought to its goal, brought to its end, brought to its completeness. It is not that

salvation was incomplete, but that it is incomplete in its demonstration until revealed by works. I'll tell you, you can take a tree and you can say this is a perfect tree by all we know about it. And you can plant it in your yard but you're never going to know how perfect a tree it is until it bears...what?...fruit and then it is perfected, manifestly perfected. And so it is that faith can be perfect but is not manifestly demonstrated to be so apart from works.

And then verse 23, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'" How was it fulfilled? By his...what?...by his works. That just repeats what is said at the end of the prior verse. Faith was perfected, Scripture was fulfilled. Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness. In other words, when Scripture said that it was right, it was accurate, it was true because it manifestly was revealed in his works. And he was called the friend of God...the friend of God.

Everybody knew him as the friend of God. Not because they knew the secret things in his heart, but because they knew the public things in his life, because they knew that his faith was real, because he demonstrated it in his obedience, even to the most difficult command. Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20 stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the Lord before the new court and he said this, "O Lord, the God of our fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens and art Thou not ruler over all, the kingdoms of the nations, power and might are in Thy hands so that no one can stand against Thee? Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham, Thy friend forever?" Isn't that wonderful? I don't know that Jehoshaphat or anybody else could have made a better post-mortem, if you will, on the life of Abraham. I don't know that there could be anything said about a man better than to say he was manifestly the friend of God. How did they know that, how did he come to have that title? Why is it that they said it? Because his faith was manifest. And God responds in Isaiah 41:8 and says, "But you, Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen descendant of Abraham, my friend." He was God's friend by faith. He was manifestly God's friend to those who knew his life by works.

You see then, verse 34, don't you? That a man is justified before us by works and not by faith alone, not by some stand-alone faith. Calvin said, "Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone. The faith that is alone is a dead faith."

He moves from the illustration of Abraham to another familiar character in the story of Israel, Rahab...Rahab. Poor lady, she's never Rahab, she's always Rahab the harlot, as if that needed to be placed beside her endlessly as a reminder, not of her evil but of God's grace. Verse 25, "And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" James chooses another illustration of justification vindicated by works. By the way, this lady is remarkably unlike Abraham. In the new book, Twelve Extraordinary Women which will be out in the fall, there's a whole section on Rahab, fascinating woman. But

Abraham was a Jew and Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham is a man, Rahab a woman. Abraham a good man, Rahab a wicked woman. Abraham a noble Chaldean, Rahab a degraded Canaanite. Abraham a great leader, Rahab a common follower. Abraham at the top of the social ladder, Rahab at the bottom. And they both appear, isn't it interesting?, they both appear among the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. And both of them are in the genealogy of Jesus, did you remember that? The Messianic line came through Rahab.

"With all those contrasts in the background," James says, "in like manner," that's what he's saying there, in the same way, *homoios*, in the very same way as Abraham, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?" Now let me remind you if you go back to..you can turn to Joshua chapter 2, it's worth looking at a couple of points there, it won't take long at it, just a couple of thoughts. Joshua chapter 2 tells the story. You remember the spies were sent in to spy on Jericho and they went in and went to the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho saying, "Men have come to Israel tonight to search out the land." Maybe they thought that staying in the house of a harlot was a good place to hide. We know later that she had a house on the wall, on the city wall, and that may have been the compelling reason to stay there. A lot of inns and a lot of places where people stayed who were traveling were brothels, this was not an uncommon situation. But this one happened to be on the wall which was the good point to observe what was going on and also a good point to make a hasty exists.

But nonetheless they went to that place. She is always called the harlot. She is always referred to as the harlot to emphasize the grace of God and the remarkable change. And, of course, you remember what happened, they came to find the men and she hid them. She hid them because, go down to verse 9, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land." I don't know how she learned that. I don't know who evangelized her about the true and living God. But I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the terror of you has fallen on us and all the inhabitants of the land of melted away before you, for we have heard how the Lord 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, Sihon and Og whom you utterly destroyed, and when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." Hey, there's a convert...there's a convert. She got the message. She demonstrates her faith. She demonstrates her faith. She was justified by faith before God. But she was justified by works before men. Her willingness to hide the spies, to try to accommodate them, to protect them, to help them showed that she loved the true God more than she feared the king. She loved the true God more than she feared for her life. This was an act of tremendous courage and tremendous faith for had they been discovered she would have been executed.

Abraham's act would have cost him his son. Rahab's act could have cost her her life, in a sense. She was willing to take up her cross. And the evidence of her faith was in this tremendous act of courageous trust in God. And she emphasizes that this Lord, this God is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. And her faith in this God and her understanding that He rules everywhere was her confidence that she was safe in His care.

And finally, back to James, James says there is one more illustration to help you see the reality of dead faith. Abraham is one, Rahab is two, the third one is the corpse in verse 26. "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." Abraham believed God and showed up with Isaac. Rahab believed in the true God, it showed up when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way. She hid them and helped them to escape and helped the Israelites to conquer her own city. Thirdly, an analogy to sum it up, like a body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

And I fear, beloved, that churches are filled with corpses, rotting corpses with no life and no breath, no salvation. Dead faith. And I think we continue to proliferate this with shallow superficial preaching and teaching.

But the question for the moment, as we close, is not about somebody else, or some other group of people. The question is about you. God knows your faith but the question is can all the rest of the people around you know that you have been justified because they can see it in your life? That's the question. What's going on in your life is the evidence. I mean, it's pretty simple. I don't want to be too simple but cats meow and dogs bark and cows moo and regenerate Christians act like it. It's simply an expression of their new nature. That's why Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." Ask yourself, you say you believe? What kind of faith is that? Do you long to obey? Do you long to serve God? Do you love Him and want to serve Him more? Do you have a hatred of sin particularly in your own life? A longing for righteousness? Do you seek humility and resent pride even in your own experience? Are you willing to put everything on the line to give up everything and follow Christ, take up your cross? Those are the things that manifestly reveal a real saving faith.

And as I've said so many times, the tragedy of all tragedies is to think you have that when in fact you don't. And the joy of all joys is to look at your life and take an inventory. It's not about the perfection of your life, it's just about the direction. It's not that you're perfect, Abraham wasn't, Rahab wasn't. It's just about the direction that your heart goes because it's a new heart, the direction that your spirit goes because it's a new spirit. Holy longings and righteous aspirations mark saving faith.

Father, we thank You tonight for this time in Your Word, just to unpack this challenging portion of Scripture and to get a better understanding of it. We thank You for the great understanding that the Scripture reveals to us so that we don't need to error, so that it's not confusing. We hear so much

today about people saying well the Bible has all kinds of interpretations, it's so hard to understand, there are so many views. The fact of the matter is for those that are diligent and those that are thoughtful and careful and consistent and those who compare Scripture with Scripture, it is wonderfully accessible, it is revelation, it is intended to open up, to make clear, to give understanding, to give wisdom to us that we otherwise could not have. We thank You that You have revealed it not to the wise and the prudent in the world, but to the children and the babes, to those of us who are the insignificant ones, but to whom You have given Your Spirit as our teacher to open the truth for us. We thank You, Father, for the true salvation, the true faith granted to us by Your grace. And we pray that everyone would look at their own lives and examine the nature of that faith and determine if it is manifestly a faith that transforms, created unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Thank You, Father, for Your grace to us throughout this day and we desire to live for You, to manifest that righteousness which You have not only imputed to us, but which You have wrought in our hearts by the new birth and through Your Spirit. Thank You in Christ's name. Amen...Amen.

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