

#4 James Chapter 2b

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Last time we ended with the first 4 verses of James chapter 2:

'My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?'

Verse 5: 'Listen, my beloved brethren: ***Has God not chosen*** the poor of this world to *be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?'

The first thing we see here in verse 5 is that James is verifying the reality of the Election of God, that ***He has chosen for Himself*** those whom He will call to Himself and save. I want to go back and refresh our memories regarding our election, by God, to eternal life. Remember, the book of James is a series of tests as to the genuineness of a person's faith, whether they are really saved or deceived. And, I want us to also refresh our minds as to what salvation really is... what it means to be saved and what it takes to be saved. First we'll go to Ephesians 2: '*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'*

When Paul uses the word 'created' there, 'created in Christ Jesus,' it means something created new where it wasn't before; it doesn't mean refashioned, remade; it means a brand new creation from nothing. He means our spiritual self which was dead before that. In Corinthians he wrote that anyone in Christ is a new creation.

First, we see that before God made us alive in Christ, we are dead in sin. Every person, when we are born into this World, is spiritually dead. We are actually unable to even come to God; we can't understand the things of God: 'But the ***natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit*** of God, for they are foolishness to him; ***nor can he know them***, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor 2:14

Before God created the World, He chose for Himself all those whom He would draw to Himself, each one at His appointed time: 'just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.' Eph 1:4

Here we see that everyone is spiritually dead in sin and completely unable to come to God or understand Spiritual things at all. Before He created the World, God chose for Himself, all whom He would save.

Then, when He did save us, it was all His choice and His work: ***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.***

Another verse that proves God's election is Acts 13:48: 'Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. ***And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.***' It doesn't say, 'as many as believed were appointed to eternal life. The having been appointed to eternal life happened

before they believed. The same has been true since the beginning of time: God elected a certain group of people and appointed them to eternal life. It says that also, before the foundation of the World, He wrote our names in the Lamb's Book of Life: 'All who dwell on the earth will worship him (the Antichrist), whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8 and: And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not **written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world**, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.' Rev 17:8

This is very important: God does not write our names in the Lamb's Book of Life when we are born or when we are born again... **our names were written in His Book of Life before He even created the World.**

When Jesus Christ took on human flesh, it says that He brought light to all the World.

'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1

'This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' 1 John 1

'And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.' John 3:19

Jesus Christ came into the World and He was the Light of the World; His light shone on every person. Those whom God has chosen come to the Light. Those, whom He has not chosen, turn away from the Light lest their sin be exposed.

What makes one person come to the Light and another hide from the Light?

'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Acts 3:19

'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pet 3:9

'Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' Luke 15:10

Why do some repent and others not?

'And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if **God perhaps will grant them repentance**, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.' 2 Tim 2:24

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, **God has granted** to the Gentiles also the **repentance that leads to life.**" Acts 11:18

See that? God grants repentance. Salvation is the gift of God and repentance is also the gift of God that leads to Salvation.

That is how we should be praying for our unsaved loved ones: 'Lord, I pray that you would reveal Yourself to my brother and grant him repentance.'

It's very important that we clearly understand the reality that we are saved, justified and declared righteous in God's sight, by faith and only by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and not as the result of any good works that we can do. If we don't understand it correctly, especially from Paul, since he was the one God chose to take the Gospel to us, the Gentiles, then we might also misunderstand what James is saying. Since Paul is so very clear on our justification by faith, that means that the few verses of James which seem to

disagree, are simply not being understood correctly because we know that no part of Scripture contradicts any other part of Scripture. Scripture confirms itself always; we just misunderstand some of it sometimes.

To those whom God has chosen, He grants grace, faith and repentance, justification and glorification... all these are gifts of God to those whom He has chosen.

'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.' Rom 8:28
How does God choose whom He does? Why does He choose some and not other? We don't know.

Jesus said, 'Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.' John 3:7 The word John used here is the same word for both wind and Spirit: *pneuma*. Just as the wind blows on every person, so too, God's Spirit lights the darkness everywhere in this dark world but only those God has chosen come to the light, only God's Elect respond to His Holy Spirit.

'Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus' Rom 3:24

'For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.' Rom 3:28

'But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness' Rom 4:5

'...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.' Rom 10:9

'But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.' Rom 11:6

'...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.' Gal 2:16

'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' Eph 2:8

All of these verses were written by Paul. These and so many more make abundantly clear that our salvation is only by faith and not as a result of works in any way. So, when James says that 'faith without works is dead,' he must be meaning something other than that works are involved in our salvation. There are many who refuse to accept that salvation is only by faith; they believe that some effort on their part is necessary to being 'really saved.' In fact, that is the stumbling block upon which many fall, refusing to believe that only faith saves us and that it is the gift of God. Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and even some genuinely Christian groups all believe that getting to Heaven means being good enough, staying good enough and constantly doing good works but even then they can never be sure they are saved.

Verse 8: 'If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.'

He is saying that not only are we saved by God's grace but our entire Christian walk should be according to God's grace and mercy. The only two laws by which we are bound are, **to love God** and **to love others**. If we will do that, we will have kept all the Law but of course, none of us do keep even those two laws completely which is why we are not only saved by God's grace but we are also kept saved by God's grace.

If we show favoritism, if we offend some and prefer others, we will be judged with the same grace and mercy we show others. That doesn't mean we will lose our salvation but it does mean we will gain or suffer the loss of eternal rewards.

Verse 14: 'What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus 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 without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?'

Here is where some begin to misread James and misunderstand salvation, thinking that works are part of salvation. As we saw with so many verses written by Paul, Scripture unmistakably teaches us that we are saved and justified only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross but if our faith stops there, then we probably aren't really saved at all. Here James says that faith without works is dead. Later in this chapter he will say, ' You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.'

James is not saying something different than what Paul will later write. Remember, this is probably the first New Testament book written, about AD 40-45. Paul won't write his letters until some years later. James is writing to Hebrews who are coming out of the Old Covenant, their whole mindset has been based on constantly observing the Law and always doing the works therein.

Something to remember: Paul is the one who was given the final full revelation from God concerning the Gospel of Grace, the Gospel taken to the Gentiles that was completely apart from the Law. James was not teaching anything wrong, he was simply teaching as far as his knowledge and revelation took him.

James is contrasting the keeping of the Old Covenant Law with the keeping of the New Covenant Law which is now written on the heart of God's Elect and is contained in only the two: Love God and Love others. We know that is what James is doing because he just now referenced the New Covenant Law: the 'Perfect Law of Liberty.' He just told his readers that every one of them were guilty of breaking the whole Law even if they had only broken one part.

James began this section by referencing someone who says, 'I have faith' but has no works. What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?' He is talking about dead faith which is really faith in the works of the Law and not in the person and work of the Savior. That faith is without life and without the works which true faith leads to. False, dead faith leads to dead works. True, saving faith leads to works which are alive, which exemplify true, saving faith.

James begins this section by using the example of someone who says he has faith but has no works, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"

This is dead faith which cannot save. He says that this kind of faith is no different than the faith that demons have. They know the truth but their knowledge does not lead to works of life and works of love. Then he gives examples of living faith which had led to actions leading to life: Abraham and Rahab. Their deeds demonstrated their faith.

James is describing two kinds of faith: one is alive and one is dead. One leads to dead works and one leads to lively, Godly works. Faith which is accompanied by lively, Godly works is a faith that is proven to be alive.

In brief, James is examining two kinds of faith: one that leads to godly works and one that does not. One is true, and the other is false. One is alive, the other dead; hence, "Faith without works is dead,"

Also, notice that James actually quotes the same verse that Paul uses to support the teaching of justification by faith in Rom 4:3: '...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' If James was teaching a contradictory doctrine of faith and works other what the other New Testament writers taught, then he would not have used Abraham as an example.

Just like Paul, James is teaching that our salvation, our justification is only by faith. Our faith is a gift from God and it is God's work entirely which He accomplishes and perfects according to His plans and purposes. When one is truly saved, he will turn from sin and begin to do works of righteousness which correspond to true saving faith but those works have nothing to do with accomplishing our salvation or sustaining our salvation; they are simply the byproduct of God's work in our lives. The only work necessary for our salvation and eternal life was the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His life, death and resurrection. The only thing we do is to believe and trust in Him. Then, that true salvation will result in Godly works of love.

A perfect example of living faith vs. dead faith, even before the advent of the New Covenant was when Jesus told The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector: 'Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves, believing that they were righteous, despising others: He said, "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' Luke 18:10

Notice a couple of things in this parable: both of them came to the Temple to pray. One came to praise himself while the other came to seek forgiveness. The first thing we see is that the Pharisee is one who trusts in his ability to keep the Law of the Old Covenant. He was very religious; he did all the 'right' things and refrained from all the 'bad' things. He fasted, tithed and kept from committing many sins and yet, Jesus said when he went away he was not justified; he was not forgiven. His faith was in himself and in doing works of the Law; it was not saving faith, it was a dead faith. He thought he could show his faith by his many works and, in fact, he was showing the kind of faith he had; his works were showing a dead faith founded upon pride and self righteousness.

The tax collector didn't even come clear up to the Temple; it says he stood 'afar off.' He was rich; all the tax collectors were. They kept a sizable portion of all they collected for themselves; they were hated by all but this one did not trust in his wealth; he sought forgiveness from God. In the tax collector, we see all the gifts from God leading to salvation, at work. God first, by grace, gave him the faith to believe that God is real and that God is good, that He is merciful and full of grace. Then God granted him repentance. It is not enough to believe; the demons believe and shudder. Repentance is the first work wrought by true saving faith. He believed and then repented. Jesus said that the tax collector's faith resulted in righteousness. The Pharisee's faith resulted in condemnation.

Verse 21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Notice that James does not say, 'Wasn't Abraham justified by offering Isaac?' He is saying that Abraham was already justified when he offered Isaac. The 'work' of offering Isaac was what proved that saving faith was already at work within him. By faith, works came into existence and by works, faith was shown to be complete.

Remember, back in Hebrews 6, the writer spoke of, 'not laying again the foundation of **repentance from dead works.**' God grants, not only, repentance from sin but also, He grants us

repentance from thinking we are good enough... our good works are good enough. Apart from faith, our good works are dead works.

Works of the Law, any good works, apart from true saving faith are dead works. Works without faith are dead; faith without works is dead.

Man sees the outward works but God sees the inward faith. Man sees the work; God sees the heart. Man can be deceived by other men's works and he can even be deceived by his own heart. Only God is never deceived.