

5. Why does the example in verses 15-16 indicate that the faith in question is "useless", "dead", and insufficient for salvation?

6. What does this show us about the nature of real faith?

7. James then gives us three examples (demons, Abraham, Rahab). What is the point he is trying to make? (also Heb. 11.17-19)

8. Verse 22 is critical for understanding what James is teaching about faith and works. Write it in your own words.

A Bit Extra

James V- Paul?

Many have wrestled with what seems to be a conflict between Paul and James.

Paul wrote "a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. 3.28). Yet James wrote, "a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone" (James 2.24). So which is it? Are they in opposition or can we see another option?

The way to untangle this "Gordian Knot" is to see that each wrote to a **different** church to make a **different** point in order to address a **different** problem.

Paul wrote to a church where people were seeking to add "works of the law" (especially circumcision) as a necessary addition to faith in order to be saved. He wrote to defend salvation by grace alone.

James wrote to a church where the issue seems to have been a "lifeless orthodoxy": fruitless faith. James wrote to challenge the church to about the reality of their faith.

Douglas Moo says it like this in his commentary on James: "If a sinner can get into a relationship with God only through faith (Paul), the ultimate validation of that relationship takes into account the works that true faith must inevitably produce."

Or as Martin Luther wrote, "We are not saved by works; but if there be no works, there must be something amiss with faith."



Jesus in James

As we have noted previously, James has a lot in common with the Old Testament Wisdom books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Like those books, James assumes that his readers have the gospel of the Lord Jesus firmly in mind as he explores the challenges facing the church. So it is helpful for us to make explicit what James assumes.

Jesus is the ultimate example of the one who has a real faith. He entrusts himself to his Father - "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26.39 NIV11). He goes to the cross trusting that his Father will vindicate him.

Peter stresses the faithfulness of God as he quotes Psalm 16.10 in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2.27 - "you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay." The gospel declares the unshakable trustworthiness of God.

James speaks of Abraham as God's friend (see Isaiah 41.8). This is said only of Abraham in the Old Testament. Amazingly Jesus declares in John 15.13-15, "I call you my friends", and this wonderful acknowledgment extends to all who are his disciples. It is Jesus himself who was our friend, laying down his life for us, meeting our greatest need. Now, because we are his friends as well as his disciples, we are called to live lives of love, bearing fruit for his glory.

Spend sometime reflecting on this and praising God using the words of this great hymn.



Prayer & Praise

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.

Here might I stay and sing:
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like Thine!
This is my Friend,
in Whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

He came from his blest throne
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O, my Friend,
my Friend indeed,
who at my need
his life did spend!

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
to suffering goes,
that He His foes
from thence might free.

My Song is Love Unknown
Samuel Crossman

Sometimes they strew His way,
and His sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!'
is all their breath,
and for His death
they thirst and cry.

In life no house, no home
my Lord on earth might have;
in death no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.

