

Greater Pleasant Branch Baptist Church

Connect Learn Grow

Wednesday Bible Study -Theme: Pathways to Spirituality

Review of the Book of James- Chapter 2-Lesson # 4- April 28, 2021

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I. Subject: Reality of Faith - Part 2- James 2: 14-20

II. Central Focus

You were created to become like Christ- Romans 8:29-30-Message Translation

III. 2021 Bible Study Motto “ Simply put, we must practice the spiritual disciplines that form pathways to the heart of god and transform us into godly people . Training-not trying is the key.” The Complete Book of Discipleship by Bill Hull

IV. Big Idea

Saving faith will result in deeds of service to prove it's reality.

V. Introduction

Faith is a key doctrine in the life of believers. A sinner is saved by faith according to Ephesians 2:8-9, a believer must walk by faith- 2Corinthians 5:7, without faith it is impossible to please God-Hebrews 11:6, and whatever we do apart from faith is sin- Romans 14:23.

The record of Old Testament believers in Hebrews chapter 11 reveals their faith (was not dead faith) in God resulted in obedience. In chapter 11, a verb (action word) , always follows the word” faith “ and indicates obedience, for example: Abel offered-verse 14, Noah prepared-verse 7, Abraham obeyed-verse 8 and Abraham offered-verse 17.

The saints of old had faith in god, their faith was more than profession, it led to practice(action/works) and proved that genuine faith results in obedience to the commands of God.

In James 2: 14-20, James warns against the danger of faith without deeds/works.

In essence the big question that James puts before his readers is: Do you have dead faith ? Conversely in verse 21-26 James teaches about genuine faith or dynamic faith.

VI. Key definitions, commands, spiritual principles and spiritual disciplines

A. The danger of faith without deeds- verses 14-20

1. James began this section of chapter 2 with two questions:

What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith and not works?

Can faith save him?

2. There are at least four key words in verse 14, the meaning of each unlocks the message of the verse:

Profit- means advantage or benefit.

Say- refers to the continual profession of faith, however, such profession does not translate into deeds/works.

Works- indicates numerous individual deeds that reveal the reality of a person's faith.

Save- The question is not can faith save the lost? Clearly faith can save the lost. The real question is: Can a faith without deeds save the lost? The answer is no. A verbal testimony/confession alone is not adequate evidence of true saving faith. Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and good deeds is a false declaration. Any faith that produces works provides assurance to a believer of his salvation and eventual eternal reward. John Calvin noted theologian states, "It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone." What Calvin states is the essence of what James teaches in verse 17 and adds clarity to the question of saving faith. True saving faith can never be by itself, it brings life, and life produces good deeds/works.

3. In verse 15-16 James utilized an illustration of true need to further clarify the meaning of saving faith, that is faith in action. James shows how shallow some professions of faith can be. On the other hand true saving faith motivates believers to help those in need. To help a person in need is an expression of love, and faith works by love- Galatians 5:6.

4. "A person can defend their faith with words or demonstrate their faith with works"-Pastor Artee Williams.

5. The term "even so" in verse 17 supports and further clarifies what James teaches in verse 14-16, that is faith that does not produce good deeds is "dead", useless, lifeless, of no worth or value. The idea is that dead faith has no life in its roots or branches, if there is no life there can be no fruit. Dead faith is "dead inwardly", its very nature is incapable of producing fruit.

6. Verse 16-18 are presented in a setting similar to a courtroom . James wanted his readers to hear the facts about true saving faith and like a jury reach their own conclusions regarding those facts. James uses a “ straw man “ -imaginary man as an objector to the facts for the sake of presenting an argument. James makes the strong point regarding the relationship between faith and works. James challenged the “ straw man” -objector to demonstrate his works, that is show them, point them out or explain them. James argues that faith apart from works is impossible and conversely faith is the source of good works. James concludes that faith produces works and you cannot have one without the other.

7. In verse 19-20 James cautions against mere “ Intellectual Faith “ (mental assent) by referring his readers to the example of demons. James teaches that demons believe in God and tremble but never change, so their deeds are always evil. In like manner James says a person can be enlightened and stirred in his heart after hearing the word of God , however, if there is no change in character and conduct that person’s faith is intellectual in nature only and can never produce good works that are acceptable to God. Intellectual Faith only touches the mind while Saving faith touches the will as well as the intellect and results in salvation and good works- Ephesians 2: 8-10.

VII. Application

1. How does dead faith and intellectual faith differ from true saving faith ?
2. Why are the Old Testament saints of Hebrews chapter 11 called men and women of faith ?
3. How are you involved individually or as a member of a group in demonstrating faith to people outside the Church ?
4. How will you apply the teaching of this lesson to your heart and life ?