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Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Book of James, Lesson 4
Talk, or Action

The Book of James

This is the fourth in our series of meditations based on the book of James for the month of July and August. This was written by the brother of our Lord Jesus, who called himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ. It was primarily written to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations. James talks in this book about practical religion: trials and tribulations, how to apply the Word of God in our daily life, the worldliness in the church and Christian perspective.

TALK, OR ACTION?

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If 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? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But 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. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his

faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James is writing to Christians to show their faith by not just talk but through action. So the question arises in our minds - Does faith in Christ save us, or doing good deeds? Do we have a difference of opinions between the two early church leaders – James and Paul?

James questions, "If a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?"

Let us find out what Paul wrote.

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through **faith** - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The Ryrie Study Bible on New Testament pg.421 writes on this subject about the different approaches of Paul and James.

Paul wrote about the doctrine of faith: Justification by faith.

James was setting forth the principle of daily living. In daily living, our salvation, which is by faith alone, is borne out by our "good deeds."

Faith is necessary. James wants to help us to examine our faith and belief.

James 2:22-23

You see that his faith (Abraham) and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

²³ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off on a different direction?

Can a non-working, dead, spurious faith save a person? James is not saying that we are saved by works, but that faith that does not produce good works is a dead faith. James was not refuting the Pauline doctrine of justification by true faith, but a perversion of it.

James 1:17-18

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Both Paul and James define faith as a living, productive trust in Christ. Genuine faith cannot be 'dead' to morality or barren of works. John the Baptist also spoke about deeds

Luke 3:11

The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.

Proverbs 3:27

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.

Jesus also instructed that don't just talk but act what I have taught you,

Luke 6:44-45

Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn-bushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his **heart**, and evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his **heart**. For out of the overflow of his **heart** his mouth speaks.

So can faith with no works save us?

James talks about the practical side in vs 15-16.

When a person comes to you with a need, what will be your response?

“The Lord be with you.”

“The Lord will take care of you.”

“Go in peace.”

“I will pray that God provide your needs.”

“Good luck.”

One has to show the evidence of faith.

“Many call me Lord, Lord but do not do what I say.” Jesus says in Matthew 7:21.

Jesus said, “Feed the hungry, clothe the needy, entertain the stranger, visit the sick and prisoners, etc.”

Matthew 25:34-40

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and

feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Let us examine our faith?

1. Vs 19 - If you say, “I believe,” know that the devil also believes in God.

This text is based on Deuteronomy 6:4-5

6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one.” The devil knew God personally. He knew the Trinity of God too - The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

6:5 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

The devil’s response: They hate God with all their hearts and fight with him with every breath, even though they know He is the Jehovah, the strong and Almighty God.

The devils knew about the power of Christ too,

Luke 8:31 “They begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.”

2. Head knowledge does not save. Having the right doctrine also does not save.

It is not just to believe but to **submit** to the Lord in order to be saved.

It is not mental consent or agreement to a list of facts about God, which is not enough.

Like going to church, joining a choir, being baptized, praying a prayer, owning a Bible or calling ourselves a Christian.

Jeremiah 17:9-10, The **heart** is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? ¹⁰I the Lord search the **heart** and examines the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

We need to examine ourselves.

In verses 21-26, James gives two examples from the Old Testament.

1. Abraham

Belief: The Lord called Abraham and made a covenant. He believed and left Ur of Chaldea.

Genesis 12:1-6

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

²"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Genesis 15:5-6

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Action: Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Genesis 22:9-18

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹²"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him.

Now I

know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

¹³Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

¹⁴So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

¹⁵The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

The Lord promised to bless him because he had obeyed him.

Romans 4:1-4

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. ³What does the Scripture say?

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Galatians 5:22-23 shows us faith expressing itself through love. Love is action.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2. Rahab – Joshua 2:1-15

Her belief:

Joshua 2:9-11

I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ¹⁰We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. ¹¹When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Action:

Joshua 2:4, 6, 15

⁴But the woman (Rahab) had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from"

...

⁶(But she had taken them to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)

...

¹⁵So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.

Hebrews 11:31

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

So what shall we do? We express our faith through action and not just talk.