

Faith Risks

Lesson for Sunday, November 19, 2023

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ This is our last lesson in James 2. How would you summarize what we have discussed and learned? *Allow for discussion...*
- ⇒ The last few lessons can be summarized with these three verses in this chapter: vs. 17, 20, 26.
- ⇒ We saw how Abraham was used by both Paul & James as their example. It makes sense, Abraham is considered to be the father of the Children of Israel. He is a highly revered and respected person in their history.
- ⇒ Now look at the beginning of verse 25 where James writes, “Likewise.” Some translations read, “In the same way.” What comes next is quite a contrast to Abraham. James reaches back to another Old Testament figure named Rahab.
- ⇒ In this lesson we will start with a reminder of who Rahab was and then look to see how James ties her into his teachings of chapter 2.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Radical Rahab
 - a. We find Rahab in Joshua 2. The people of God were about to take the promised land and the first major city was Jericho.
 - b. Summarize Joshua 2 with the following:
 - i. Vs. 1-7: Joshua sends two spies to Jericho, who find refuge in Rahab's house. The king of Jericho hears of their presence and sends soldiers to find them. Rahab hides the spies and misdirects the soldiers.
 - ii. Vs. 8-14: After ensuring the spies' safety, Rahab acknowledges her belief in the God of Israel. She requests the spies to spare her and her family's lives when they conquer the city.
 - iii. Vs. 15-24: Rahab helps the spies escape by lowering them from her window with a scarlet cord. They instruct her to tie the same cord in her window as a sign for the Israelites to spare her household.
 - c. The biggest difference between Abraham and Rahab was that Rahab was a harlot. The natural question would be: Why would James bring her into this discussion? There are three primary reasons.
 - d. First, Rahab was a recipient of scandalous grace.
 - i. Rahab was everything Abraham was not. She was a prostitute, living in the middle of the enemies of God at the bottom of the social ladder.
 - ii. But look at Matthew 1:5. Rahab was Ruth's mother-in-law, included in the lineage of the Messiah!
 - iii. Rahab is a reminder that God's grace often shocks us by reaching the most unlikely.
 - iv. APP: We are more like Rahab than we like to acknowledge. We need the same scandalous grace.
 - e. Second, Rahab feared and revered the sovereign God.
 - i. Read Joshua 2:11. The little that Rahab knew she believed.
 - ii. She refers to God as “the Lord” (Jehovah) “your God” (Elohim).
 - iii. She knew judgment was coming and she feared and revered the Lord.
 - iv. The result was that she was willing to risk it all.
 - f. Third, Rahab risked it all for the spread of God's glory.
 - i. Think what Rahab did – she committed treason!
 - ii. Then look at Hebrews 11:31 – she is a hero! She put it all on the line for the Lord, trusting Him without reservation or hesitation.
 - iii. APP: Are we as willing as Rahab to take risks in obedience to God's Word?

2. Understanding Justification in James 2

- a. In verse 25 James states that Rahab was “justified by works.” In summarizing what James is teaching us, there are three realities we must deal with:
 - i. First, Christ is the basis of our justification. We are only right before God because He lived the life we could not live and died the death we deserved to die. See 2 Corinthians 5:21.
 - ii. Second, faith is the means of our justification. We come to the point of faith when we realize that you can do nothing but trust what has been done for you in Christ. It is more than intellectual assent!
 - iii. Third, works are the evidence of our justification. Faith bears fruit! In both Abraham and Rahab, they believed and then their actions confirmed that belief.
 - iv. The realities above are only possible by the grace of God. Everything we are and have in Christ is because of God’s grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. A proper recognition of God’s grace is what will motivate us to faithful obedience to God and to His Word.
- b. James wraps up this rich chapter by restating his point one more time in verse 26. “Faith without works is dead.”
 - i. When you stand before God, will you have more to stand on than an empty profession?
 - ii. Will there be evidence (fruit) from your life that points to the reality of your profession?
- c. In this chapter, James has been almost confrontational.
 - i. It is natural for readers to get uncomfortable with what he is saying. But James is not wanting anyone to enter into eternity depending on an empty profession.
 - ii. James is speaking from a heart of love, not wanting anyone to perish or to be holding onto a false profession.

DISCUSSION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ Have you memorized James 2:17?
- ⇒ How do we take what we have learned in the last half of James 2 and apply it in our lives? What difference should this passage make in our daily lives as we seek to walk with God?
- ⇒ Do you understand the difference between a salvation based on good works and a salvation that produces good works?
- ⇒ Challenge the class to take the time to self-evaluate after this lesson. What fruit are they producing in their life? Make sure they know you are available to talk with them if they have questions or concerns.