

Lesson Six — James Chapter Two, Part II: Faith and Works¹

Day One — Living by Faith

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In the past several weeks we have seen many commands which James has written to the Christians who had been scattered into the regions surrounding Jerusalem due to the persecution which was taking place in the early Church. He has told them to:

- **consider it joyful when they enter into various trials**
- **ask for wisdom when they lack it**
- **be doers of the Word/not hearers only**
- **persevere under trials**
- **not hold their faith in Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism**
- **not be deceived about these things**
- **be quick to hear/slow to speak and slow to anger**
- **speak/act as those who will be judged by the law of liberty**
- **put aside all filthiness/all that remains of wickedness**
- **humbly receive the implanted Word**

James offers several motivations to his readers in telling them these things. The motivations are: the possibility of their receiving the crown of life (1:12), so that they might be a first fruit (1:18), and so that they might love God and be an heir of the kingdom (2:5). We have studied what *crowns*, *first fruits*, and *being an heir* have to do with. We know that James is not speaking of the free gift of eternal life, which is based on faith in the blood of Christ and His finished work at Calvary; rather James is speaking of the salvation of the soul (1:21), which is based on our finishing the work that God has called us to do (1:22). Hence, he tells his readers to be doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

¹ This lesson is pivotal in understanding the epistle James wrote! Be sure to give yourself time to complete it thoughtfully.

As we begin now to study the second half of chapter two — dealing with the relationship of faith and works — we must remember this context. Remember to pray for discernment and understanding, as this relationship between faith and works is often misunderstood.

Day One — Living by Faith

Using your observation sheet, read chapter two in its entirety

Now we are ready to begin digging into the second half of chapter two of the Book of James which deals with faith and works. Let's begin by building a foundation of what *faith* is.

In its most basic sense, faith can be defined as *simply believing what God has to say about a matter*. The English words *faith* and *believe* are from the same Greek root word, ***peitho***, which means *to be persuaded about a thing*. The Greek word for *faith* is ***pistis***. This noun corresponds to the verb *believe* — ***pisteu***, the two words coming from the same root word. Hence, to have faith, or to believe in something, simply means to be *persuaded about a particular thing*.

Faith is the basis of any and all of our dealings with God. A person can only approach God on the basis of faith. It takes faith in the blood of Christ to receive the free gift. In what is probably the most simple terms in all of Scripture having to do with faith unto the free gift of eternal life, the apostle Paul told the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30-31 that he simply needed to *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* and he would *be saved*. And how does one come to faith? One must *hear* what God says about a matter before one can believe it.

Romans 10

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

As we have already seen in our study, believing in Jesus Christ as Savior is not the sum of it! That is only the beginning point. Yes, one does receive *the free gift of eternal life* when he/she believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. And this salvation (the salvation having to do with our spiritual birth) is secure in eternity, being *based upon the finished work of Christ*. In this salvation, the ***only*** relationship that faith can have with works is that we must put ***faith*** in (believe what God said about) *the work of Christ*.

Works on the part of any individual can in no way enter into the free gift. A person's works cannot gain, keep, or prove anything with respect to our spiritual birth. This salvation is totally based upon the work of Christ, and His work alone! But once that foundation has been laid, ***then and only then***, can the works of the person who has believed in Christ come into the picture. The one who believes, having been justified, or declared righteous, then must *live by faith*. Read the following passages:

Romans 1 (the phrases in brackets are added for clarity)

17 For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man [the one who has been justified] SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Galatians 2

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

Galatians 3

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Hebrews 10

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

Go back through these verses and underline the phrase *live by faith*.

For insight on what it means to live by faith this, let's read *the context* from which the previous Hebrews passage comes:

Hebrews 10

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

According to vv. 32-34, what was the experience of the recipients of this letter?

In what did they exhibit faith at the end of v. 34?

According to this passage, why should they not throw away their confidence?

According to this passage, why do they need endurance?

Continuing —

Hebrews 10

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK <5288>, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving (KJV., to the saving) of the soul.

shrinks back <5288>

Re-tell what is happening in this passage and what the encouragement is in the end.

The verb-phrase, *shrinks back*, is written in the subjunctive form, which means the action *may or may not happen*, depending on the circumstances. Reread the passage with this in mind.

Do you see that *if* one of God's righteous ones shrinks back, *then* God would have no pleasure in him? Do you remember that God was not pleased with the Children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea (I Cor. 10:5)? He

was *not pleased with **most of them*** because they shrank back from believing and obeying *God concerning the promised land*. They refused to go in and they desired to turn back. In their desire to turn back, they refused to go in!

Look again at Hebrews 10:39. What contrast is made in this verse?

It takes *living by faith* to please God. And this kind of faith — to the saving of the soul — is described in the verse which exactly follows Hebrews 10:39. It reads:

Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is the assurance <5287> of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it [faith to the saving of the soul] the men of old gained approval....
...6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

assurance <5287>

Having gained approval (11:2) shows that one has pleased God. It takes *living by faith* — faith to the saving of the soul — to please God. And without this kind of faith — faith to the saving of the soul — it is impossible to please God. And the one who has this kind of faith — faith to the saving of the soul — believes that *God is a rewarder*. And guess what the reward is? (The answer is found in Colossians 3:24. Underline the answer when you see it.)

Colossians 3

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

The reward is something that is *earned*, it is not something that is given as a free gift. It is the inheritance awaiting *faithful* believers.

Before you close for the day, please write it your own words what you have learned. You will be glad you did.

Day Two — Abraham's Faith

Be sure to pray!

As we begin to see more clearly how both faith and works come into the picture subsequent to the initial moment of faith and the spiritual birth, there is something we must understand. Anything done in the spiritual realm (which can only be done by one who is spiritually alive) falls into either of two categories. On the one hand, a saved individual can perform *works according to faith* and in the end be rewarded for those works; or on the other hand, he can perform *works according to the flesh* and in the end suffer loss for those works. Judgments and distinctions are made at the judgment seat of Christ at which time a believer's works will be tested by fire (I Cor. 3:11-15). The goal is to accomplish works according to faith!

But how does a *saved individual* perform works *according to faith*? Faith must be in exact accord with what God says in His Word. Therefore, we must know and understand what His Word says! (OH! It is so important to understand this short paragraph!)

Yesterday we looked at several passages which deal with saved people needing to live by faith. Perhaps you could quickly review those passages now (p. 64).

In the Books of Romans and Galatians, Paul explains the fact that the Old Testament Law had its place prior to the coming of Christ. Though no one has ever been justified through works of the Law, yet, through the Law came the knowledge of sin (Ro. 3:20). Paul writes that the Law was given as a tutor for *right living* (cf. Gal. 3:24, 25). And keeping the Law had to be on the basis of faith in order to please God.

Then when Jesus came, He fulfilled the Law (He did not nullify the Law) and now, rather than a written Law, God gives believers His indwelling Holy Spirit as the means for *right living*. Through walking in the Spirit (through walking in *faith*), Christians are now to keep the commandments of Christ *with a view to the inheritance in the kingdom*. *Faithful* obedience comes subsequent to the initial act of faith and obedience is a matter of the heart. In order to please God, the commandments of Christ must also be kept *through faith* (through believing what God says about a matter), rather than through a legalistic attitude. *Faithful obedience to what God said* is what pleases Him (Heb. 11:6). It is through an individual's actions based upon what *an individual's belief concerning what God said about the inheritance and the kingdom* that will please God and allow one to be granted his inheritance.

Now, let's talk about how a person who has been justified through faith in Jesus Christ can be justified again and again, thereby "living by faith." Actually the Bible reveals that there are two ways in which an individual can receive justification *after he is saved*. On the one hand, when a person *believes* what God says about something, he receives justification from God. On the other hand, when a person *acts upon that belief*, he also receives justification from God. Thus, there should be many points of justification in a person's life, which are *subsequent* to his initial justification through faith in Christ's work on Calvary.

In short, *subsequent to ones initial justification* (ones spiritual birth), justification can come in two ways: 1) through faith alone, and 2) through works that emanate out of that faith. (Remember, *faith comes by hearing the Word of God!*) And those points of justification, subsequent to the spiritual birth, are illustrated in Scripture in several ways.

Note that both Paul and James use Abraham as an example of justification *subsequent* to Abraham's initial justification. We will study what both of these epistle writers say about Abraham. Today we will see how Paul explains justification *by faith alone* in Abraham's life; then tomorrow we will see how James takes exactly the same picture in Abraham's life and shows how works, which emanated out of his faith, justified him. Thus we will see how both faith and works fit together into the whole picture *after a person is saved*.

At this point it must be understood that neither in Romans chapter four, nor in James chapter two, do the respective authors deal with Abraham's *initial justification*. Both Paul and James deal with a point of justification *subsequent* to his reception of the free gift. Careful study will bring this to light.

In Romans chapters three and four, Paul is dealing with the fact that the Law cannot justify anyone.

Romans 4

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." **4** Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. **5** But to the one who does

not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness...

...13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Again, no part of the passage is dealing with Abraham's initial justification! In Romans 4:3 Paul is dealing with an event which took place in Genesis chapter fifteen. Abraham was initially justified by faith unto eternal life at some point **prior** to Genesis chapter twelve. His initial justification would have had to have happened in Ur **prior** to His leaving Mesopotamia, for in Hebrews chapter eleven God commends his faith for leaving Ur, connecting this *act of obedience* to his looking forward to the inheritance (Heb. 11:8, 9)! Any action (work) on the part of Abraham or any individual would not be (could not be) commended by God *prior to* God initially justifying that individual through his faith in God's provision of death and shed blood. Therefore, Abraham's justification unto eternal life had to have taken place in Ur, and we are simply not privy to the details of the event because God did not see fit to record it in Scripture. God cannot/will not commend an individual's works *prior to* salvation. Therefore, when Paul deals with an event having taken place — even a point of faith on the part of Abraham subsequent to his leaving Ur — he would have to be dealing with a post-salvation experience.

So what is Paul dealing with in showing that “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness”? Notice in Romans 4:13, *Paul connects Abraham's belief with the inheritance*. Paul recognized that it was the inheritance that was being dealt with in Genesis chapter fifteen. Abraham believed *what God said* (“faith comes by hearing” [Ro. 10:17]) about Abraham's heir and the inheritance. (You may want to check the context in Gen. 15 and Rom. 4 to see if what is being said here is factual!)

In Romans chapter four, Paul is actually dealing with an event which took place long after Abraham left Ur. Paul is dealing with an event wherein God reckoned (or accounted) righteousness to Abraham due *to his belief in what God had just revealed*. This refers to events in Genesis chapter fifteen (which immediately follow events in chapter fourteen), wherein God revealed to Abraham that his *reward would be very great!* In the text of Genesis 15:1-5, Abraham immediately related the reward with an inheritance (an inheritance which would be very great!) asking who would be his heir since he was childless. God told him his heir would come from his own body, and in fact, he would have as many descendants as the stars of the heavens. *And Abraham believed what God said!* And God counted it to him as righteousness. It is that simple!

Nothing in the entire scene in Genesis chapter fifteen has anything to do with death and shed blood. In no way does this have anything to do with Abraham's initial salvation. It has all to do with his being blessed for simply believing what God was revealing to him at that moment — about the reward (Gen. 15:1) and the inheritance (15:4). Abraham's faith (believing what God had just said) became a point of justification for Abraham (*subsequent* to his initial justification), apart from any action taken on the part of Abraham (15:6). Herein he was justified by believing God's Words apart from works. He *simply believed* what God said concerning his reward (v. 1) and what God said concerning his descendants (vv. 4, 5), and God counted his faith as righteousness (v.6). (Doesn't the text say just that?)

It was later that Abraham was called to act upon this faith! And that is what we will deal with tomorrow in the Book of James. Before we close for today, go back to the passage printed from Romans, and reread the passage with these thoughts in mind. You will need a good grasp on this in order for our continuing study tomorrow.

Day Three — Abraham's Test

Begin in prayer.

In the past two days we have learned that an individual who has initially been justified through faith in Christ's finished work must continue to live by faith. We also learned that a person can be justified through faith even subsequent to his initial salvation. And *if* one continues to live by faith, *then* he will have many points of justification credited to him throughout his walk of faith. (Notice the cause and effect statement!)

Yesterday we studied an event in Abraham's life wherein he believed exactly *what God told him* (the very definition of faith) and God counted it to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:1-5, 13). Today we are going to study this same event in Abraham's life, and with further study, we will see how Abraham later *acted upon that faith* and was *additionally justified through that action*. This is where James chapter two comes in. The faith displayed in Genesis chapter fifteen was later *perfected* or *brought to its end* (its goal) through Abraham's action in Genesis chapter twenty-two. While Paul deals with Abraham's faith about what God said concerning his descendants and the inheritance, James goes further and deals with Abraham's *action emanating out of his faith*.

James is showing how *works bring faith to its end — its goal* (Jas. 2:22). The specifics of the goal of faith is stated another epistle writer — Peter. In Peter's first epistle, he specifically states what the goal of faith is:

I Peter 1

3 ...according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance...

... 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

What have we been born again to obtain (v. 3, 4)?

What is the outcome (goal) of ones faith (v. 9)?

We see then that in a sense, the *inheritance* and the *salvation of the soul* can be interchangeable terms.

In demonstrating how one reaches this goal (receives the inheritance), James writes —

James 2

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

Immediately you should remember that James has specifically stated in previous text which salvation his epistle is dealing with. Do you remember what he said in chapter one?

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls (Jas. 1:21).

Just because there is a chapter break between this statement in chapter one and what James is dealing with in chapter two is no reason to think that James has changed his subject matter! He deals with the *salvation of the soul* throughout his entire epistle. If this is understood, the Book of James is a very easy epistle to grasp. This epistle deals with ***works done in faith, which have to do with the saving of the soul.***

Now let's pick it up again in chapter two, and see what we can learn from the example James gives us.

James 2

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead <3498>, being by itself.

dead <3498> (Especially note the definition 2b.)

James points out that faith, if it has no works, is dead in the sense that *it is useless toward accomplishing its goal*. Remember the goal of faith is the salvation of the soul (1 Pe. 1:9). This is key to understand. And the salvation of the soul (Jas. 1:21) has to do with works which emanate out of faithfulness. (As we continue, notice James uses the <3498> word again in vv. 20 and 26.)

Continuing —

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless <3498>? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected <5048>; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead <3498>, so also faith without works is dead <3498>.

According to v. 21, was Abraham justified by works?

Verse 22 explains how Abraham could be justified by works. How is it?

Write out the first five words of v. 23:

What is the result of faith being brought to its end (v. 23b)?

Just as Paul uses Abraham as an example of how a man is justified by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law, here James uses Abraham as an example to show how works will justify an individual, *if the work is done according to faith*. James deals with God testing Abraham's faith (that which he believed in Genesis chapter fifteen) with the purpose of the test to bring his faith to its end (or its goal), depicted through his action in Genesis chapter twenty-two. (In Genesis chapter twenty-two, Abraham was tested by God in His asking him to offer up the very son of promise as a sacrifice. Abraham immediately made arrangements to obey.) And in James bringing the picture to this point, the Holy Spirit uses the pen of James to show Abraham as an example of an individual's *faith reaching its goal through a work that emanated out of his faith*. Thus, Abraham was *justified by an action* — an action that emanated out of the faith, which had been expressed prior.

Throughout this epistle, James is dealing with things beyond the simple faith message. James is dealing with works done through faith — works done in view of what God says about things, having to do with the salvation of the soul.

Thus, the faith Abraham displayed in Genesis chapter fifteen concerning a descendant coming from his own body and the inheritance was brought to its goal through Abraham being tested and responding in faith to the test in Genesis chapter twenty-two. Abraham could act accordingly because he believed God would be faithful to what He had previously told Abraham. Abraham could act accordingly because he believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19)! So both — Abraham's faith (Gen. 15), as well as the action borne out of faith (Gen. 22) — were counted to him as righteousness, neither of which had anything to do with eternal salvation (the free gift), except that eternal salvation had to be in place.

Through Abraham's example, James is simply showing the importance of works bringing faith to its intended goal. And he uses very strong words in showing this. (Excuse my straightforwardness here, but this is not just some "pie-in-the-sky" theology that can be accepted or denied by someone's personal preference. In the long run, it is very important to understand and believe what James is saying!)

Now let's think through the statement James makes in 2:26. Write that statement in your own words:

The English word *spirit* is taken from the Hebrew word *pneuma*, which comes from the root word *pneo*. The literal meaning of *pneo* is *to breath hard, to blow*. James compares the physical body and the spirit (or breath), to faith and works. Just as the body without breath would be useless (dead) in the physical realm (unable to accomplish anything), so would faith without works be useless (dead) in the spiritual realm (unable to accomplish its end or goal). Faith has a goal — the salvation of the soul! Without works, faith does not come to its goal! Therefore, faith becomes useless (dead) with respect to the salvation of the soul — the salvation with which James is dealing.

So you see, faith and works are extremely important in the life of a believer after he/she has received the gift of eternal life. And both — *faith alone*, and *works that emanate out of faith* — are counted as righteousness.

We'll end today with this thought. Hopefully, it will help to seal what we have just learned.

Notice, *faith must be alone* when it is connected to our spiritual birth — the birth from above; but *faith cannot be alone* when it is connected to the saving of the soul. Works connected to the saving of the soul, though, *must be on the basis of faith!*

On the one hand, concerning ones spiritual birth, works on the part of an individual, absolutely *cannot* enter into the picture. On the other hand, concerning the salvation of the soul, works *must* enter into the picture. Herein, faith cannot stand alone! In order for faith to be alive and active, works must emanate out of faith. And that faith must be based upon that which God has said.

In order for a person to accomplish the salvation of the soul, he/she must have works which emanate out of their faith.

I hope that helps. See you tomorrow.

Day Four — Faith, Works and Rewards

We have seen that faith without works is useless in relation to the saving of the soul, because faith would remain by itself! It is the testing of your faith which produces and endurance and endurance has a result — that the one tested would become mature and lacks nothing (Jas. 1:3, 4). Testing brings one to a place wherein he must do a work. These works allow the goal of faith to be accomplished — the salvation of the soul.

In James chapter two, James asks the question, “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works?” (2:14). The English word for *use* is the Greek word *ophelos* which means to heap up (i.e. accumulate or benefit); gain: advantage, profit. James is asking about profit — can faith without works profit a man?

Of course, James is not dealing with initial faith in the finished work of Christ, for that faith (apart from works) certainly is an advantage to a man. It is a gift to be received — the gift of eternal life.

No, James is dealing with ongoing faith post our initial salvation! James asks — If faith (concerning that which God has said about things post salvation) has no works, then can that faith profit a man? The answer is “No!”

You may be asking the question, “Is it OK to look at faith in such a way? Is it pleasing to the Lord for us to see faith as something to which we need to add profit?”

Does it sound materialistic to you? Let’s quickly look at a parable Jesus gave to His disciples. (FYI — a companion parable is found in Lk. 19:12-27).

Matthew 25

14 “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

16 “Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master’s money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well

done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ 22 The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 ‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.’

26 “But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

29 “For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Do you see the gaining of profit in this parable? If so, where?

What did the first servant do, and what did the master do in response?

What did the second servant do, and what did the master do in response?

What did the third servant do, and what did the master do in response?

Do you think that the master was equally happy with all three servants? Why or why not?

Jesus is using this parable to teach His disciples what kind of life will *gain an approval* by the King of kings (Mt. 25:20-23). On the contrary, look at v. 30 and see what happens to the kind of servants who do not work for profit. Specifically in the end, what happened to the third servant?

Now the question is, “Is the third servant a believer?” Well, let’s consider a couple of questions:

Is the master one and the same over all three servants?

Is the third servant a servant of the master, just as the other two are?

In their relationship with the master, is there any difference between the third servant and the other two?

What was the difference between the three of them?

The third servant did not “work” for the master, though the master expected him to. And, when the master returned after a long absence, he had a different response to the third servant than to the other two servants.

By telling this parable, what do you think Jesus was trying to show His disciples?

In more simple terms, Jesus speaks one simple statement of admonishment:

John 12

26 “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him...”

Where will the one be who serves and follows the Lord?

Whom will the Father honor? And what will be necessary in order for the Father to honor someone?

This week we have seen that *the just must live by faith*. Faith, *as it relates to spiritual birth*, must be **without works**; but works must accompany faith, relating to the saving of the soul, otherwise the faith is dead, or useless.

Possibly reflecting back on the historical setting of James — believers being scattered due to the persecution in Jerusalem and surrounding areas — here in James chapter two, James gives his readers ideas on what kind of works his readers might do. He suggests that they might consider helping with the basic needs of their brothers and sisters who are in need.

James 2

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use (profit) is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

But remember, any work that is to be counted as profit, must be done in faith (believing what God has said about something).

Any thoughts?

Day Five — The Goal of Faith

On Day Three of this week’s homework, we glimpsed a portion of a passage in Peter’s first letter which specifically states what the outcome (goal) of faith is. Today we want to look at the text surrounding this passage. Remember to begin in prayer.

Now study the passage through several times.

1 Peter 1

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome <5056> of your faith the salvation of your souls.

outcome <5056>

Understanding James —
To the Saving of the Soul

Lesson Six
James Chapter Two, Part II:
Faith and Works

Let's consider a few questions in order to help us observe the text better:

What have we been born again (spiritually born) to obtain?

Describe this inheritance as it is described in this passage.

Where is this inheritance being held in reserve?

Who will receive this inheritance (v. 5)?

Peter says that those for whom the inheritance is being reserved may be presently undergoing various trials (*cf.* Jas. 1:3f). What does Peter say that testing will do to their faith?

What would make the recipients of Peter's letter, who are undergoing various trials, have inexpressible joy?

In your own words, would you personalize this passage?

Look at the verb phrase *may be found* in v. 7. It is in the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood is the mood of possibility and potentiality indicating the action described may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances. The ones to whom Peter was writing to those whose faith *may be found* to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But there is a possibility that they may not have that kind of faith. According to this passage, what will bring their faith to its goal (vv. 6, 7)?

As we close for the week, would you do two things, please? Would you quickly scan what you have learned in this week's lesson?

Then would you read through James chapter two one more time with the information from this lesson in mind? Thanks. See you in class.

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Week's End Summary:

Understanding James —
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Lesson Six
James Chapter Two, Part II:
Faith and Works