

James the Just - Part # 3

Faith Without Works is Dead

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 9/13/2003

1 Corinthians 1:

- 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are:
29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Luke 4:

- 18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to **preach the gospel to the poor**; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

*The Gospel to the poor **is a sign** that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus was reading the very words He had inspired the prophet Isaiah to write of Him.

Isaiah 61:

- 1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison **to them that are bound**;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Matthew 11:

- 2 Now when John [the Baptist] had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
3 And [they] said unto him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?

The answer that Jesus gave to John's disciples was in reference to the Messianic prophecies that Jesus was fulfilling.

Matthew 11

- 4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:
5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Luke 6:

- 20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed **be ye poor**: for yours is the kingdom of God.
21 Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh.
22 Blessed are ye, **when men shall hate** you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.
23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

When a person is needy and poor – he **has to** look to God.

When a person has everything he needs – it is easy to leave God out of the picture.

Luke 6:

24 But woe unto **you that are rich!** for ye have received your consolation.

If someone becomes an “Elite Christian” thinking himself to be **above the rest** of the brethren – **better than the others** – it is arrogancy – dividing the church.

That is what happened at Passover in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 11:

21 **For** in eating everyone takes before *other* his own supper: and one is **hungry**.

They were being selfish and uncaring – even during Passover.

James 2:

6 But ye have **despised the poor**. Do not **rich** men oppress you, and **draw you before the judgment seats?**

Let’s look at an example of those with the power - but misusing it.

This story starts with the way God deals with us.

Matthew 18:

23 Therefore is the Kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owe.

29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst it of me:

33 Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth [angry], and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.

This is not a onetime thing – but a way of life.

Go back up to where this story began:

Matthew 18:

- 21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and **I forgive him?** Till seven times?
22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

When someone **repents** – God says we **must** forgive them **as a way of life**.

When a Christian acts in the way this man did – he blasphemes God’s name.

James 2:

- 7** Do not they blaspheme that worthy name [God’s name] by the which **ye are called?**

Greek: *Epi kale ist hai* is Greek for ‘Called.’

We are ‘called’ Christians

A wife is called by her husband’s name.

Children are called by their Father’s last name Sir-name.

Children of **God** / Church of **God**

We are to be the **wife** of Christ, and take His name – “Christ-ians”

James 2:

- 7** Do not they blaspheme that worthy **name** by the which **ye are called?**

Christ taught this:

Matthew 6:

- 14** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 7

We are warned not to get caught up in hypocritical conduct:

We need to have our lives in order – before we worry about others.

Matthew 7:

- 1** Judge not, that ye be not judged.
2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
3 And why behold thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but consider not the beam that *is* in thine own eye?
4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?
5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

We are going to be Kings and Priests in the Kingdom of God.

Saying, "This is the way – walk ye in it."

James 2:

- 8** If ye fulfill the **royal law** according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

There is a brand of **False Religion** that believes if you keep ONE part of God's law really well – it is a ticket to salvation.

They measure their **righteousness** by the ONE thing they do Right.

The next two verses go together:

James 2:

- 9** But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.
- 10** For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.
- 11** For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.
- 12** So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.
- 13** For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoices against judgment.

Are we saved by Faith and grace?

Are we saved by works and deeds?

Men were attempting to compartmentalize their religion – a form of **False Religion**: So James had to address it:

James 2:

- 14** What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say **he hath faith**, and **have not works**? Can faith save him?

James speaks on the matter of our **living** like Christians should – saying **works** are required according to the Laws of God.

James emphasizes keeping God's Laws.

Yes, Faith is absolutely necessary to become Christians in the first place – but then we must do the **deeds / works** of the Law of God.

We do not steal, lie, or cheat others because that does not love our neighbor – because those **works** are against the Law of God.

Let's understand what James is saying.

What are **works**? What are **deeds**?

Let's look at how Paul addressed this question.

We must define what Paul means by "the **deeds** of the Law, or **works** of the Law."

* He means basically keeping / obeying the Ten Commandments.

Protestants accuse us of trying to **work** our way into heaven by **deeds** – keeping the Ten Commandments.

Some people in the world teach that "Jesus did it all for us" – therefore we don't have to be good. That is not true either.

We in God's Church understand that sin brings death. "I have sinned against God therefore I must die eternal death."

Romans 6:

23 For the wages of sin **is death**; [Eternal death.]

* The only way we can be **saved** from eternal death is through Jesus Christ. Jesus will pay that wage in our stead – if we believe and obey what He says.

Romans 3:

25 [Jesus Christ,] Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through **faith in His blood**, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Romans 3:

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith **without** the **deeds** of the law.

We conclude that we are justified by faith and not by **works** or **deeds**.

Paul was talking only about how "sins that were **previously** committed – sins that are **past**" can be "tolerated or passed over" (verse 25 above) so that with the help of God's Holy Spirit we can live our lives as faithful and obedient servants of God.

The subject in **Romans 3:28** is **not** about how we are to be living our lives after conversion – it is about how we come to justification after a life of sinning.

What Paul is saying in verse: 28 has no bearing whatsoever on the importance of God's Law (works or deeds) as the guide to our behavior. Paul was certainly not condoning Law breaking.

Let's understand what "Justified by faith" means:

*I am **justified by faith** when the guilt of my past sins has been removed by Jesus Christ – I no longer have to die because I sinned in the past. I am justified by faith because I **believe** that God the Father assigned the Righteousness of Jesus Christ to me personally when I accept His sacrifice in payment for my sins. My guilt is abolished because of that faith in Jesus Christ that He paid for my sins – not by my being good enough. (My righteousness is as filthy rags - **Isaiah 64:6**)

The fact that God forgives my sins – my Law breaking – shows that God's Laws must necessarily still be in effect. If there were no law to be kept – there would be no sin!

Paul is saying here that the concept of God's "forgiveness" establishes clearly that His Laws (works and deeds of the law) are still in effect and that sin is breaking that Law. God defines the sins that must be forgiven.

1 John 3:

- 4 Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

In **Romans 3:28** Paul was referring to beginning justification upon repentance and faith in Jesus as our personal Savior. God considered us Righteous on the basis of that faith – and that took place at our baptism – and now we are to be obedient to the deeds of the law.

Only a few verses later Paul answers a crucial question: "Do we then make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (verse 31).

Paul is showing that we could never earn forgiveness by being good.

James is coming at this equation from the other side.

James 2:

- 14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say **he hath faith**, and **have not works**? Can faith save him?

Here is an example. Suppose I break the law by driving faster than the speed limit. I am arrested and put in jail until I pay a large fine. I don't have the money. But Jesus comes along and pays my fine for me – and I am let out of jail. I am justified – the Judge says my slate is clean – I'm free to go – because of what Jesus did in paying my fine. That does not mean that I no longer have to follow the speed limit. Yes, I will keep the law from then on – but keeping the law in the future is not what got me out of jail.

James 2:

- 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

1 John 3:

- 16 Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.
17 But whoso hath this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwells the love of God in him?
18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in **deed** and in truth.

Let's look at an example from John the Baptist:

Matthew 3:

- 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
8 Bring forth therefore **fruits meet for repentance**:

Fruits meet for repentance means obedience to God, **works – doing it right**

Matthew 5:

- 16** Let **your light so shine** before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Your light so shine means **works – do it right**

Matthew 7:

- 15** Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
- 16** Ye shall know them **by their fruits**. [Not their rhetoric, Not their Promises, Not their overflowing words – talk is cheap]

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [NO!]

Matthew 7:

- 17** Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.
- 18** A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
- 19** Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [God is not speaking of trees here – but men.]
- 20** Wherefore **by their fruits** ye shall know them.
- 21** Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **does** the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Galatians 2:

- 16** Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works** of the law, but by the **faith** of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Protestants sometimes say 'believe' is ALL you have to do.

Acts 16:

- 31** And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved**, and thy house.

If you '**believe**' that a Mack truck will run over and kill you if you are standing in the middle of the highway – you **take action** are get out of the road.

In the very same way, when we '**believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**' we take action (works and deeds) and do all those things that are pleasing in His sight.

There is no controversy between Paul and James.

Notice what Paul says here:

Romans 2:

- 6** [God] Who will render to every man **according** to his **deeds**:
- 7** To them who by patient **continuance** in **well doing** seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:
- 8** But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, [no works/deeds] but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
- 9** Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that **doeth evil**, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

It comes down to this:

***Good works are the evidence that Faith exists.**

God gives us the opportunity to **prove our Faith to Him** – by our **actions**. [works/deeds]

Title here:

James 2:

- 17** Even so **faith, if it hath not works**, is dead, being alone.
- 18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.
- 19** Thou believe that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

1 John 3:

- 10** In this the **children of God** are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever **does not righteousness** is not of God, neither he that **loves** not his brother.

Loving his brother is also the action step that proves we are the Children of God.

Title again:

James 2:

- 20** But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
- 21** Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Abraham went through **the action** (though he was stopped) proving his faith.

Nothing was more important than God's will to Abraham.

God said, "Now I know!!!"

Genesis 22:

- 12** And [the angel of the Lord] said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for **now I know** that thou fear God, [Faith] seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

Key to Perfection: Reverence for God accompanied by action.

James 2:

- 22** Do you see how faith wrought with his works, and by **works was faith made perfect?**
- 23** And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham **believed** God, and it was imputed unto him for **righteousness**: [justification] and he was called the Friend of God.
- 24** Ye see then how that **by works** a man is justified, **and not by faith only.**
- 25** Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot **justified by works**, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

Rahab staked her entire future in protecting the Israelite Spies. She **believed** that God was working something out – and she became a part of it. She put her life on the line.

Hebrews 11:

- 31** By **faith** the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Title again:

James 2:

- 26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also.

James 3:

- 1** My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

We are responsible for the things we say and do.

Key to Perfection: Self Control

James 3:

- 2** For in many things **we offend all**. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

We offend all, means that **we all slip up and sin**.

Jesus said:

Matthew 12:

- 35** A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.
- 36** But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

It works both ways:

Matthew 12:

- 37** For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

James 3:

- 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.
- 4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, [tiller/rudder] at the whim of the helmsman.
- 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles!
- 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.
- 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:
- 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.
- 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.
- 10 Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.
- 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?
- 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.
- 13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

False Religion: Contention, strife and envy do not accomplish God's purposes.

James 3:

- 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
- 15 This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.
- 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.
- 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
- 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

James 4:

- 1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?
- 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.
- 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
- 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
- 5 Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy?
- 6 But he gives more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.

Key to Perfection: Draw nigh to God.

James 4:

- 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.
- 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

Key to Perfection: Humility

James 4:

- 10 **Humble yourselves** in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.
- 11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a **doer** of the law, but a judge.
- 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judges another?
- 13 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:
- 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

Faith is Dependence on God:

Key to Perfection: Seek God's Will.

James 4:

- 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
- 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.
- * 17 Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.

James 5:

- 1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.
- 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
- 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.
- 4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts.
- 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.
- 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.
- 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

- 8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near.
- 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge stands before the door.
- 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.
- 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.
- 12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.
- 13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.
- 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Key to Perfection: Prayer avails much.

James 5:

- 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.
- 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- 17 Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.
- 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Key to Perfection: We Are Our Brother's Keeper.

James 5:

- 19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;
- 20 Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

End: James the Just – Part 3