

Faith -vs- Belief

Text : **James 2: 18-26 ; Matthew 23: 23-28**

S#1.

S#2.

A. We are in the section of James that is most controversial.

1. This is the section of the book that motivated some of the early protestant reformers to advocate that James not be recognized as a valid book of the N.T.
2. Luther was the first to advocate its rejection, but later recanted his objection.
3. This section of James directly contradicts the teachings of John Calvin.
 - a. Thus, many of those who advocate Calvinism still reject James.
 - b. We will deal with this supposed contradiction in a future lesson.

B. With this lesson we will explore the difference between faith and belief.

S#3.

1. This will not be an exhaustive study, but we will establish there is a difference.
2. We will see :
 - a. The same word is used for both.
 - b. Many who believe have no faith.
 - c. Works display faith, but cannot save.
 - d. Only living faith can save anyone.

I. The words “faith” and “belief” being used interchangeably fosters confusion.

S#4.

A. The words come from basically the same root.

1. Faith : { *pistis* } .. 1 conviction of the truth of anything, belief; 1b belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same. [Strong's]
 - a. **James 2: 1** – My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. S#5.
 - b. **James 2: 14** – What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (*Negative response implied*) S#6.
2. Believe : { *pisteuo* } 1 to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in. 1A of the thing believed. 1A1 to credit, have confidence. 1Bc mere acknowledgment of some fact or event: intellectual faith [Strong's]
 - a. **James 2: 19** – You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. S#7.
 - b. **James 2: 22-23** – You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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. S#8.

3. Both of these words come from this same root word :

- a. { *peitho* } 1 persuade. 1A to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe. S#9.
1B to make friends of, to win one's favour 2 be persuaded. 2A to be persuaded, to suffer one's self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe: to have faith: in a thing. [Strongs]
- b. Phil. 2: 24 – I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly. S#10.
- c. Acts 28: 24 – Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. { *apisteo* } to disbelieve S#11.

B. We can understand by context that there is a distinction between faith and belief.

- 1. ILL. – *I believe that exercise will be helpful to me, but I don't exercise.*
- 2. The Devil believes that Jesus is the Son of God, but places no faith in Him.
 - a. James 2: 19 – You believe that God is one. You do well; S#12.
the demons also believe, and shudder.
 - b. Luke 4: 33-34 – In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"
- 3. Many of the Jewish leaders believed, but had no faith.
 - John 12: 42-43 – Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but S#13.
because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.
- 4. The father of a deaf and mute son who was demon possessed expressed this well.
 - Mark 9: 23-24 – And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible S#14.
to him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

* 5. In the normal course of conversion one comes to believe before he develops faith.

II. Even today, many who believe have no faith. S#15.

A. If there is no change in one's life, his belief has not yet matured into faith. S#16.

- 1. People of faith, i.e., saved people do things that evidence their relationship with God.
 - Heb. 6: 9-12 – But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, S#17.
and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

2. No one can see how a person feels, but faith is clearly observable. **S#18.**

James 2: 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." (*actions are the leaves of faith*)

B. Many believe, but are not fully persuaded enough to trust. **S#19.**

1. Are you fully confident that, "If you were to die this very minute you would go to be with God eternally?"
2. A person with faith trusts Jesus to keep His promises. Compare Paul's confidence : **II Tim. 1: 12** – For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; **S#20.** for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
 - a. The Apostle was in prison facing imminent death.
 - b. He had committed his eternal destiny to Jesus.
 - c. He had full confidence that his eternal destiny was secure. (Compare – **4: 6-8**)

C. We cannot know the heart of another so we can never judge motives, **S#21. but there have always been people who profess faith but do not have it.**

1. **Matt. 15: 8** – This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.
2. **I Cor. 4: 5** – Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait **S#22.** until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts;
3. **Matt. 13: 28-30** – He said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said **S#23.** to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹ "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

D. An empty profession of faith is a barrier to salvation. **S#24.**

*** To profess is not necessarily to possess !**

1. **II Cor. 13: 5** – Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!
2. **James 1: 21** ... Those who do not practice what they learn deceive themselves, lost.
3. **Prov. 23: 7** – For as he thinks in his heart, so is he: (*One becomes what he thinks about.*)
 - a. Our hearts contain the motives that foster our actions.
 - b. Thus, faith in one's heart produces good works in his life.
4. If one's faith has not changed his life, it is only belief ... not saving faith.

S#25.

III. The activities, the deeds of one's life display his faith, but cannot save him.

A. Everyone is in need of salvation.

1. By nature people are not righteous because they seek their own desires.
 - a. **Phil. 2: 20-21** – For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. **21** For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. S#26.
 - b. **Eph. 2: 3** – Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
2. We all separate ourselves from God by the sins we commit.
 - a. **Rom. 3: 10 , 23** – There is none righteous, not even one. ... **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; S#27.
 - b. **Rom. 6: 23** – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - c. Remember .. **James 2: 10-11** .. To violate one command is to violate all.
 * *One is either pure and holy or he is defiled; there's no partial holiness.*

B. Salvation is 100% by faith. (*Good works are the fruit produced by faith.*) S#28.

1. **Rom. 4: 4-5** – Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited 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 credited as righteousness,
2. No one deserves salvation; it is a gift given by God's grace. (**Rom. 5 .. enemies**) S#29.
 - a. **Eph. 2: 8** – For by grace you have been saved through faith
 - b. **Rom. 5: 15** – the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.
 - c. **Rom. 11: 6** – But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.
3. Salvation is **by grace** though faith, but it is **for good works**. S#30.

Eph. 2: 8-10 – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

 - a. Created in Christ = God saved
 - b. Gift = not earned or merited
 - c. For & so that = statements of purpose
 - d. Walk in them = duration of purpose
 - c. Good works = purpose for which one is created in Christ Jesus, i.e., is saved.

IV. Only a living faith will result in salvation.

S#31.

A. One is not saved because he/she :

S#32.

1. Leads a life of personal holiness.
2. Obeys all of the commands
3. Has learned and understands the bible
4. Goes to church three times a week
5. Believes that Jesus is God's Son

B. Only a living faith from a surrendered heart results in one being saved.

S#33.

1. **James 2: 26** – For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.
2. A living faith flows from a surrendered heart.
 - a. A surrendered heart seeks to obey and to please.
 - b. A surrendered heart serves out of love and gratitude.
3. A surrendered heart which produces faith changes lives.

C. The decisions and activities of our life display our faith for all to see.

S#34.

1. Abraham's strong faith was made apparent when he willingly gave God the thing he love most in the world, his only son.
2. The faith of David was made evident when he charged the giant, Goliath.

D. As we examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith we ask, (**II Cor. 13:5**)

S#35.

1. Is our faith alive and vital ?
2. How has our faith changed our lives ?
3. Does our faith direct our daily life ?
4. Are others drawn to Christ by the faith they see in us ?

INVITATION :

A. Is your faith growing or do you need to revitalize it ?

S#36.

B. Have you made a faith commitment to God by obeying the gospel ?

S#37.

S#38. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**James 2: 18-26**

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? **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; **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** 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, so also faith without works is dead.

Matthew 25: 34-46

34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **35** 'For 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; **36** naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to 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? **38** 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? **39** 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' **40** The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

41 Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; **42** for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; **43** I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' **44** Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' **45** Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' **46** These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.