“How To Have Real Faith”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 7 of 15 – February 17, 2013 at SBC

 James 2:14-26

It seems, if you put the word "real", in front of anything, . . . it sells more -- real coffee, or real leather. We're interested in, the genuine article. There was a TV show, that used to be on, . . . "Real People". There's a book out, . . . “Real Men Don't Eat Quiche”. Coke, used to be, . . . the "real thing".

We want to talk to you, today, about what James has to say, about how to have, . . . a real faith. There are a lot, of phony religions, out there -- people who think, . . . they are Christians, . . . and, really aren't. In this passage, . . . James talks about the difference, . . . between real, and counterfeit Christians, . . . authentic believers, and fake believers. He talks about how, . . . you have, a real faith.

This is the most controversial, and misunderstood passage, in the book of James. Every cult, and a lot of false religions, . . . misunderstands it, and, they try to use this passage, to prove, you have to, . . . work your way, to heaven. It's important, that you get, what we’re going to talk about today, . . . so, that when those guys, . . . come to your door, . . . you'll know, what to say, to them.

The entire New Testament, teaches that, we are saved, by faith, alone. Ephesians 2:8 – “*By grace, . . . through faith, we are saved.”* James comes along, and says, “It's not, just faith, . . . but, faith, and works.” What is he, talking about? James, . . . and, Paul. They are both, . . right. They are talking, about, . . different things.

Paul was fighting, the problem, . . . of legalism -- the problem, of "I've got to keep, all the Jewish laws, and regulations, . . . to be a Christian." Paul is talking, to that group. James, on the other hand, . . . is not fighting legalism, but laxity -- those that say, "It doesn't matter, what you do, . . . as long as, you believe."

They are fighting, two different enemies. But, they both use the word, "works", in different ways. When Paul uses the word, "works", he's talking about Jewish laws, . . . like circumcision, . . . and, things, like that. When James uses it, he's talking about, the lifestyle, of a Christian -- acts of love. It's totally, different.

Paul focuses, on the root of salvation -- what happens to me, internally. James focuses, on the fruit of salvation -- what happens, on the outside. Jesus said, *"By their fruits, you will know them."* Paul is talking about, “How to **know**, you're a Christian.” James is talking about, “How to **show**, you're a Christian.” Paul is talking about, his passages, . . . on faith, alone, how to become, a believer. James talks about, how to **behave**, . . . like a believer. It is not, . . . a contradiction.

It's summed up, in Ephesians 2:8-10 – *"For it is by grace, you have been saved, through faith, for a life of good works, that God has already prepared, for us to do."* There are three prepositions, in this passage -- "by grace", . . . "through faith", . . . "for good works". If you get those, out of order, you're in trouble. If you think, you're saved, by works, for faith, . . . you're in trouble. But, he's saying, we're saved by grace, . . . through faith. We're saved, . . . just, by accepting, . . . God's gift.

But, **how do I show**, I am a believer? James says, there's five ways, you can know, . . you've got, the real thing. He gives us, five steps, or principles, . . . here in this passage. **What is, . . . real faith?**

**1. REAL FAITH IS NOT, . . . JUST SOMETHING YOU SAY**

Real faith, is not, just something, you say, . . . something, you talk about. James 2:14 – *"What good is it, my brother, if a man, claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such `faith', save him?"* It doesn't say he, actually, has faith, . . . he just **claims**, . . . to have it. He talks, about it. He knows, all the right phrases.

There are a lot of people, who claim, to be Christians. George Gallup says, 50 million Americans, say "I'm born again," but, you don't see anything, in their lifestyle, to prove it. Today, we tend to label people, as Christians, if they make the slightest sound, of being a believer. It's more, than just talk, . . . that, is involved, in real faith.

Jesus said, in Matthew 7, *"Not everybody, who says to me, `Lord, Lord', is going to enter, into the kingdom of heaven."* Not everybody, with a Christian bumper sticker, . . . is a believer. Not everybody, who is a professor, of Christianity, . . . is a possessor, of Christianity. V. 14 – *"Can such faith, save him? What value is this, kind of faith?"* Nothing. Talk, . . . is cheap.

Even Larry Flint, the publisher of Hustler, said he was born again? But, you never saw, any change, in his life. He kept right on, . . . printing pornography. No difference. No change.

James is saying, that real faith, . . . is not, just something, you say. Do you know anybody, that claims to be a Christian, . . . but, you don't see any evidence, in their life? That's, a phony faith. Real faith, is not, just something, you say.

**2. REAL FAITH IS NOT, . . . JUST SOMETHING YOU FEEL**. It's more, . . . than, emotions. A lot of people, confuse emotions, and sentiment, with faith. You can be, emotionally moved, . . . and, never act on it. You can go to church, and get a quiver in your liver, goose bumps, . . but it never, makes any difference.

Then, he gives, an illustration. James 2:15 – *"Suppose, a brother or sister, is without clothes, and daily food. If one of you, says to him, `Go, I wish you well fed,' but, does nothing, about his physical needs, what good is it?"*

**Peanuts Cartoon**: Charlie Brown, and Linus, are inside, all bundled up, and Snoopy's out in the cold, shivering, in front of an empty, dog food bowl. Charlie and Linus, are having a discussion, on how sad it is, that Snoopy, is hungry and cold. "He's cold and hungry. We ought to, do something, about it." They walk outside, and say to Snoopy, . . . "Be of good cheer, Snoopy."

Do you know where, Charles Schultz, got that idea? From, this verse. What good is it, . . . if you see someone in need, and you say, "I feel, for you!" He's saying, “It's more, . . . than, just words. It's more, than, just feelings.” If, after church, you're getting into your car, and you happen to slam eight fingers, in your car door, and you're standing there in agony, with blood on your fingers, and I walk up and say, . . . "I really feel, for you!" -- is that, . . . any help?

Real faith, is more, . . . than, just, sympathy, and feeling, and emotion. You get, assistance. You do something, about it. You act, on it. Real faith, takes the initiative. A real believer, has real faith, and it's practical. It gets involved, with people. He's talking, about Christians, here. When you become, a part of God's family, . . . you have some family responsibilities. A real believer, will care about, . . . other believers.

1 John 3:17 – *"If anyone, has material possessions, and sees his brother, in need, but has no pity on him, how can, the love of God, be in him?"* Real faith, is generous. It wants, to give. Who can count on you, in a crisis? How many Christians, have the freedom, to call you up, in the middle of the night, . . . if they have an emergency? Not just, . . . talking, the talk. Not just, feeling for people.

I John 3:14 says, that one of the proofs, of salvation, is that, we love, other Christians. Do you have fellowship, with believers? Real faith, . . . wants to be around, other believers. You, love them. It is known, . . . we are Christians, . . . by our love.

We are a lot better, at verbalizing our faith, . . . than, practicing it. I can't meet, everybody's needs, . . . but, I can meet, . . . somebody's. James is saying, that if my faith, doesn't lead me, to share with others, . . . it's wrong.

James 2:17 – *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it's not accompanied, by actions, is dead."* If I don't feel like, helping other Christians, I don't have a sick faith, . . I have a dead faith. James is laying it, on the line. He says, “Do you want, real faith? It's more, than just something you say, and it's more, than just something you feel.”

**3. REAL FAITH IS NOT, . . . JUST SOME SOMETHING YOU THINK**. For some people, . . . faith is an intellectual trip -- a matter, . . . to be studied, debated, talked over, and discussed. James imagines, . . . this, intellectual objector.

James 2:18 – *"Someone, will say, `You have faith, I have deeds'"* He's imagining, some intellectual guy, . . who says, "You're into faith, I'm into works. That's cool. Different strokes, for different folks. Let's debate it. You've got your thing, I've got mine. To each, his own way. Stimulate me mentally, but, don't ask me, to make any commitment." *"Show me your faith, without deeds, and I will show you my faith, by what I do."* Real faith, . . . is visible. You can, see it. It's apparent. If you claim, to be a Christian, . . . people will be able, . . . to see it. It's, . . . visible.

We've got a lot, of Lady Clairol Christians -- nobody knows, for sure. Only God knows, . . . for sure. Faith is odorless, weightless, invisible, . . . so anybody, can claim to have it. How do you know, . . . for sure? James says, . . . “Show me.” If you claim, to be a Christian, I have a right, to ask you, to prove it, . . . by looking at your lifestyle. Somebody said, . . . "Faith is like calories. You can't see them, . . . but, you can sure, . . . see the results." You can't see faith, . . . but, you can see, the results.

James would have made, . . . a good Missourian. The theme of the state, of Missouri, is . . . "Show me". James is saying, “You say, you're a Christian? Prove it. Let me see, your actions, . . . back up, your words.”

 If I say, "I believe my health, is very important. Personal health, is a high priority, in my life. I believe, that good health, is one of the most important things, we ought to have." You say, "Do you, eat right?" No. "Do you, exercise? Do you get, your proper rest? Do you, take vitamins? Do you, ever go, for a check up?" No. It doesn't matter, . . . what I say. What counts, . . . are my actions.

Real faith, is more, than just something, you think. You can point it out, and see it, in people's lives. Our kids sing a chorus: "If you're saved, and you know it, . . . then, your life, will surely, show it." That's what, James is saying. Show me. You claim, to have real faith. It's something more, than something you say, something you feel, and something you think about. You can, . . . prove it.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – *"Any time, a person, becomes a Christian, he becomes, a new person, inside, the old things, have passed away. All things, become new."* Not, overnight. But, they start, . . . becoming new.

If you grab onto a 220 volt wire, you're going to know it. I don't see how somebody, as big as God, . . . can enter your life, . . . and, it not, . . . change you. James says, flat out, that, if it doesn't change you, there's a question, . . . whether, He's really, in your life. What can I see, in my life, . . . that, proves it?

Someone once asked, the question, . . . “If you were arrested, for being a Christian, . . . would there be enough evidence, . . . to convict you?'" That's, a good question. That's what James, was talking about. If you say, "I know it!" Show it! How do you know, . . . you're a believer? You'll see, some changes, . . . in your life. Real faith, always, . . . produces change. Real faith, is not just something, you say. It's not, just something, you feel. It's not, just something, you think.

**4. REAL FAITH IS NOT, . . . JUST SOMETHING YOU BELIEVE**. James 5:19 – *"You believe, that there is one God. Good! Even the demons, believe that -- and shudder!"* There are a lot of people, who have strong beliefs, in God, the Bible, about Christ. They can recite creeds to you, and catechisms, and talk about doctrines, of the Trinity, quote bible verses. James says, "big deal!" Just saying, I believe in God, . . . is not enough, to get you to heaven. Even the devil, . . . believes that.

The Bible says, in Proverbs, *"The fool has said, in his heart, there is no God."* It's foolish, to be an atheist, and the devil, is no fool. The devil, believes in God! The devil, is a great theologian. He knows a lot, about the Bible. He's been around, a while. He knows theology, backwards, and forwards. He believes. His demons believe, . . and shudder. The Greek word, is "to bristle" -- their hair stands up, on end. Why? Because, the devils, understand the majesty, and awesomeness of God. They believe in God, . . . and, they tremble.

The word, believe, in Greek means, . . . "to trust in, to cling to, to rely on, to commit yourself completely." I believe in Hitler, . . . but, I'm not a Nazi. I'm a Christian, because, I believe in Jesus. But, it's more than, just, a head knowledge. A lot of folks, are going to miss heaven, . . by 18 inches. They've got it in their head, but, not their heart. They say, "I believe, in God." James says, . . . "Big deal. Everybody believes, in God. How do you have, a creation, . . . without, a Creator? But, that's not enough.”

Real faith, is not just saying, "I believe". There is so much, . . . “easy believism”, in America. Article in the Register: "Many in America, believe, but, don't practice." They did a survey, and asked people, all around the country, and they found, a high degree, of belief. "Sure, I'm a believer. I'm a Christian."

Do you, attend church? “No.” "Do you donate, your time?" “No.” "Do you, tithe?" “No.” 10% or 2%?

James would say, . . . that's, a phony belief. You're just, conning yourself. A lot of people, . . . are doing that. If it's not, just something, . . . you say, or think, or feel, or believe. What is, . . . real faith?

**5. REAL FAITH IS, . . . SOMETHING YOU DO**. In the next, couple of verses, . . . James gives two illustrations, . . . that say real faith, is something you do. Faith is active. It's not, passive. It's a, . . . commitment.

Two illustrations, of two very different people, . . . Abraham and Rahab -- exact opposites, extremes. Abraham is a man. Rahab is a woman. Abraham is Jewish. Rahab is a Gentile. Abraham is a patriarch. Rahab is a prostitute. Abraham is a somebody. Rahab is a nobody. Abraham is a major character, in the Bible. Rahab is, a minor character. He uses these illustrations, to say, it doesn't matter, who you are, . . as long as, you've got, . . . the important thing. They only had one thing, in common -- their faith, . . . in God. Their faith in God, . . . led them, . . . to an action.

James 2:20-23 – *"You foolish men. Do you want evidence, that faith, without deeds, is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham, considered righteous, for what he did, when he offered his son Isaac, on the altar. His faith, and his actions, were working together. His faith, was made complete, by what he did. Scripture was fulfilled, when it said, `Abraham believed God.'"*

How do we, know it? We, saw it. He behaved, in a way, that his belief, came out, visibly. V. 23b – *"Abraham believed, God, . . . and, it was accredited to him, as righteousness, and he was called, God's friend." \*

You know, the story. It's the ultimate test, . . . where God asked Abraham, . . . to give up, . . . his own son. This has nothing to do, with salvation. Abraham was already, a believer. Twenty-five years earlier, God had said, . . “You're righteous.” He's not talking about, being saved, by his works. He’s saying, that this just shows, . . . how much, you believe.

Abraham, . . . obeyed God. It was, immediate. He followed Him. He took, his son up. He did all, those faith steps. He cut the wood, built the altar, . . . and, was ready, to sacrifice, his own son. Abraham says, to his son, while walking up the mountain, "We [not I], . . . will return". He knew, that God, . . . would provide, somehow, even if it meant, . . . raising him, from the dead.

Abraham, was about to sacrifice him, . . . and, God says, “I was just testing you, to see what's most important, in your life.” It was, . . . an action. His works, proved his faith. He held nothing back, . . . from God.

\* And . . . he talks, . . . about Rahab. The story, is in Joshua 2. It's the story, how a prostitute, helped a couple of spies, when they were coming, into Jericho. Rahab ends up, . . in the family line, of Jesus. She risks her life, to save the spies. Our faith, is not determined, by what we do, . . . it is demonstrated, . . . by what we do.

About 40 years ago, there was a famous tightrope walker, named George Blondin, . . . who decided, he would walk across Niagara Falls, on a tightrope. On the appointed day, they stretched a tightrope, from one side of Niagara Falls, to the other. He got out there, and there were crowds, lining both the Canadian, and American side. Thousands of people showed up, to see this unbelievable feat.

Blondin walked up to the edge of the tightrope, . . . put one foot on the tightrope, and put another foot out, and began to walk across -- inch-by-inch, step-by-step. He got out in the middle, and everybody knew, . . . that, if he'd make one mistake, . . . he'd fall off the rope, and into the Falls, and obviously, . . . be killed. Blondin got to the other side, and the crowd went wild.

Blondin said, "I'm going to do it, again." He got to the other side, and the crowd went crazy. Blondin said, "I'm going to do it, again, but, this time, I'm going to push a wheel barrow, full of dirt." He pushes, the wheelbarrow, across. He got to, the other side. He did this, nine or ten times. On about the tenth time, he pushed the wheelbarrow, right in front of a tourist, who said, "I believe you, could do that, all day." Blondin dumped out the dirt, and said, . . . "Get into, . . . the wheelbarrow."

In a very real sense, . . . that's what God, says to you. Talk, is cheap. Put your money, . . . where your mouth is. "I believe, in Jesus!" Prove it. Our faith, is demonstrated, . . . by our actions. Actions speak louder, . . . than words. Our behavior shows, . . . what we, really believe.

2 Corinthians 13:5 – *"Examine yourselves, to see whether, you are in the faith."* Test it. Check it out. See if, you're really, . . . a believer, or not.

**A couple of questions**: Am I really a Christian, . . . after all? In the light, of what James says, . . . am I really, a Christian? What changes, . . . can I point to, . . . in my life? Is my lifestyle, . . . any different, at all, . . . from, unbelievers? So many people, think it doesn't matter, what you do, as long as, you believe. James says, . . that's, not true. He's not saying, you work, your way, to heaven. He's not saying, works deliver, salvation. He's saying, they demonstrate it. He's saying, that if your faith doesn't work, what good is it?

How do I know, . . for sure? You settle it, in your mind. Maybe, some of you have had doubts, whether, you're really, a believer, or not. You're a good person, you've gone to church, and maybe, you've known about Christ, and you've read the Bible, and you've had religion, and you've gone to classes.

But, . . . are you, absolutely sure, that if you died, today, . . . you'd go to heaven? The fact is, you can, be sure. You don't have to leave here, . . . and have the shadow, of a doubt. You can settle it, . . . right here.

How do you, do that? Ephesians 2:8-9 – *"For it is by grace, you have been saved, through faith, for a life of good works, God has already prepared, for us to do."* God's grace. God, . . . reaches down. He says, “I want you, . . . to know Me. I want to have, a relationship, . . with you.” That's grace. And, you look up, and say, "I want to know You, . . . Lord. I want to have, a relationship, with You."

When God's hand of grace comes down, and your hand of faith goes up, that's called salvation. That's what it means, to be a believer. Saved by grace, through faith, . . . to do exactly, what God made you to do, in the first place. He has a plan, . . . for your life. You are not here, . . . by accident.

“How To Have Real Faith”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 7 of 15

James 2:14-26

*"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by actions, is dead."* (vs. 17)

\*\*\* WHO IS RIGHT - JAMES OR PAUL? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Paul (Gal 2:16) & James (Ja. 2:24)

Problem: "Legalism" / "Laxity"

"WORKS" Jewish laws / Christian lifestyle

Focus: "Root of salvation" "Fruit of salvation"

(internal/unseen) (external/seen)

Purpose: How to know How to show I'm a Christian I'm a Christian

Ephesians. 2:8-10 – “*For it is BY GRACE you have been saved THROUGH FAITH . . . FOR a life of GOOD WORKS which God has already prepared for us to do.”*

\*\*\* WHAT IS REAL FAITH?

1. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"What good is it, my brothers, if a man CLAIMS to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such "faith" save him?* (vs. 14)

Matt. 7:20-23

2. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If 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?"* (vs. 15-16)

1 John 3:17 – “*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”* Also 3:14-16, 4:7-20 (vs. 17)

3. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"But 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."* (vs. 18)

2 Cor. 5:17

4. REAL FAITH IS NOT JUST SOMETHING YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder!"* (vs. 19)

5. REAL FAITH IS SOMETHING YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

Illustrations: Two very different people

\* Abraham (vs. 20-24)

\* Rahab (vs. 25)

2 Corinthians 13:5 – “*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”*