James: A Handbook on Holiness

Faith and Justification

James 2:20-26

General outline:

1.

The Way to Holiness: The Divine Perspective 1:2-27

1.

The Trial-Temptation Complex 1:2-18

2.

The Word of God 1:19-27

3.

The Principles of Holiness: The Biblical Framework 2:1-26

1.

The Law is the Structure of Holiness 2:1-13

2.

Faith is the Dynamics of Holiness 2:14-26

1.

Faith and Works 2:14-19

2.

Faith and Justification 2:20-26

The Pattern of Eph. 2:8-9

Savior: "God" saves

↓

Mode: "by grace"

↓

Means: "through faith"

↓

Outflow: producing works

James 2:20-26

The Issue

20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Abraham

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"- and he was called a friend of God.

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Rahab

25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

The Conclusion

26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Discussion Questions:

1.

V. 20: Who is the "foolish person" to whom James is speaking? See v. 18.

2.

V. 20: Does James say his purpose in this section is to prove justification by works? If not, what is his purpose? _____

3.

V. 21: Paul says Abraham was *not* justified by works in Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:2; and Gal. 2:16, even using the same proof text found here in v. 23! "The works James commends are not the works Paul condemns." What kind of works do each have in view?

1.

Paul: Works of (establishing) S_____-R_____

2.

James: Works of (flowing from) F_____

3.

V. 22: Works of faith "show" (v. 20) someone's faith, which you cannot directly "see" (vv. 22, 24). What can you "
see
" about a person's faith in their works? Their faith is a_____, and is c_____ by their works.

Remember these excellent summaries which draw directly on this passage:

"*We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.*"
-- R.C. Sproul.

"*Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.* "
-- WCF 11.2