



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 2:14-26

James

“Faith That Works”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the time we have together this evening, an opportunity for your people to gather together to read Scripture together and then consider its meaning in some depth, and we pray that you would bless us as we do that. We look to you to teach us, to guide us and direct us as we make our attempts at interpreting and understanding, and yet ultimately, Lord, we can't do that apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us. So, we pray that you bless us to that end, help us to think clearly, and guide us in our thinking, that it be an enjoyable time and a helpful time, an edifying time together. Bless our time of prayer afterwards as we intercede for our friends and for others. Bless the young people as they meet tonight. May they have good fellowship and instruction together, as well. We commit our time together now to you. We pray you bless it in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] James 2:14-26, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 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? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 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.’ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 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? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

Saving faith is one of James’ main themes, and it is usually defined in three ways, or rather as having three parts, three components: knowledge, assent, and trust. Now, the first two have to do with the intellect, and the last, the third part, has to do with the will. Knowledge is an understanding of the content of the gospel and of the promises of God. Assent is the intellect acknowledging the truth of it, apart from personal trust, and then that third, trust, is appropriating the truth. It is putting ones confidence in it. It’s possible to possess a part of that and not the whole. It’s possible for a person to have knowledge and assent without having trust. People can grow up in a Christian environment, they can grow up in an evangelical church, and they can know all the terminology without questioning the truth of it but never believe it, never actually trust in the things that they understand [*break in audio*] as a result, they have a profession of faith but they don’t have the reality of it.

When that is the case, it will show itself. It will manifest itself. It will become apparent, and that is the problem that James deals with in chapter 2, verses 14 through 26. It is easily the most difficult passage in the book because it might seem to be in conflict with other parts of Scripture. It seems at least at first blush that James is crossing swords with the apostle Paul. In Romans 3:28, Paul wrote, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law,” and then we come to James 2:24 and we read, “A man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” The two seem to be in conflict with one another. It seemed that way to Martin Luther. That’s why Luther, when he came to the book of James and he read that, in light of what Paul wrote in Galatians and what Paul wrote in the book of Romans, decided that the book of James was an epistle of straw and he dismissed it. But there is no conflict between the two. James is not denying that salvation is by faith alone. He is explaining the nature of saving faith, and he’s showing that it is an active faith.

Paul taught the same thing, in different ways, but essentially he taught the same thing. In Philippians 2:12 he told the Philippians, “Work out your salvation

with fear and trembling.” It’s not enough to put your faith in Christ; you must work out your salvation. You must be active in it. That’s the Christian life. It doesn’t save you, but the saved person will do that. You have salvation; now work it out. It’s similar to what he says in Ephesians 2:8-10, and with verses 8 and 9 he makes it very clear that salvation is by grace, through faith, apart from works, not of works lest any should boast, but that doesn’t mean works don’t have any place in a Christian life. A person who has faith as a result of grace will also have works, because he goes on in verse 10 to say that we were created in Christ Jesus for good works. In fact, those very works have been predestined for us to walk in.

So, there’s no conflict but there was a problem in the church to which is writing, and what might have occasioned James writing what he does in chapter 2 is a neglect of works among some in that congregation, that is it seems from many things in the book of James that he was writing to a congregation of Jewish Christians, and so they would have come out of a works salvation system. Having come to believe in the gospel of salvation by grace through faith, it’s very possible that some of them have gone to the opposite extreme and assumed that works were no longer needed at all. That seems to be, if we make a connection between our text and the previous one, that seems to have been the problem in terms of not showing mercy, of showing favoritism. That’s the issue we dealt with two weeks ago when we were studying in our series. There was favoritism being shown and there was mercy that was not being shown. In other words, they weren’t living a kind of life that should have been part of the life of faith, and so he corrected that. But now he corrects this problem of a faith without works.

Having said that, Martin Luther would certainly have agreed with that aspect of faith and works. He would have certainly said that we’re saved by faith alone but not a faith that is alone, and that is the basic point that James is making. He’s not contradicting salvation by grace through faith. He’s saying that the faith that’s genuine, a living faith, will manifest itself, will be active; it will be seen and prove itself in works of righteousness. That’s genuine faith, it’s working faith. He begins with a hypothetical situation and a rhetorical question in verse 14, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?”

James doesn’t say that this person, this hypothetical person actually has faith. He says that he says that he has faith, he assumes that, and faith that this person

professes must manifest itself, though, if it's genuine, because faith is invisible. We can't see faith. We hear about faith, but for faith to be known, it must be seen. The evidence must be given. Real faith will give that evidence, and so he asks can this faith, this faith which has no tangible evidence, no works, can this faith save, and the implied answer is no. That is actually what the grammatical construction would demand, that no, the answer is that faith can't save. The works that James has in mind here are not works of the legalistic salvation – works, righteousness – it's not that. It's works of an ethical nature, works of a social concern which, again, would seem to be supported by what preceded in the previous paragraph, verses 1 through 13. They were lacking that. They weren't showing mercy. That's what he's speaking of, that kind of life.

Now, to illustrate his point, James gives what has been called a parable. It's an illustration of human need, of people with insufficient food and insufficient clothing, verse 15. “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 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?” Well, of course, it's of no use. Words without supporting actions are worthless, and what makes this particularly bad is these are fellow believers. He describes them as a brother and a sister, so these are fellow Christians who are turned away, and they're turned away with very warm words of farewell, the idea of the two commands, be warmed and be filled, is let someone else feed you and warm you, and I suppose that the idea is something like, “God will take care of you. Go on your way.”

It was something of a kind of pious platitude that was given to these two people who are in need. Well, of course that's true, God will take care of you, God takes care of His people, He's faithful to do that, but He generally does that through means of the saints, through us helping one another, and so James is giving a concrete example of how genuine faith operates and how it proves itself. If a person has faith, he or she will help others, particularly Christian brothers and sisters. Now, the apostle Paul certainly didn't disagree with that. There's no conflict between Paul and James on this point because Paul taught the very same thing. In Galatians 6:10, he writes, “While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” So, if those of the household of faith are in need of food or in need of clothing, then we are to supply that. We're to help them.

But the point of the illustration is made by way of analogy, and I think that James’ point here in bringing this out is not only to give us a concrete example of how an act of faith will manifest itself, but by way of analogy he’s showing that just as words without actions are of no use, so too faith without works is of no use. That’s James’ conclusion in verse 17. He writes, “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.” In other words, that kind of faith, the faith that is professed only, is lifeless, and so it’s unable to save. It’s dead being by itself, and that’s the very point that James will conclude this section on in verse 26.

Now, James doesn’t affirm that this hypothetical individual that he brings before us at the first has faith, but he doesn’t deny it, either. He doesn’t deny that there is a kind of faith here. He simply says that it is inadequate faith. It’s not the right kind of faith. It’s not the faith that it pretends to be. It’s not living faith that can save. A person can have knowledge, a person can have assent without having trust; that’s inadequate faith but a faith of a kind. In verse 18, he develops his argument to support his position, and he does so by giving an objection to it, which he quickly answers, verse 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.’” This is a difficult verse for a couple of reasons, and I’m not going to go through the technicalities. We don’t really have time to get into that.

But there is a question about who is speaking. Is it an objector? Is it James? Is it a friend of James’? There’s some question about where the quotation, the objection ends in the verse. Does it carry through the whole verse? The New American Standard Bible has it that way, but it may not. The words “someone may say” are similar to Paul’s way of introducing an objector. We see it, for example, in the book of Romans and in the book of 1 Corinthians. He uses the words, “You will say,” and he uses the words, “Someone will say,” and so it seems that the person that’s speaking here, it’s not James and it’s not a friend, it’s an objector. It’s one who’s raising an objection to the things that James has taught. That’s the natural way to read the text, I think, anyway.

The question then is, “Well, how much of the verse is the objection that he’s making?” and that is probably to be understood as the first part of the verse. The reason is because the problem with taking this as the objector is that he seems to reverse the situation. He speaks of James as having faith and himself, or the objector,

as having works. Well, we know that’s not the case. James does have faith, but the objector certainly doesn’t have the works, and so to understand what is being said, some have suggested that the statement is not as specific as the words you and I would suggest, but they’re probably to be understood in a more general way, meaning one has and another has. So, the idea is one person has faith, another person has works, and the objection is that faith and works are not necessarily related to one another. So, the objector would be saying something like this, “Some people are gifted with faith, and some people are gifted with works. They don’t necessarily go together. It’s possible to have one without the other,” and so that’s what he sets forth as his response to what James is saying.

James is saying, “You don’t have works. Well, but I have faith,” or, “You have faith, other people have faith while other people have works. That’s just the way things are.” So, James addresses that, and he addresses it by rejecting that dichotomy, that separation between faith and works, and he answers the objector with a challenge. He says, “Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works,” the point being faith itself is invisible, so a profession of faith without any accompanying works is really begging the question. The proof of faith’s existence, the expression of its reality is made in works, in deeds of righteousness, in obedience, and so he adds that the reality of his own faith is demonstrated in his works, “I will show you my faith by my works,” or he might illustrate it from one of the last scenes in *Macbeth*.

We all read *Macbeth* when we were in high school. We may not remember all the lines in it, but at the very end when Macbeth is about to meet his end, and he’s facing off with Macduff and have this challenge going on between them. He says to Macduff, “I have no words. My voice is in my sword.” I suppose it’s not the best comparison to make between Macbeth and a man of faith, but the point is still the same, and that’s what James is saying. It is simply this: talk is cheap. Anybody can say things, anybody can talk, but the proof of it is in the action, just as my voice is in my sword, I’ll leave my talking to my sword. I’ll leave my talking to my actions. That’s what James is saying, “I’ll prove my faith by the way I conduct myself, by my works.”

A second argument to support the statement that faith without works _____ given in verse 19, accepting a creed, even an orthodox creed, is not enough. The

creed he has in mind in verse 19 is probably the _____ of Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. It is the great statement in the Old Testament of monotheism, and so James says, “You believe that God is one. You do well.” In other words, that’s good, and he’s not being sarcastic here. He’s saying that’s good, that’s right, that’s proper, that’s necessary. There’s no salvation, there’s no saving faith apart from orthodoxy. It’s not enough to have faith. Faith must be in the right object, it must have the right content, and so that’s good. You believe that God is one. You have a correct view of God. You understand who He is. That’s proper, that’s right, that’s good, but it’s not enough to simply know the truth and give assent to it. In addition to knowledge and assent, there must also be trust.

Calvin commenting on that said, “Knowledge of God can no more connect a man with God than the sight of the sun can carry him to heaven,” and James is saying basically that, it’s not enough to know these things, it’s not enough to affirm belief in an orthodox creed, and then he goes on to give some conclusive proof of that from the _____. They know the truth and they believe it, but it doesn’t save them. “The demons also believe, and shudder.” Now, that is faith without works. They have that. They are in no doubt that God is one. They know there’s one God. They know that He’s a _____ God. They know that he is the Father, that God is God the Father, God is God the Son, God is God the Holy Spirit. He is three in one, and we see that throughout the gospels, and even in the book of Acts there are expressions, confessions by the demons that Christ is God’s son, and they gave clear testimony to that, and James says they believe this and shudder, which is the result of fear because they know that fact means they are doomed.

Their belief is orthodox, and their response is an evidence of genuine conviction because the thought of God terrifies them, but it doesn’t save them. They’re convinced of the truth of it, they believe it, they shudder, but they’re not saved by the things that they understand and they believe, so there is a faith that is informed with truth. We could even call orthodox, it has a right understanding of things, but it’s not saving faith. It is faith in the same nature, the same kind of faith that the demons have, so we can call it a kind of demonic faith; it is faith that doesn’t work. Saving faith is not just a convinced knowledge. It is not intellectual only. It is deeper. It involves the whole person, the whole man. Faith that saves is living faith,

it's personal faith which involves trust and is known by its works. It's known by its deeds of mercy.

James introduces the next proof for his argument with a blunt question in verse 20, where he writes, “Are you willing?” He's still speaking to this hypothetical individual, this person who claims that you can have faith without works. “Are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” That's something of a challenge that he throws out to this individual. The word “foolish” means empty, it means vain. It's used a number of places in the New Testament. One place is Mark:12:3 of a person who goes away empty-handed, and here I think it has the idea of empty-headed. That's what he's describing this man to be. James is saying, in effect, “You haven't got a clue. You have no comprehension of theological truth. Do you even want any?”

That's the question that he's asking this person, “Do you really want to know the truth? Do you want to know about the nature of saving faith, that without works faith is useless, that it accomplishes nothing?” The implication is that James doesn't think so. He has his doubts about this individual that he really has an interest in learning. He is resistant to the truth. But James has proof of his position that he sets forth that should convince this individual if he or someone like him wants to know it, and he gives that in the next verses with two biblical examples, those of Abraham and Rahab.

First, Abraham in verse 21, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?” Now, that word “justified” is the word that we find throughout the New Testament, throughout the book of Romans, throughout the book of Galatians. It means to declare righteous. It is a forensic term or a legal term. It never means to make righteous in a subjective sense. It means to declare a person righteous, to declare a person what he or she is. That's clear from the usage of the expression in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 25:1 where Moses instructs Israel's judges that they will justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. Well, it doesn't mean they're to make people righteous and make people wicked. He means declare them to be what they are, and that's the sense here. It means to declare righteous.

So, Abraham's works did not make him a righteous man. They declared something about him. They made a statement about him. They were a proof about

him. Now, this verse taken by itself and taken out of context could mean, or at least it certainly seemed to mean that Abraham was saved, he was justified by his works, which would completely contradict what Paul teaches in the book of Romans and in the book of Galatians. In Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 he cites Moses. In Genesis 15:6, “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Faith was the means to righteousness, and in Galatians 3:16, he writes that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, since by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. This verse, taken in isolation out of context would seem to contradict all of that. In fact, it would if we took it in the sense that you’re saved by works, but there’s no contradiction, as we said earlier in the lesson, because Paul and James are not referring to the same thing. They’re referring to two different events.

Paul cited, as I said, Genesis 15:6, when Abraham was initially justified, when he was saved having believed God’s promise. James is citing something completely different. He’s citing Genesis 22, an event that occurred some 30 years later, after Abraham had been justified and saved. So, there are two different events, and the event that James is citing here of Genesis 22 is an event that **tested** the reality of Abraham’s faith, the faith that he had exercised in Genesis 15, and his obedience later in chapter 22 proved that the faith of chapter 15 was real faith. If you’ll remember from the account that *[break in audio]* in Genesis 22, when Abraham is about to slay Isaac, and he’s got him bound on the altar and he is ready to do it, he was determined to do it, he had done it in his mind, in effect, and he was about to plunge the knife into his son. The angel stops him before that happens and the angel says, “Now I know that you fear God.”

What that means is his obedience to the Lord proved his fear, his devotion, his trust, his faith in the Lord. His obedience proved that, and so his works justified him as a man of faith. So, James, in this text, he is not defining the method of justification, as Paul was careful to do in Romans and in Galatians. He was disproving the notion that saving faith can be a non-working faith, that it can be an inactive faith. Abraham’s obedience, his works, didn’t earn his justification. That occurred 30 years before. His works were the fruit of his faith, and they confirmed his justification. That’s the point that James makes in verse 22. He says, “Faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.” Abraham proves that faith and works go together, they’re inseparable. They can’t be separated.

They work together. It was faith that enabled Abraham to be obedient and to pass such a huge test, this colossal test of offering up his son on the altar, which would seem to nullify the very promise that God had made to him and that he had believed in in Genesis 15, but he had faith.

The author of Hebrews elaborates on that faith, that he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead, but it's that faith that enabled him to be obedient, to pass such a great test. His faith was working with or his faith was working in his works. Works is the goal of faith. It's the object of faith. It's what faith is to produce. Genuine faith is a living faith, and so it produces living things in the sense or in the form of actions and obedience, and so James says that by these works, Abraham's faith was perfected. He doesn't mean by that that Abraham's faith was previously weak or it was inadequate and that it became strong by his works, but that his faith was brought to its fullest, its completion with his works.

As I said, that's the goal of faith. Faith is to be active. Faith is to be obedient. Faith is to produce a life of obedience, a life of works, righteousness, and so having faith, justifying faith is made complete, it reaches its goal by works just as a tree is made full and beautiful by the production of leaves and fruit. It's completed by that. That's the object and the goal and the purpose of the tree, and so, too, with Abraham's faith. It was made complete. It was made perfect in that way through the obedience that resulted from it, and it produced.

James then quotes Genesis 15:6 in verse 23, and he says that it was fulfilled by the obedience of Genesis 22, and what he means by that is that text, that Scripture in Genesis 15 was completed. The faith of that passage of Genesis 15 was brought to its completion, its fulfillment in the events of Genesis 22. The natural outworking of Abraham's faith in Genesis 15 was obedience in Genesis 22. This is the natural result of genuine faith of that justifying faith in Genesis 15, so the test of his faith brought out the character of his faith. That's what tests do for us. They challenge our faith and they cause our faith to show itself to be real and vital, and that's what Abraham's faith did, that's what happened to it with this great test, the greatest test of his life at the end there in chapter 22. It brought out, it brought to fullness that genuine saving faith that he had all along, and, in doing that, that act of obedience vindicated God's act of justifying him some 30 years before.

Well, to put it another way, Abraham was justified by his faith, and Abraham's faith was justified by his works, proven to be real. God in justifying him was vindicated by Abraham's obedience. He was a man of complete faith. James adds, “He was called the friend of God,” which is another way of saying that he was right with God. He didn't earn his favor with God, he didn't win God's friendship; he was God's friend all along. You see that as you go through Abraham's life. Go back to chapter 18 and you'll remember Abraham is met by these three angels and entertains them, and then two of them go on to Sodom and Gomorrah. The third remains, and it's evidently a _____ of our Lord, and there the Lord takes Abraham into his confidence and he told him what he was going to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”

Well, he shows there that Abraham was his friend, and God does call Abraham His friend. His friend, as we see, because He brought him into his confidence. He spoke to him about the things that He was to do. It's very similar to what our Lord did with his disciples in the upper room. You'll remember in John 15:15, the Lord said, “No longer do I call you slaves ... but I have called you friends, for all the things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” The mark of their friendship, of that aspect, that relationship that they had with Him which He calls friendship is that He disclosed things to them. He disclosed God's purpose. He revealed things.

That's what God did with Abraham in chapter 18, so Abraham was God's friend all along. He didn't become God's friend in chapter 22. The things that he did, the obedience that he showed didn't make him God's friend. He didn't win God's friendship by offering up Isaac. He proved his friendship by acting as a friend of God, acting the way a friend of God should act, which is to trust Him and to obey Him. So, all of these things prove the reality of who Abraham is, has proved that he is a friend of God. They demonstrated that the faith that saved back in chapter 15 was a genuine faith, a real faith.

James now addresses his readers with this evidence, and he asks them to draw a conclusion from *[break in audio]* draw the right conclusion from what he has said, from the evidence he's put forth. “You see,” he says, “That a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” Again, James isn't denying here that justification is by faith alone. What he is saying is that a faith that justifies is not a faith that is alone.

It's a real faith. It's a living faith. Faith is the human response to the divine initiative. It is our answer to God's call, and God doesn't call us to an inactive life. He calls us to a life of activity, He calls us to a life of obedience, so genuine faith is obedient faith. It is alive. It is a working faith.

Now, James might have stopped here. This would have been a legitimate place to end his argument, but he adds another example in verse 25 to show that this principle of faith works is universal. He cites the example of Rahab. She his very different from Abraham. She is the opposite. She's a woman, a gentile, and a harlot, completely different from Abraham. Tasker in his commentary said that James seems conscious that in Rahab he is taking an example from the bottom end of the social ladder. That's probably what he's doing. But, from top to bottom what he's saying is this principle that I'm setting forth here of active faith, of faith that works, is true for everyone. Everyone who is saved, every genuine believer is a person who acts in obedience, demonstrates the reality of his or her faith in what he or she does, and so he says in verse 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?”

Now, James doesn't refer to her faith here. You know the story. She was a woman of Jericho, and Jericho was the first city to fall in the conquest on the west side of the Jordan River. Spies went into the land and into the city, and she received them into her house and she protected them, and then she sent them out another way when the men of the city became aware of their presence, and so she protected them and sent them off. Now, he speaks of that but he doesn't speak of her faith, and he didn't really need to do that because his readers certainly knew of the faith of Rahab. She's very prominent in their history. But the faith of Rahab is set forth very clearly in Joshua 2:11 where she said to the messengers, “The Lord your God is God in heaven above and in earth beneath,” so she was a true believer in Yahweh. She trusted in Him.

But her faith was not a useless faith. It was not a dead faith. It was not a barren faith. It was fruitful, and that's demonstrated in her response. Her faith created within her a desire to further the purpose of the Lord, even though it meant the demise of her city and her nation. She had a new city that she was looking toward, if we could put it in that way. She had a new people. She had a new god that she was trusting in, and so because of her faith in Him, she was moved to promote His

purpose, and so she helped the spies by sending them out by another way. The verb that's used there is rather strong. It means to cast out, so it's a strong way of saying she helped them, she put great energy and effort into sparing these men. Her works were aggressive in that sense as an expression of her faith.

Well, James concludes, following this second example of a faith that works, with an act of faith and gives the conclusion to this discussion in verse 26 with a very striking analogy. “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” Dead and useless, and not saving faith, an inactive faith. A faith that is intellectual only is like a lifeless corpse, and just as a body has no independent life apart from the spirit, so too faith has no independence apart from works, which is to address that objection as made back in verse 18 to say, “Well, they can exist separately.” A person can have faith and a person can have works, the two can exist without being connected. “No,” James says, “That cannot be.” The faith that has no works, has no life. It's like a body without a spirit. A body cannot exist independently of the spirit, and faith that's genuine cannot be without being active and being vital. Faith and works are inseparable.

Saving faith is active, and I suspect that he's directing this to these people who are not merciful, the people that he addressed in the first part of the chapter, and he's saying, in effect, if you have a genuine faith, if you're truly a born-again individual, you're going to be a merciful person. All of this fits quite consistently with what our Lord said in Matthew 7. He spoke along the same lines, and in verses 16 through 20 He said, “You will know them by their fruits.” As He points out, a bad tree produces bad fruit, and a good tree produces good fruit. Faith that's genuine will manifest itself in the way a person lives and the conduct of that person. We were not saved to be idle; we were saved to be obedient, through a life of obedience and a life of service to a Christ-like life, and that is what all of us need to be striving for.

This is one way God stirs us up to do that. To persevere in the faith and to be active in the faith is by reminding us of the kind of people we're to be, and that's what James was doing with his audience, and so may God use the same thing, the statements that James has made, the exhortations that he's given to do the same with us that we might have a productive faith, a fruitful faith, and, to be specific, that we might be the kind of people that don't show favoritism and are merciful to those around us. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the truth of this text. We, left to ourselves, would tend to be idle and not exercise the kind of activity and response to others that we should, but genuine faith, saving faith is faith that's active. It shows itself, it manifests itself, and so we pray that you would cause us to be that kind of people, people who are merciful, who are obedient to you, and manifest Christ in our lives. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.