




Face in a Mirror: A Study in the Letter of James



Part 4 of 7
October 30, 2022



Oct 30 Chapter 2 Part II

Nov 6 Chapter 3

Nov 13 Chapter 4

Nov 20 Chapter 5

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Review - Chapter I Part I

25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Review - Chapter I Part II

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Review Chapter II Part I

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

Compare James 2:1-4 and 2:14-17

1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

1. Serving the poor, especially in Christian community, is evidence of true faith
2. Dead faith cannot save.
3. Reasons why faith without works is dead
 - a. Faith and works can't be separated.
 - b. Even demons believe the right things about God
 - c. People who demonstrated true faith through action
 - i. Abraham
 - ii. Rahab

James 2:18

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

James 2:19

19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

James 2:20-24

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?
21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

Paul vs James Part I

Romans 4

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

Genesis 15

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

2 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” 5 He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 22

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Abraham's life

1. Genesis 15 - call of Abraham and promise of a son
2. Some time (decades?) later, Isaac is born
3. Some time (decades?) later, Abraham is tested
4. Genesis 22 - testing of Abraham

Romans 4 - Abraham's response of faith to God's promise of blessing (Gen 15)

James 5 - Abraham's faith lived out in obedience (Gen 22)

1. Abraham was declared righteous (justified) when he believed in God's covenant promises. (Paul's emphasis)
2. That righteous status before God was "fulfilled" or demonstrated through obedience (James's emphasis)

=> Abraham was justified through true, living faith, which resulted in faithful works

=> This is the only kind of faith that saves

Paul vs James Part II

Romans 3

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

James 2

24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

Different views:

1. Both Paul and James are talking about true faith, with different emphases
 - a. What Paul is rejecting is reliance on works to earn right standing with God.
 - i. Rather it is true faith in God, not merit earned through works that makes us right with God.
 - b. What James is rejecting is empty belief that makes no difference to how we live our lives.
 - i. Rather true faith in God which justifies and saves us will lead to faithful action.
2. Paul is talking about our initial justification and James is talking about our ultimate justification at the end of the age.

James 2:25

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

Joshua 2

2 The king of Jericho was told, “Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.”

3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.”

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 “Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.

Prayer