

Seoul Grace Community

The Book of James: A Life that Fears or a A Faith that Lives

James 2:14-26

February 7, 2016

1. Introduction

- a. James here appears to contradict the teaching that Christians are saved by faith alone and not the good works they do.
- b. The issue for James is that we are really known to be saved by what we show and do.
 - i. James is most concerned about how our convictions/beliefs translate into actions—most notably to the poor, widowed, orphaned and disadvantaged
 - ii. He's not advocating that we are saved by our performance but rather that what we do shows what we claim to believe.

2. A Life That Fears

- a. He starts with a stark admission: even the demons believe (v.19)
 - i. Jonathan Edwards preached: That which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace."
 - 1. The argument is that you can believe, have sound doctrine, and still not have a personal relationship with God
 - 2. James is stating that even demons know and acknowledge God—they even know him by name (c.f. Matthew 8: What have you to do with us, o Son of God?)
 - ii. Nothing is wrong with doctrine and it's incredibly important to know what you believe. But you could have all the right beliefs and still be no more than demons!
- b. More than that. They are scared of him.
 - i. Their belief gives them fear of God.
 - ii. But this word is only used here in James 2:19—fear, not respect necessarily. Meaning to shudder or bristle
 - 1. *Phobos* is more often used for "Fear" translated as awe or reverence in the New Testament
 - 2. Psychologically, a phobia is just that—an inordinate fear based on inordinate respect
 - iii. The demons' fear is not out of respect but a shuddering fear—of consequence, retribution, obligation
 - 1. We tend to operate out of fear—performance, shame, guilt, doctrine, obedience.
 - 2. We can have all the answers and be no better than the demons.
 - 3. We can live morally upright lives and still be no better than demons because we are operating out of a place of fear—fear of being exposed for who we really are, fear of not doing well enough, fear of failure—many fears grip us and tend to lead us to a life of performance.

3. A Faith That Lives

- a. Then how do we know we have a living faith? James is concerned about faith that is dead (v. 20)
 - i. Signs of living fruit? It's alive towards other people. V14. If someone is without clothes and we do nothing about it what good is it? If we get into the presence of poor and broken people and show indifference than we have no living faith.
- b. Belief can shudder. We can be moved by fear and guilt.
 - i. But remember, God chose the poor.
 - ii. If we have a living faith we know we are poor ourselves. We must grow in compassion to those who are naked and coming to thee for dress.
 - iii. He gives an example of Rahab. She was a prostitute—racial and religious outsider. And yet she had compassion for the spies. How radical.
 - iv. Are we growing in this way? If not then we are just claiming to have faith.
- c. His ultimate proof or example: Abraham.
 - i. Called God's friend.
 - ii. A dead faith will obey God for what you get out of him but Abraham was going to lose everything.

1. His prized jewel was Isaac, his son. He was clutching onto Isaac.
 2. And God was going to wrestle away the very pride of his life. He was going to take the very thing Abraham found value in. (His lineage. His name. His legacy.)
 3. Abraham knew God wanted to be his friend
 4. To call someone a true friend means we live for their smile.
 5. Abraham was a friend like this. No benefit needed. Just needed a friend.
 - a. God was after his love. He just wanted a relationship.
 - b. Do we just shudder? A reaction meant for a benefit?
 - c. Or are we changed? Do we get goosebumps? Do we have a friendship with our God that moves us into action? That's living faith.
- d. How do you get rid of a life of fear and opt for a friendship of living faith?
- i. What gets rid of fear? Courage? No! (Perfect love casts out all fear) (1 John 4:18)
 - ii. How do you know Jesus is your friend? Because he gave his life for yours
 1. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13
 2. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. John 10:18