**Sincere Faith:**

*An Exposition of the Book of James*

**Sermon Eight:** Sincere Belief *[James 2:14-26]*

July 25, 2021

**Opening ILL:** If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, swims like a duck…it’s probably a duck. \*\*Test this\*\* name some characteristics of animals and see what the congregation guesses. What is somebody who claims to be a believer and lives like an unbeliever? Probably an unbeliever. What is somebody who claims to be a believer and lives like a believer. Probably a believer.

1. **Introduction:** 
   1. **What was our focus last week?**
      1. We talked about how quick we are to excuse our sin.
      2. We talked about how easy it is to be a sinner and how hard it is to obey.
   2. **What will we talk about today?**
      1. What about fruitless (so-called) faith?
      2. Should we expect that a Christian life will be a changed life?
      3. Should we expect conversion to affect our way of living?

**Quote:** "It is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that there is a vast quantity of so-called Christianity nowadays which you cannot declare positively unsound, but which, nonetheless, is not full measure, good weight and sixteen ounces to the pound. It is a Christianity in which there is undeniably something about Christ, something of grace, something about faith, and something about repentance and something about holiness; but it is not the real thing as it is in the Bible. J. C. Ryle, Holiness, page 13

1. **An All-Too-Common Situation (James 2:14)**

**Quote:** “It is a kind of practical blasphemy to veil an impure life under a profession of faith; for we do, as it were, tack on and fasten the errors and excesses of our lives upon religion…There is less dishonor brought to God by open opposition, then by profession used as a cover and excuse for profaneness.” Thomas Manton

* 1. **The insincere profession of faith—***If someone says he has faith*
     1. Notice that this is not “If someone has faith.”
        1. True faith saves. We are saved by faith alone.
           1. Latin phrase: *Sola fides justicat, sed non fides quae est sola*
        2. We are not saved by saying we have faith. We are saved by having faith.
           1. Manton quote: “Words are cheap, compliments cost nothing; and will you serve God with that which costeth nothing?” Works, vol 4, page 236
           2. **1 John 3:18** Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.
  2. **The insufficient product of faith—***But has no works*
     1. What are we describing here?
        1. A so-called faith that does not lead us to any work.
     2. Does your Christianity do anything in you?
        1. Does it make you think differently?
        2. Does it make you act differently?
  3. **The inadequate power of “that” faith—***Can that faith save him?*
     1. The issue here is “that” faith
        1. Anaphoric use of the article.
        2. What faith?
           1. A supposed faith that doesn’t do anything.
     2. The assumed answer here is “no”.

**Point:** Do we not see this all the time? Examples: Faithless funerals, fruitless Christians. Does Christianity really DO anything in us/to us?

1. **A Rhetorical Scenario (James 2:15-17)**
   1. **The Circumstances (vv. 15-16)**
      1. I hope it works out for you!
         1. If we see a need and refuse to do something under the guise of “faith”…what good is that?
         2. This doesn’t mean that prayer doesn’t help…if prayer is a sincere expression of faith.
         3. This doesn’t mean that you are useless without the means to help.
         4. This means that if you have the means to help and you feign faith as an excuse NOT to help, what good is that feigned faith?

**ILL:** This would be like waving money at a starving person and expecting that to fill his belly! “The belly is not filled with words, or the back clothed with wishes. This but like that mad person that thought to pay his debts with the noise of money, and instead of opening his purse, shaked it.” Manton, vol 4, page 235

* + 1. What’s the point?
       1. Sincere concern is shown in actions when those actions are within the realm of possibility.
          1. If you see the need to help, and you have the means to help, and you refuse to help, you cannot say that the reason you refuse to help is that you are too spiritual.

**ILL:** I share this illustration to my own shame! “I really need someone to mow the lawn.” When I was a lowly intern and youth leader at a church, before Seminary, I had asked this man whose wife had just died, “Do you need anything?” He responded, “I really need someone to mow the lawn.” I was way too interested in spiritual things to actually help…and I have regretted it for more than 20 years!

* 1. **The Comparison (v. 17)**
     1. Likewise, faith without works is dead.
     2. What does this mean?
        1. This means that any supposed faith that doesn’t do anything isn’t worth anything.
        2. This means that any supposed faith that doesn’t produce anything in us and through us is not genuine, saving faith.

1. **A Possible Objection (James 2:18a)**
   1. **Some people are “faith” people and some people are “works” people.**
      1. What’s true about this?
         1. Obviously, all of us are stronger on one side of this: We are either mainly “doers” or mainly focused on the internal realities of discipleship, affections, etc.
      2. What’s wrong with this?
         1. Sincere faith works.
         2. Sincere (genuine, Christian) works are only motivated by sincere faith.
2. **A Proper Response (James 2:18b-25)**
   1. **How can you show faith without works?**
      1. A disingenuous faith cannot be shown.
      2. A Sincere faith cannot be hidden.
   2. **Your bare-bones, basic orthodoxy is no better than what the demons have!**
      1. The demons are orthodox in their theology…they know better!
      2. The demons are emotional in their anxiety…they feel terror!
      3. The demons are dead in their rebellion…they refuse to honor Christ!

**Quote:** “Never rest in the devils’ faith…They believe there is a God, that there is a Christ, that Christ died for sinners. A Christian is to exceed and go beyond devils...Is it not a notable check to atheistical thoughts, [to ask,] “should I be worse than devils?”

* 1. **Was Abraham’s faith simply a momentary, emotional, internal experience?**
     1. What is James getting at here?
     2. Does James disagree with Paul?
        1. No. James’ focus is different that Paul’s was.
        2. No. Both Paul and James affirm that we are saved by a sincere faith.
        3. No. Both Paul and James affirm that sincere faith works.
  2. **What about Rahab the Harlot?**
     1. What is James’ point here?
     2. How does this affect us?
  3. **Faith without works is dead!**
     1. Dead faith is insincere faith.
     2. Dead faith is fake faith.
     3. Dead faith is not saving faith.

1. **Conclusions**
   1. **Does your practice match your profession?**
      1. Is your soul something you took care of years ago, and now you are just coasting?
      2. If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict?
   2. **Does your believe affect your behavior?**
      1. Is Jesus, the church, and spiritual things simply a Sunday thing?
      2. Can you really believe if you don’t do anything?
         1. Again, we are not talking about perfection, but production.
         2. Some fruit trees produce more than others, but they are both the same kind of tree.
   3. **How must I respond?**
      1. Look in
      2. Look up
      3. Look around

**Quote:** “If sin is subtle, watchful, strong, and always at work in the business of killing our souls, and we are slothful, negligent, and foolish in this battle, can we expect a favorable outcome? There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed upon…There is no safety but in a constant warfare for those who desire deliverance from sin’s perplexing rebellion.” John Owen