



James 2:14 Reviewing Biblical Faith!

July 12, 2015

Text: James 2:14

- Since it has been awhile since we've discussed faith, I thought it would be prudent to review biblical faith before we walk through James 2:14-26.
- These verses in James are so needful right now. Christians have not been called to withdraw from culture but to engage; not to run away afraid but to fight; not blend in but be a light on a hill! Faith without works is dead!
- But, biblical "work" takes biblical faith, which is why it is SO important that faith is understood.
- The Greek word for faith in these verses is *pistis*, which primarily means "a firm persuasion."
- Amen! How badly we need a "firm persuasion" in Christ and His Word right now! ☺
- Next week, we start the exegesis. This week, let us all be clear on what true faith actually is.

Understanding Biblical Faith: A Review (March 2012)

1. In context, James has said the believer must count all things joy, ask in faith without doubt, remain steadfast under trial, endure temptation, hear and do the Word, serve widows and orphans and keep oneself unspotted from the world, show no partiality, and walk in the Law of Liberty! This kind of life requires **faith!** ☺
2. Saints, we must also remember that we are fighting a **spiritual war**. And this war is ugly, vicious, and out to blaspheme Christ's name and destroy Christian foundations. This too requires that we fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). Sadly...
 - a. Too many people trivialize the nature of faith. It has become too personal and less Kingdom-oriented. What I mean is much of our believing God is for us, not against demons and devils and for the advancement of God's truth.
 - b. As John MacArthur rightly put it, "To ask in Jesus' name does not mean to tack such an expression on the end of a prayer as a mere formula. It means: 1) the believer's prayer should be for God's purposes and Kingdom and not selfish reasons; 2) the believer's prayer should be on the basis of God's merits and not any personal merit or worthiness; and 3) the believer's prayer should be in pursuit of His glory alone."
 - c. Of course there is nothing wrong with laying our petitions before God, but the key is our **motive**. Is it for His glory? Is it for the Kingdom? Is it to display His wonder before unbelievers?
 - d. Without this understanding of faith, God becomes our personal waiter instead of the King of Kings who commands an advancing army for His own glory! Look at a primary direction for faith:

Eph 6:10-13 (ESV) - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

3. We must understand our own **limitations**.
 - a. In fact, understanding this is key to living a life of faith. Why?
 - b. Have you ever bumped into your own limitations? Have you ever realized that you couldn't do it (whatever "it" is) on your own? Are you honest enough to admit that you need in your life each day, "the power of Jesus Christ?"
 - c. I know this is contrary to popular teaching, but understanding your own frailty is **fundamental** to biblical faith!
 - d. **Understanding that we are nothing and that He is everything is fundamental to biblical faith, and as a result, pleasing and glorifying our Lord!**

*John 15:5-8 (ESV) – I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, **for apart from me you can do nothing**. (6) If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (7) If you abide in me, **and my words abide in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (8) By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. [Emphasis mine]*

4. From the place of limitation, we can rightly embrace **biblical** faith.
 - a. We must first understand that “we are NOT, yet HE IS.” ☺ This is the first step of faith.
 - b. True faith towards God is rooted in brokenness, in humility, in a desire for His will. Then we can approach Him with right understanding...

1Jn 5:14-15 ESV And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (15) And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

5. So, biblical faith **asks, believes, and trusts!**
 - a. Here is the process, and you’ll find this totally true if you are honest:
 1. *We ask God for what we desire of Him...*
 2. *We believe that God can do anything...*
 3. *We trust in His complete and total sovereignty over any situation!*
 - b. Unbiblical faith stops at the first two points: asking and believing. Amazingly, it negates the “trusting” of God, and many times unknowingly says, “Lord, I don’t trust you to do what is best for me. Therefore Lord, do what I want!”
 - c. Unbiblical faith refuses to acknowledge that in our asking and believing, sometimes God says **no** (this friends, requires trust!!!).
 - d. Even our Lord prayed, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* (Mat 26:39 ESV) **How can that then be an unbiblical prayer?**
 - e. Unbiblical faith often finds its impetus in **selfishness** or in more difficult cases, pain and desperation. But here is a clue: even in one’s pain, *you know a thought is trending away from Scripture when it exalts the desires of man over the desires of God Himself.*
 - f. **Therefore biblical faith is not a trust in anything worldly or man-centered; biblical faith ultimately finds its root in a firm trust in a loving, sovereign God.**

6. Biblical faith embraces the **sovereignty** of God.
 - a. Although this is hard for those taught the heretical prosperity brand of faith over the last several decades, here is biblical faith + sovereignty:
 1. The truth is that faith is "the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). The word "assurance" is from the Greek *hypostasis*, which simply means "a confidence." True faith simply knows that God has a plan, agreeing that His plan is best, and trusting in Him fully for the execution of His plan, not ours. I love the way Solomon put it:

Pro 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (KJV)

2. This is critical, because many times, we ask “wrongly, to spend it on our passions” (James 4:3).
3. So it is not what we want, but what He wants. That is faith. Living a life of complete surrender requires extreme levels of faith. Interestingly, when we read the rest of Hebrews 11 and examine what the heroes of faith trusted God for; we find without exception that God's will (not their own) was their priority.

4. And just as interesting, we find that although some prospered in their circumstances, some *"died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."* (Heb 11:13).
5. Others *"were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."* (Heb 11:35-40 ESV)

Trust means Work!

1. If we truly believe that God hears us when we ask, and that His answers are perfect (because He is sovereign), then what is stopping us from working?
2. Our Lord **petitioned** the Father, believed the Father, and trusted the Father. Therefore he worked...

Joh 4:34 ESV Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."

Joh 5:17 ESV But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

Joh 9:4 ESV We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

Joh 6:38 ESV For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

3. This is our example! It is not results that drive us; love for God drives us! It is not outcomes that stop us. Fear stops us!
4. God is God! He is sovereign! His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable! ☺

Col 1:16-17 ESV For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

5. **Therefore friends, we can trust Him! We can go to work! We can preach and live out the Gospel! We can reform our families and church! We can be light in a world of darkness, fearing NO evil and no persecution! Truly, let us...**

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. (4) Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (5) Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. (6) He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. (7) Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! (8) Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. (9) For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. (10) In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. (11) But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. Psa 37:3-11 ESV

I'll say it again: biblical faith asks, believes, and trusts. This sort of faith gives us peace, is inspired by love, and pushes us to work the works of Him who saved us.

May Christ be honored in our attempts to trust Him. Amen!