

THROUGH THE BIBLE: JAMES 1-2

I live in the middle of a forest, on a wooded lot. And right after we moved in, I noticed these indentations all over the yard. At first I didn't know what they were.

I thought some kind of rodent was burrowing into the pine straw. Finally, it dawned on me, these were tracks.

I knew some big critters were hiding nearby, *but I had never seen them*. They were nocturnal.

Then late one night I met them, eating crabapples off a tree in the front yard. Evidently the suburban sprawl had forced them out into the open. A family of deer were migrating back and forth across my yard.

But I saw the tracks, long before I saw the deer.

I could tell you a unicorn lives in my backyard... Or Bigfoot... Or a herd of wild buffalo criss-cross my yard... *But with no tracks would you believe me?*

Real animals leave tracks. Imaginary animals don't.

And the same is true with faith!

Real faith leaves behind tracks. It doesn't just exist in a person's imagination. It's not just a product of self-deception, or wishful thinking... *you can see its tracks!*

And this is the theme of the book of James... *faith leaves tracks!* In fact, it leaves behind multiple tracks...

Faith shows up in how we handle trials, temptation, money... It's more than intentions, it provokes action...

It effects how you treat folks less fortunate... Faith works... It effects *how you talk* and *what you say*... It doesn't conform to the world, but seeks wisdom from above... It walks humbly, and prays fervently... Faith connects with other believers in meaningful ways...

Real faith shows up in real life!

And if your faith doesn't leave tracks... *perhaps it's a unicorn faith*. It's a nice sentiment. It's wishful thinking.

It's a heirloom of the past... *but the faith you claim to have doesn't exist!* It's pretend. It's an imaginary faith.

The book of James was written to expose a unicorn faith. If faith is real you'll see its tracks all over your life!

Chapter 1 begins, "**James...**" *But which James?* I can think of a lot of folks named James. In fact, here's the **Top Ten Most Famous People Named James...**

10) King James, 9) James Taylor, 8) James Bond, 7) Jesse James, 6) James Dobson, 5) James Earl Jones, 4) The James Gang, 3) Lebron James, 2) James Brown... And the real King of Soul... 1) Pastor James!

There're also a few men in the Bible named "**James.**"

Two of the 12 apostles were called "**James**" - the **son of Alphaeus** - and the **son of Zebedee**. Zebedee's boy was martyred by King Herod in Acts 12 - in 44 AD.

Most Bible scholars believe the author of the book of James was the half-brother of our Lord. Matthew 13:55 tells us Mary had kids after Jesus – four boys and at least two girls. The oldest was named "**James.**"

But this means James had some initial doubts.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, John 7:5 tells us, that "even His brothers did not believe in Him."

I'm sure James looked up to his big brother, but imagine having to admit your sibling is the Son of God. There's a maxim, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Jesus and James played in the sandbox - on the same Little League team - worked in the same carpenter's shop.

Imagine growing up in Jesus' shadow? James could never stack up. Like a lot of younger brothers, he might've carried a resentful chip on his shoulders.

Yet we know what opened his eyes! In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us that after Jesus' resurrection He made several special appearances. One visit was to His half-brother, James. Jesus cared about his kid brother.

And when James realized that Jesus had conquered death it suddenly dawned on him why Jesus always made A+s in conduct. **He was God!** Instantly, James went from a *doubting brother* to a *devoted believer!*

And James grew rapidly in his faith. In short order he became the leader of the church at Jerusalem. In Acts 15, it was James who took charge at the Church Council. He was known as a man of extreme devotion.

He had a nickname, "*James the Just.*"

Eusebius, the early church historian, made the following statement. "James used to enter alone into the Temple and be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for the

people, so that his knees grew hard like a camel's because of his constant worship of God."

In 62 AD James died a martyr's death. The Jews took him to the highest point of the Temple – *without a parachute!* They ordered him to recant his faith before all the people. Instead he boldly preach the Gospel.

The Jews were so angry they pushed him off the pinnacle of the Temple. When he survived the fall, they beat him to death with clubs, as he knelt and prayed.

When James says, "**Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...**" there was some street cred behind his words! James' faith left some deep tracks in his life!

He introduces himself, "**James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.**" Recall James is the blood brother of the Lord - on his mother's side.

If a family affiliation ever counted this would be the time! James could've flaunted his status. He could've called himself, "*the Savior's closest sibling...*" or "*the kid brother of God...*" Instead, he refers to himself as "***a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.***"

Rather than name drop, and pull rank - He's content to be a servant. After spending his whole life in Jesus' shadow, this is his chance to take advantage of the relationship. But no way. James is only a servant.

James knew that like everyone else, he was a sinner saved by grace. It was honor enough to be "**a love-slave**" – "***a bondservant***" of His Lord! James now worshipped and served the Brother he once resented.

And he writes, “**To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.**” Twice in the OT, Israel was conquered by invading empires, and scattered across foreign lands. Many Jews never returned home. Little Jewish communities sprang up around the world.

But as the Gospel spread it reached these dispersed communities, and many Jews believed in Jesus. James wants to write them a letter of encouragement.

The fact that James’ letter is addressed exclusively to the twelve tribes of Israel could mean it was written prior to the Gospel reaching the Gentiles. James may’ve been written as early as 45 AD - which would make it one of the first NT books actually penned!

And James cuts right to the chase. He speaks to the felt need of his audience. For no matter where they lived, the first believers were strangers in a strange land. They were blazing a new trail. Cutting a path where there was no path. The Christian way of life was sure to stand out and draw fire. You can bet the early Christians suffered heavy trials for their faith in Jesus.

Which is where James starts. Verse 2, “**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...**”

Notice it’s not “**IF** you fall into trials...” but “**WHEN** you fall into various trials.” All Christians face trials!

I wish I could tell you being a Christian immunizes you from hardship, *but it doesn’t*. James says “**various trials**” will arise - not just one type from one source...

Sometimes we suffer from our own mistakes... At other times the suffering is unjust... On other occasions the specific reason is a mystery, other than we live in a fallen world... and at times, we suffer for Jesus' sake...

We suffer "*various trials.*" This is why we shouldn't fret over the source, but rather fixate on its purpose.

This is how James can tell us to "*count it all joy...*"

The New English Translation puts it, "Consider it *nothing but joy* when you fall into all sorts of trials..."

The Phillips NT renders it, "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives... don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!"

"*Nothing but joy...*" "*Welcome (trials) as friends...*" Are you kidding? Let me repeat, the only reason to be happy over a trial is if you're locked in on its purpose...

Which is why James says, "*knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*" Trials produce "*patience*" - endurance.

The Greek word is "*hupomone*" - "to remain under" - "to stick it out" - "to persevere." Trials are resistance training. When our faith is pushed it grows stronger.

And it's endurance - a long obedience in the same direction - that matures or perfects God's work in us.

Real faith grows only under pressure. It's been said, "*No one sharpens a knife on a stick of butter.*" You need friction. And God uses trials to sharpen our faith.

For a time seafood distributors who shipped codfish from New England to markets across the country had a problem. In the beginning, they tried to ship frozen cod, but the freezing process robbed the meat of its flavor.

The answer was to ship the fish alive, in a tank of seawater. But even then the fish arrived mushy and tasteless. That's when someone had an idea...

The cod's natural enemy is the catfish. So a couple of catfish were placed in the tank with the cod. All the while the cod were on the road, they were chased by the catfish. The vigilance it took to survive the catfish, kept the cod as fresh and delicious as when caught.

This is what trials do for our faith. God dumps a catfish or two in our tank so our faith won't get flabby.

Note verse 3, James says the Christian "*knows*" this truth. The word implies an intuitive knowledge. *Why would Christians know that trials produce endurance?*

Every Christian has been to the cross, and at the cross of Christ, God turned the *worst trial* into the *supreme triumph*. The heart of our salvation teaches us that God works miracles through trials! It's His way!

Every miracle in the Bible began as a problem.

Recall Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to the idol, and were thrown into a fiery furnace.

But all that burned were the ropes that bound them.

And this is the result of trials and tribulations in the life of the believer. God uses the fire not to burn us, but to burn off the superfluous stuff that's holding us back.

Verse 5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” If you’re in the midst of a trial ask God for wisdom not to waste the trial. Ask Him to show you what you’re suppose to learn by the trial.

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” Doubt is spiritual flip-flop. I trust God, but I don’t. I trust, then I worry. James compares doubt to an ocean wave that’s governed by tides and winds - by circumstances. Real faith is unaffected by the situation.

“For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord...” Write it down, *Doubt takes you out from under God’s spout*. Doubt will cause you to miss out on God’s blessing. Doubt is a robber!

Verse 8 says of the doubter, “he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” The Greek phrase is “double-minded.” It means, “facing two directions.”

In his classic allegory, “*Pilgrims Progress*,” John Bunyan refers to a doubter as “*Mr. Facing-both-ways*.”

He refuses to decide. He’s a fence-straddler.

On Monday he walks with God, but by Friday he’s sucked back into sinful pleasures. And in facing both directions he’s giving 100% to neither. He needs to be “*all in*.” He’s *an unhappy saint and a miserable sinner*.

Verse 9, “Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.” In Christ we’re all on equal ground... the poor man is rich spiritually - and the rich man realizes his material wealth means little spiritually.

Money has no effect on a person's spiritual status.

No less of an authority on the subject of finance than the Wall Street Journal once printed, "Money is a universal provider of everything except happiness, and a universal passport to everywhere but heaven."

"For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits." Some of you ladies received roses for Valentines. It's less than a month later and I'll bet they've withered. You've thrown out.

Their beauty is temporary, and so is this life.

Shakespeare penned, "Golden lads and girls all must, as chimney-sweepers, come to dust." Death is the great equalizer. When it's your time to die all the money in the world won't buy you God's approval.

Verse 12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." In heaven a special crown will be awarded those believers who endured temptation.

Crowns belong to royalty - *people who rule*. Crowns are worn by members of the ruling class. And it's true spiritually. *Aren't you tired of being a slave to the sin?*

God wants us to live free, and overcome our sin. The power to resist temptation is a track or mark of faith.

Verse 13, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” You’ll never overcome sin, if you blame God for your failures.

Don’t play the *blame game!* I’ve heard folks talk like God was suppose to reach down and grab them by the britches and pull them out of the temptation. Not so, in a *temptation situation* its your choice what you do.

And sin is a progression... “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” Get ensnared in a web of temptation, and its nobody’s fault but yours. The chief culprit is your lust.

It was Luther who said, “Evil thoughts are like birds. I can’t keep them from flying over my head, but I can prevent them from nesting in my hair.” I can keep from dwelling on an evil thought - mulling it over, savoring it.

For “when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin...” When an evil inclination you’ve harbored inside meets with an opportunity on the outside a full-blown evil action results. The sin comes out into the open.

When the egg of desire is fertilized by an opportunity for sin - then presto you’ve got a baby on your hands. And hiding you sin is about as difficult as hiding a baby.

“And sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

If you never repent and turn from the *act of sin* death results. Your life spins spirals downward. *Full-blown* sin turns into a *full-grown* lifestyle of wickedness.

Sin is a slippery slope that ends in destruction. Hey, sin always results in unintended consequences.

One day you wake up in *a place you never wanted to go - with people you dislike - suffering ramifications you didn't plan - facing a future you never dreamed...*

Verse 16-17, **“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”**

Here's the key to victory in *a temptation situation...* **You won't say yes to sin if you're convinced that everything good and perfect comes from God.**

Satan runs a second-hand shop. Why settle for seconds, when God supplies the best? Each of the devil's temptations is a short-cut. Trust in God's way.

Once an impulsive buyer froze his credit cards in a block of ice. Before he could make a purchase he had to wait until the ice melted. It gave him time to think.

This is what we need when tempted... **THINK!** *Every good and perfect comes from the Father of lights!*

Verse 18, **“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”** Here James is speaking of the new birth. We receive the life of God when we trust in His word.

And this makes us a special breed! Born again!

James uses an agrarian metaphor. We're the **“first fruits”** of a spiritual harvest - a new race of humanity never before seen on Earth. God lives within us! And if God dwells within us... His tracks should be evident!

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...” God created humans with two ears and one mouth for a reason. Apparently, He wants us to listen twice as much as we talk.

Hear of the linguist who spoke multiple languages?

He was given the ultimate compliment. Someone said, “He knew how to stay silent in seven languages.” Its easier to speak and spout, than listen and learn.

In addition, be “slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Rarely do we achieve God’s justice and fairness by venting our anger. Our wrath only bruises and hurts and further alienates... we make matters worse!

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness...” In the Greek it’s literally, “get the wax out of you ears.”

And lay aside any “overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness (a yielded-ness) the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Notice it’s not the spoken word, or heard word, but “*implanted word*” that saves. It’s the word that takes root - that’s held by the will – that captures our desires.

Like an Air Force fighter pilot that locks onto an enemy target - then pulls the trigger... The “*implanted word*” is when our faith locks on to the promise of God.

Verse 22, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” DL Moody said, “Every Bible should be bound with shoe leather.” He meant that just hearing it is not enough. The Bible is for doing!

Here's what can happen in a well-taught church. We become wine-tasters. Professional connoisseurs who sip the wine - roll it around in their mouth - without consuming much. We don't take the Word to heart, and let it shake up our lives. We hear, but remain unaltered.

And we say we love the Word. We're deceived.

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” You glance in the mirror after eating a hot dog, and you notice ketchup all around your mouth... but you do nothing about it!

This is the “hearer only!” He's always gaining info he never acts on. Some of you know the Bible *out the wazoo*. All kinds of issues have been identified, but you've never done anything to clean up. Don't stop coming to studying – just start putting it into practice.

“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

The Law of bondage was the Mosaic Law. It provided rules without the power to obey those rules.

But the New Covenant is the “*perfect law of liberty*” – it not only provides us *wisdom*, but *power*. The love of God makes us doers of the word, not just hearers only.

Verse 26, “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.” Faith that *grabs hold* of a heart will *control* a wagging tongue.

Finally, verse 27, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” If you want to see faith tracks, here's a two... a compassion for the weak and a desire for purity....

For as far back as I remember, until the day she died, every Sunday afternoon my Dad drove downtown to visit his invalid sister. My Aunt Ann lived in a nursing home. Dad would buy her a Coke, and they'd chit-chat.

During the week Ann called the house incessantly just to make sure Dad was coming on Sunday.

She was lonely and just wanted to talk. I'm ashamed to admit it now, but whenever I answer the phone, and it was Ann, I'd get annoyed. But Dad quoted this verse. Pure religion “*visits orphans and widows.*” We can talk all day about God's love, but *real faith leaves tracks.*

Chapter 2 begins, “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.” In other words, *don't play favorites!*

“For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not

shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" The flight to heaven is not divided up into *first class* and *coach*.

Jesus accepts me *just as I am* and *right where I'm at*, and this is how I should accept others. Don't treat the rich, or hip, or beautiful any differently than the rest.

The *banker* and *bag lady* should get equal love!

While in South Africa, Mohandas Ghandi, was impressed with the teachings of Jesus, and thought of converting to Christianity, until he went to church.

He saw the prejudice among its members, and concluded, "If Christians have caste differences of their own, I might as well stay a Hindu." How sad for anyone in God's family to feel like a second-class Christian!

Once a street person went to join a church. The pastor wasn't sure if the church wanted "*her type*."

He told her to give him a week to think it over, but the week went by, and still no decision. He then said he needed another week... and on and on this went.

Finally, in pray the Lord spoke to the woman. "My child, don't worry about joining that church. I've been trying for 20 years, and they want let Me in either."

Verse 5, "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man.

Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?" In Luke 4:18, Jesus said the Spirit of the

Lord had anointed Him “to preach the Gospel to the poor.” He brings good news to the poor.

But the rich are often threatened by Jesus’ message.

They’ve made an idol out of money or their own ability to make it. It’s an attack on their god to assume that real fulfillment can’t be found in riches and wealth.

It’s amazing how little dimes held close to your eyes will block your view of a huge mountain... *even of God.*

Yet this is the effect wealth can have on our faith.

Riches can blind us to God. Jesus said in Matthew 19:24, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Most people dream of being rich, but spiritually speaking excessive wealth can be a disadvantage.

Verse 8, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” It’s not that we can’t have *a close circle of friends*, just as long as it doesn’t become *a closed circle of friends*... The church is no place for cliques.

The “*royal law*” in the Church - the law that reigns above all other laws - is to love your neighbor!

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” When a person lives under the Law condemnation is inevitable. No human is perfect, and the Law requires perfection.

“For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.” Break one of the 613 Laws, and you’re guilty of violating them all. “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.”

God hasn’t called us to live by law, but by love!

“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Showing a little mercy will do more to change a person’s life than insisting on strict judgment.

Verse 14, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works?”

Here’s someone who *professes faith*, but there’s no evidence of *possessing faith*. He talks a good talk.

Isn’t faith more than words? What about works?

He’s asking what constitutes *true saving faith*?

And in verse 15 he tells us what true, saving faith looks like... “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” Your blessing was nothing but hollow words.

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” In essence, real faith leaves tracks. A legitimate faith will leave an imprint. I’ll act on what I believe.

Real faith - saving faith - the faith that gets you to heaven - is a commitment to the point of action!

Charles Blondin was a famous acrobat. On June 30, 1859 he crossed Niagara Falls on a three inch rope - *1,100 feet across the falls and 160 feet above them.*

Over that summer Blondin did numerous stunts from the tightrope... *he did a backwards somersault, crossed blindfolded, pushed a wheelbarrow across the rope, walked it on stilts, he crossed at night, he even cooked an omelet on a portable stove halfway across...*

But Charles Blondin's most amazing feat on the wire above Niagara Falls came on September 15, 1860.

Before crossing that day, he turned to the crowd and asked, "Do you believe I can carry a man across the rope on my back?" The crowd roared, "Yes, we believe!" That's when Blondin asked for a volunteer... Yet of all the people who said they believed, none would climb on Blondin's back. Their talk was cheap.

Their lack of action betrayed their claim to faith.

Finally, one man stepped forward. The crowd didn't know it, but it was Blondin's manager, Harry Colcord.

Harry had already tied his future to Blondin's daring, so why not go all out and trust him with his very life?

And this will be our reaction if we really trust Jesus.

We'll climb on the Savior's back and let Him carry us. We'll tie every area of our life to Jesus. *Real faith, saving faith, faith that gets you to heaven* – is not a sideline faith. It's a faith that acts on what it believes.

Verse 18, **"But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."**

It's true, faith is faith and works are works.

Don't turn faith into another work. You are made right with God not by what you do, but by what Jesus did, and your faith in His work. Salvation is by faith alone, but if you're really saved faith will never be alone...

It will be accompanied by works and loving action.

Some people point to a supposed contradiction between Paul and James. Especially in verse 24 where James says, ***"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."*** That seems opposed to Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."***

Martin Luther was so upset with the book of James he called it ***"a right strawy epistle..."*** He included it in the canon of Scripture, but failed to put it on the same level with the rest of the NT. It was strawy, not golden.

The so-called conflict between Paul and James clears up when you realize the vocation of the authors.

Paul was a theologian. He was adept at breaking down abstract ideas. He deciphered steps and causes.

James though was the son of a carpenter. He cared about the end result. The steps and procedures you followed while building a chair don't really matter if you end up with a handsome, sturdy piece of furniture.

And this is how these two men dealt with salvation.

Paul broke it down into cause and effect. Faith alone is the cause. Spiritual fruit and good works are results.

Whereas James had a more comprehensive view of salvation. He was so sure faith produced works, he saw salvation as a package deal. If a life didn't show good works, then it obviously didn't possess real faith.

Paul's letters are spiritual schematics. They break down the inner workings of faith. While James sees God's work as a building project. It's not over until the trim is finished, and the punch out list is complete.

Paul x-rays the roots of faith... James eyeballs the fruits of faith... Paul says faith comes first and should never be confused with works. But James says works always follow faith. Works are the evidence of faith.

Package them together and you see the complete picture... **A faith that saves is a faith that works!**

Verse 19, **"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble!"**

Faith is obviously more than an intellectual assent. Even the demons are orthodox in their doctrine. Just an agreement on the facts doesn't constitute real faith!

Here's a side note, the demons "*tremble.*" The word means "to bristle up." It's the idea of a hair-raising experience. A demon's faith in God doesn't save him, it scares him. He believes in God's judgment, and it causes the hair on the back of his neck to stand up.

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" Here he gives an example...

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? If Abraham had not obeyed God how can you say he really trusted in Him?"

If you pray for rain, then leave the house in the morning without an umbrella - you didn't pray in faith.

Verse 23, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God." Go back and read Genesis 15. Abraham was declared right with God 22 years before he was told to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. That came in chapter 22.

The point being, his faith came first. But his faith was real faith. It was later confirmed by his faithful works.

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." And in the context in which James is speaking he's right. If faith inevitably produces works, then ultimately you can't have real faith without works.

Again Paul breaks down the Christian life into parts, whereas James sees it as a continuum. He's not worried about where faith ends, and works begin. He sees both

in an unbroken chain. One does end and the other begins - but that's Paul's concern, not James'.

In James' mind we're *justified by both faith and works*. How can you separate the *root* from its *fruit*?

Here's another example, "**Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?**" It's the same idea, trust in God provoked her to help the Jews.

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Note the Bible's definition of death, **it's when the spirit departs from the body.**

Once the spirit vacates, the body is an empty shell. It's dead. And likewise a faith that's lost its heart, and guts, and vigor, and effort is also as good as dead.