

James 2-5: Justification in James

*Father, as we look at the book of James tonight, we ask that its core message would reach us, that You would reach us as we read. We pray, Lord, that as we consider the nature of true faith, that You would work faith in us—real, strong, grounded faith—a faith that is not merely orthodox ideas, but a true trusting in You. We pray, Lord, that You would work in us through that faith what is pleasing to You—love and reliance upon You and also the desire that James speaks of so often—to do what is right and good, to prove that our faith is genuine by deeds of kindness and love and obedience. Lord, this book also challenges those of us here who are called to be teachers and leaders to do a good work, using our mouths to convey Your truth and to bless people. We confess, Lord, together that to use our tongues rightly is something too great for us alone. It shows our weakness. It humbles to consider the way we use our words. Lord, it is good that we be humbled, because when we are humbled, then we turn to You for grace. So, Lord, we pray that You would call us to good works and call us to Yourself even as we go about studying Your Word in this time. We ask that You be pleased with my words and the meditations of each of our hearts, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.*

Today we are looking at chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 of James. In our last lecture, we saw that there are three tests of genuine faith. Do you remember what they are? The first is controlling your tongue. The second is caring for the widows and orphans in distress—that is to say, caring for the poor and the needy. The third test is keeping yourself unstained by the world. After that great summary of the marks of true visible religion, we noted that James did something that seemed a little strange. He went into a discussion of seating patterns in the local synagogue, of all things. James sometimes gets a bad reputation because he does things like that. However, all of the true tests of faith are present in a simple thing like who gets to sit where and how you talk to people as they get their seats in the church. First of all, you have a sign of the lack of true faith in that the person who says to the poor man, “Sit on the floor by my feet, be a footstool for my feet,” is not helping the poor but rather is dishonoring the poor. In the one place where the poor might be expected to be treated well, even there they are disregarded and treated shabbily. Of course, it is worldly to try to gain favor with the rich and the powerful. In addition, you are using your tongue to say, “Here, sit on the floor,” to the poor and to favor the rich rich person. So in fact, this act which seems to be so trivial really demonstrates what true faith is—that is to say, it proves itself even in the little things of life. Finally, we saw that James takes this very seriously. While we might say, “Well, this is just a little thing; it does not really matter whether you get the seating thing right or not,” James says, “No, if you violate this part of God’s will, you have not just broken one little part of God’s will, you have violated the law of God.” You are not just breaking a law, you are violating God. Thus, there is no act of disobedience that is a trivial matter. We also talked about how all the commandments are interconnected, and so if you lie, cheat, or steal, you have probably violated somebody in a lot of other ways as well.

That section is so strong that it could be oppressive. This is something James seems to be very much aware of, and so his last word, instead of this word of condemnation, is that mercy triumphs (or boasts or exalts) over judgment. The last word is not the word of judgment; the last word is of mercy spoken to believers. This prepares us for James 2:14-26, a great passage and one that, in some ways, is one of the two central passages in James. He is very much continuing the theme of true religion. He is continuing the idea of being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (chapter 1:22 told us that). It is saying, “As you hear the Word, help the needy.” It is imperative that you actually help the needy and not just wish them well. He also is looking at the idea he expressed back in chapter 1—that we should gaze into the law and do it. In chapter 2, we might say that James is gazing into the law, and here is how. Chapter 2 refers or alludes to Leviticus 19, one of the passages in Leviticus that has the most to do with reformulating the Ten Commandments, at several points. In Leviticus 19:18, it says, “Love your

neighbor,” and, of course, here we will see how we should go about loving our neighbors. In Leviticus 19:9, it says “Do not glean the corners of your field so that you can help the needy,” which is being discussed in chapter 2. He also refers to Leviticus 19 in other places, but he seems to be meditating on the law here. There is even a reference to controlling the tongue, because he talks early on in this segment about simply giving nice wishes to poor people, using your tongue and giving nice words that really have no value, so you need to control your tongue. James 2:14-26 is very much working at the questions, “Do you have real faith? Is your faith manifesting itself?”

Let’s look at what he actually says. He opens with a question: “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith, but has no deeds?” In that question, “What good is it?” the word that is used there is actually, “What is the profit?” or “What is the benefit?” That idea of, “What is the benefit?” is one that was used in ancient rhetoric to help people deliberate about things. They would ask, “Is this course of action worth anything or not? What is the benefit of this course of action?” The next thing that comes up, in verse 14, is a little shocking. If you don’t know Greek, you will have to trust me on this or get a hold of somebody who knows Greek. The next phrase is, “The man claims to have faith, but has no deeds.” In the NIV, it says, “Can such faith save him?” but in the original, that word “such” is not there. What he actually says is, “Can faith save him?” We are used to thinking, “Yes, faith can save anybody.” That is the Gospel, isn’t it, that anybody who believes can be saved? However, James is prodding us or poking us with this question, “Can faith save the person who has faith but no works?” The way he expresses it, he expects the answer, “No.” There is a kind of faith that does not save—the kind of faith that has no works. What kind of faith is that? What is real faith anyway? He takes us through these four scenarios. The first scenario is the case of a needy brother, in verses 15-17. It makes the point that false faith or spurious faith is ineffective toward our fellow man. Here is the brief vignette describing false faith. Here is a brother or a sister without adequate clothes, dressed in rags or inadequately prepared against the cold, and without daily food. If someone says, “I hope things go well for you; I hope you get warm; be well-fed,” but doesn’t do anything to help them—there is that question again: “What is the benefit?” What is the value of that course of action? Of course, the answer is, “It is worthless.” What good is it to be kindly disposed and say to someone who is desperately needy, “Things will turn around someday, I’m sure, and I hope it happens soon; goodbye; I’ll be praying for you”? What is the benefit of that? It does not help that person at all. In a similar way, James says in verse 17, faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead. False faith is like seeing a need and doing nothing except having vague good wishes. It is ineffective. If you see somebody who is hungry, don’t say that you hope their belly gets filled. Rather, buy them a pizza or a bowl of soup. That is what the Lord wants you to do.

The second case is the case of knowledge without peace. This shows that false faith or spurious faith is ineffective towards God. You have to observe this pretty carefully in verse 18, where it reads this way: “But someone will say,”—that is, someone who is an advocate of faith that does not have works—“someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have deeds.’” Now if you observe this carefully, you realize that the wording is not quite what you would expect here. In fact, it is the opposite. What you would expect somebody to say is, “I have faith and you have deeds,” because that is the issue. James is saying you need both. He is saying that faith without deeds is no good, so maybe we would expect the other person to say, “You are a ‘deed’ kind of a person and I am a ‘faith’ kind of person.” James could read it that way, but he turns it around to say that no matter how you would express it, some people’s response to the call to good works is that it is a matter of gifting. Everybody has different gifts, and some people have the gift of administration, others the gift of service, and still others the gift of encouragement or evangelism or teaching. These people would say that faith and works are that way: some people have the gift of knowledge and doctrine and other people do something about it. Some people have faith and others have works. The problem with that thinking is that if you look carefully over the gift lists in the Bible (which we will do later on), in almost every gift you see, there may be somebody who is highly

gifted, but all Christians ought to participate in every gift. There is a gift of encouragement—someone who is great at lifting people’s spirits, a Barnabas-type person. Some people are extraordinarily gifted in that way, but we are all supposed to encourage each other, aren’t we? What did Hebrews say?

“Encourage one another daily as long as it is called ‘Today,’” so we all should encourage. There is a gift of evangelism, but we all have to be able to give an account of the faith we have. So there is the gift, which is the high expression, but there is also the modest expression which we all must have. Faith is actually a gift, but every Christian should have faith. Service is a gift, but every Christian should serve, so the excuse “you have faith and I have deeds” or “I have faith and you have deeds”—whichever way you say it, it is all wrong, because it neglects the fact that we should all participate in belief and action. Real faith has both.

James replies to this error and says to them, “You show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” Faith is proven by the deeds. Faith is only known by the life. I will show you my faith by what I do. Someone might tell me over and over again, “I really know how to cook. I am a gourmet cook and I get out the pots and pans and make a mess and make some really great food.” After I hear that about five times, I am inclined to say, “So when are you having me over for dinner? Let’s see some of those stuffed mushrooms. If I taste your food and it is really good, then I will believe you.” James says, “If you have faith, prove it. Prove it with some deeds.” He goes a little bit further and says, “You believe that there is one God; you have orthodox ideas about God, good. Let me tell you, you are right up there with the demons. They have some orthodox theology. They believe that there is one God. They believe that He sees all and that He is a judge of the earth and they also believe that they are going to be destroyed on account of orthodox ideas without living faith.”

I am what you would call an adult convert to Christianity, I became a Christian at the age of 18, as a freshman in college, and I clearly remember having this kind of faith as a teenager. I believed that there was one God. I believed that Jesus Christ was His Son, and I believed that by believing Him you were saved, and I believed it was important to live a good life out of faith. I knew all the theology and I did not believe any of it and I was afraid. When I was 15 and 16 and 17 years old, I thought about God as little as I possibly could and that was not little enough. It is very possible to have orthodox theology. I could have led someone to Christ when I was 16. I know a lot of other people in that position; they have spent time around churches and they know enough theology that they could actually give the Gospel with sufficient clarity that if God was working in an unusual way, He could be pleased to use those words to lead someone to Himself, but they do not believe it and they have no peace with God. They tremble like the demons. False faith, spurious faith is ineffective towards God.

Third, he talks about the case of difficult obedience, and that is the case of Abraham. To prove again, now positively, that faith without good works is useless, he gives another case—the case of true faith which is effective towards God. We come to the case of Abraham. Faith acted effectively in the case of his near-sacrifice of Isaac. You understand the life of Abraham and the central test in his life. When Abraham was 75 and his wife was 65, the promise came that they would have a son. They waited 25 years to have a child. At the ages of 100 and 90, their child was born. When all reason and experience would have said that Abraham and his wife Sarah were as good as dead from the standpoint of reproduction, they continued to believe. We might say even that every time they had conjugal relations, it was an act of faith that God would do what He said. Of course, Abraham stumbled, but fundamentally he was faithful during those years, until that dreaded day when God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and sacrifice him on the mountain I will show you.” There are a few clues about how old Isaac would have been when that event took place. He was able to carry the wood, and he was able to reason with his father. He was able to say, “We have wood and we have fire, but where is the sacrifice?” We have to depict the scene with Isaac being at least close to 10 years old so that he could

carry the wood and ask at least mildly sophisticated questions. Of course we do not know exactly—maybe he was 9 or 12 or 14 or 15—but they waited 25 years and now they have waited 10 or 12 more and Isaac is half grown up and now God says, “I will take him away from you.” The book of Hebrews says that Abraham believed that, if necessary, God could raise his son, Isaac, from the dead when he offered him up. We also look at the dialogue he has with the servants where he says, “Wait here and we will come back to you,” expressing his faith in that way. James describes this in very strong language. He says, “Here is one more piece of evidence that faith without works is useless. Wasn’t our ancestor, Abraham, considered righteous for what he did?” That is in verse 21. The Greek reads, “Was he not justified by what he did when he offered his son, Isaac, on the altar?” Then verse 22 says, “You see that his faith and his works”—this is the literal translation—“his faith and his works were working together and his faith was brought to completion.” That is a very literal translation. Do you know the words “monergism” and “synergism”? Very briefly, the word *monos* is “one” and *ergos* means “work,” and so “monergism” means that salvation occurs by one working—that is to say, by God working. Monergism is the idea that God saves, and “synergism” is the idea that we are saved by two working together. Synergism is the idea that mankind and God have to work together; it is a cooperative venture and God alone does not save. We have to help Him out a little bit. Synergism is generally considered to be heretical. God saves. Here in this place, the word is *synerge*, which is the word that gives us the word “synergism.” His faith and his works were working together so that his faith was brought to completion.

Faith comes to maturity or full expression only when it works. Real faith must work. Faith has not come into its own if there are no works. Verse 23 goes on to emphasize this a little more: “And the Scripture was fulfilled that ‘Abraham believed God and it was credited (or reckoned) to him as righteousness.’” That is to say, do you remember when Abraham was first justified or reckoned righteous? Where was that in his history? Where did Abraham nearly sacrifice Isaac? In Genesis 22. When did God declare Abraham righteous? In Genesis 15. Turn there and look at this, to see a little more clearly what James is expressing. Keep in mind that in chapter 22, Abraham offers his son on the altar. Chapter 15 occurs roughly at the midpoint between the time when Abraham heard the promise that he will have a child and the time when the child was actually born. We could say that maybe he is about 82 or 85 years old. Genesis 15:1 says, “After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram.” His name was still Abram here. “Do not be afraid, Abram; I am your shield, your very great reward.” Abram says, “Sovereign LORD, what can You give me, since I remain childless and the one who will inherit myself is Eliezer of Damascus?” That is his leading servant. Essentially what Abraham is doing here is talking back to God. God says, “I am your shield and your great reward,” and Abraham says, “Oh yeah, then how come You have not given me the thing that I have been waiting for the most for the last 10 years? If You are my shield and my great reward, where is that son You have been talking about?” Verse 4: “And Abraham said, ‘You have given me no children, so a servant of my house will be my heir.’” The Lord, who is always willing to get into a serious discussion with anybody, said, “You are wrong. Eliezer of Damascus will not be your heir. A son coming from your own body will be your heir,” and then He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens, and count the stars, if indeed you can count them.” And he went outside and looked at the stars.

You must realize that this is not like looking at the stars here in St. Louis or in any other large city. This is like going out to the Rocky Mountains at 2 o’clock in the morning, climbing halfway up the hillside somewhere. You are starting off at 8000 feet and you find a little clearing and lie on your back and look at the stars, away from the light and industrial pollution. It takes your breath away. It is dazzling, and God said, “That is what your offspring will be like,” and verse 6 tells us that “Abram believed God, and it was reckoned (or credited) to him as righteousness.” That was the day when he was accounted righteous before God by faith. We would say he was justified by faith on that day, but James is almost playing with that formulation here in order to correct the misconception. In James 2:23, he says, “The

Scripture was fulfilled that says”—and now he quotes Genesis 15:6—“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.” What he is saying is that it is as though our justification, as the word is used by James, has different phases to it. There is the initial phase, and then there is a later time when that word of the justification of Abraham is vindicated or proven to be true, when he demonstrates his faith by the deed of offering up Isaac.

Let us talk for a moment about justification. There are three possible time-frames: the past, the present, and the future. In which of these does justification occur? People say it is in the past, because that is when Jesus died to atone for our sins. We can also reason that it is in the past another way: by looking back to the day when we professed faith in Christ and saying, “On that day, I was justified.” Do you know the word *ordo salutis*, or “order of salvation”? The *ordo salutis* is a concept that says there is an order to salvation. Salvation begins with God’s divine plan in all eternity. Romans 8:28 says, “Those whom He foreknew, He predestined. Those whom He predestined, He called. Those whom He called, He justified.” Once you are justified, then you are adopted in the family of God and you are growing in grace—that is called “sanctification,” and if you keep on growing that is called “perseverance,” and in the end we come to glory or “glorification.” That is the order of salvation. When we think of those terms, we then think that justification is something that lies in our past, because now here I am, growing in the Christian faith. I’m in the sanctification phase; I’m in the persevering phase; I’m in the growth phase, so my justification is in the past. That is one way we could look at it, in the terms of the work of Christ which is past, on one account, and also we look to the day when we professed faith.

Justification is also, in some sense, future. It has to do with our judgment. When will we hear the words “You are righteous, you are just, you are exonerated from your sins”? When will we hear that with our own ears? It is on the judgment day, when we will all be arrayed before the throne. So in a sense our justification lies in the future—on the judgment day, the day the Bible calls “that great Day,” the day of Jesus’ return.

Justification is also a present reality. In terms of my position, I am justified now every day. On an ongoing basis, our sin is forgiven. We are forgiven day by day and we are right with God day by day. There is one more thing, and that is that every time we perform a good work, it verifies or proves that we are right with God. That is what is going on in James 2:23. We could stumble over that odd phrasing: “You see that the Scripture was fulfilled when it said, ‘Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.’” He goes on in verse 24 to say that, “You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” You say, “Wait! I thought that we were justified by faith alone.” James says, “No, you are also justified by what you do”—verse 24. What he means is that every time we perform a good deed, it verifies and demonstrates that we belong to God, that we are right with God, and that His life is at work in us. We could put it another way. We could say that God’s word of “You are righteous with Me,” is vindicated or proven to be true every time a believer performs a good work that flows from his or her faith. God is not liable to the charge of saving people by a legal fiction, but we demonstrate that we belong to Christ. When we are justified, in a sense, what happens is that God sees us not as we are but as we are in Christ. He sees our sins covered by Christ’s righteousness and by His sacrifice. He sees Jesus’ perfect obedience reckoned to our account. Some people would say that is a fiction, but it is not, because our life really is in Christ. God sees us in Christ, and we really are in Christ. Our life really is hidden in Christ, as Paul says, and the proof that our life is really hidden in Christ is those deeds that can only come to pass by faith spontaneously expressing itself in good deeds.

The fourth case is the case of the good pagan who demonstrates that real faith is effective towards man. Abraham is an illustration of faith that works. We might even say that he is a logical example to choose. The Jews viewed Abraham as a hero of the faith and as a deeply righteous man. Some even said that he

was the most righteous man who ever lived, so he is a logical choice for an example of faith, but what kind of choice is Rahab to demonstrate living faith? She does not look very good compared with Abraham. Abraham was a father of Israel and Rahab was a Canaanite woman. Abraham was a noble male patriarch and Rahab was a disreputable female prostitute, but I would submit to you that Rahab is an outstanding example of real faith. In fact, she is a perfect example of how real faith is never simply an intellectual conversion. It is never simply holding orthodox ideas about God, which is what James was opposing, because if Rahab merely had orthodox ideas about God she would have been destroyed with everybody else in Jericho. If she had simply thought to herself, “You know, I think the God of the Israelites is the true God and very powerful,” what would have happened to her? Instead, she acted on her faith; when the spies showed up, she did something about it. What did she do? She told a lie. Indeed, that is true, but she acted. She believed that God is the real God and she put her allegiance with God and with God’s people. That little thing of helping the spies hide was a way of proving that she had transferred her allegiance from her own pagan gods and her pagan race and was siding with the God of Israel and His people. She did not do much. We could put it this way: Abraham did this spectacular thing and here is this woman who basically tells a little story and helps a couple men run off. However, she did what had to be done. She did what was before her to do, and it made a difference. Their lives were spared. She demonstrated that her faith was real.

What is James all about? James is speaking to people who grew up in church today or grew up in Sunday school and are content with holding orthodox ideas. In his own day, people didn’t grow up in Sunday school, because there was no Sunday school. Nevertheless, there were people back then who were content with orthodox theology and orthodox doctrines, and so he is saying that is not enough. That is not a genuine faith. He is speaking to comfortable Christians. One thing that you will sometimes hear about ministry is that it is important for those that are engaged in Christian work to comfort the afflicted, but it is also important to afflict the comforted—that is to say, those who are falsely comfortable. These are the people who think that because they are decent and nice to their neighbors and because they have been baptized, catechized and sanitized from most major sins, they are all right with God, and they are not. They are not. Real faith shows itself in radical good deeds. Rahab did not do much. She hid a couple of men and let them get away, but she is a perfect example of the fact that mere intellectual ascent to ideas about God is not enough. She did what had to be done.

Let us talk about the consistency of James with the rest of the Bible. Sometimes people have a hard time with James—not because they don’t understand what we have just talked about, but because he sounds quite different from Paul. Paul, in Romans 3:28, says that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. In Galatians 2:16, he says that no man is justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. That sounds very, very different, doesn’t it? It sounds almost like a contradiction with James 2:21 and 24. In fact, however, these statements cohere, and we will see how.

First of all, the entire New Testament agrees that real faith must produce good works. This is not something that only James says. Jesus is the one who started it. He said, “By their fruit you will know them,” in Matthew 7:16-20, and he also said it is vain to say, “Lord, Lord,” if you do not have a genuine faith in Him. He said that on the last day a person will be judged according to what they have done. I am referring to that famous scene when all are arrayed before Jesus and He says, “I was hungry and you did not feed Me; I was naked and you did not clothe Me; I was in prison and you did not visit Me.” To another group, He says, “I was naked and you clothed Me and I was in prison and you visited Me and I was hungry and you fed Me.” What He is saying is that on the last day, He will judge people according to their works. Paul says the same thing; we must all render account for the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. On the last day our deeds will be brought out and will be the ground of judgment. What does that mean? What it means is that not the deeds in themselves, but rather that the deeds that

come from faith will be used on the last day. If your faith is real, Jesus says, it will constantly, necessarily express itself in good deeds, so that they will be manifested before all the world and one of the most important ways to look at this passage, Matthew 25, is to realize that the believers, those who go to Jesus' right hand, will say, "Lord, when were You hungry? When were You thirsty? When were You in prison? We don't remember that." Of course, they do not remember, because the righteous do what is good naturally. It is like good fruit growing on a good tree and like good words naturally coming from a good mouth. We do not even know that we are doing what is good, because it is just us being ourselves. So it is not some good works that we put on a pedestal that cause us to be judged, but is the life of Christ. We could think of John 4 and John 15. It is the life of Christ, like a well, springing up from within. It is like being branches on a vine; you cannot help but grow and yield good fruit when the life of Christ is in you.

In that sense, Jesus says good deeds are necessary, because if the life is there, then the good deeds will necessarily come. If they do not come, it shows that there is no life there, so that is what Jesus says in the synoptic Gospels. He says in John 8:39, "If you are the children of Abraham, then do the deeds, do the works of Abraham." He says in John 15 that the fruitless branches will be cut off, but those who abide in the vine bear fruit, keep God's commands, and show love for one another. Paul says the same thing. People sometimes say that James is stressing that we are justified by faith that works, and he stresses works, but Paul does not stress works. Actually, there are almost 50 times where Paul says that it is necessary for a Christian to produce good works. In 1 Corinthians 3:13, Paul says that each person's work must be manifest. In Galatians 6:4, he says that each person should test his own work. James 2:10 says it is necessary to keep the whole law, and Paul says the same thing in Galatians 5:3. They both praise the law that is royal and perfect. James says it gives liberty and Paul says it is spiritual and holy and just and good," so we produce deeds of the law. Both of them say, (chapter 1 of James and Romans 2:13) that not hearers, but doers of the law will be considered righteous. Notice how similar Romans 2:13 sounds to James: "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." Do you hear how similar that is to James? Romans 2:25-27 sounds very similar to James 2:14, when he says that what counts, or profits, is obedience. He is talking about the Jews, who have pride in their knowledge, and he says in their status as Jews: "Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you will become as though you had not been circumcised. If those are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?" One who is uncircumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you. Even though you have the written code of circumcision, you are a law-breaker. You must to keep the law, Romans says. Your theological knowledge is not enough. Maybe the crowning passage of them all is found in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one should boast." That is where we usually end our quotation, but then he goes on to say, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Paul is every bit as insistent on good works as James, and we could also go through the entire New Testament and demonstrate this in Peter, John, and all the rest.

The other way of looking at this is to try to get the perspective of what each author is trying to accomplish. What problems is he trying to correct? What is he working on? When Paul says that a man is justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, what Paul is addressing is the person who asks "How can one get into the kingdom? How can one be saved?" That is his question. Is it necessary, as some people say, to be circumcised? Is it necessary to observe the food laws? In order to be saved, do you need to become a Jew first? Paul's answer to those questions is, "No; all you have to do is believe, not do works of the law." James' question is, "How shall I treat these people who believe that since they grew up with the faith and they have been trained in the faith that they are right with God? How should I

Speak to those who believe that it is enough to have orthodox ideas? We might say that Paul is writing for people like the Wesleys. Do you know the story of John Wesley? He had a holiness club and he used to get up and pray 2 or 3 hours a day, and then he would go and distribute food and clothes and medicine throughout the city, and then he would start his regular ministry. He did that for a number of years in London, and then he went to America to convert the Indians. He not only spoke to the Indians, but he was a skilled preacher, and before long he was preaching in the church in Virginia and the governor's family was there listening to him every week. They were very impressed with him, and the governor's daughter got engaged to him, but she broke the engagement and Wesley preached a sermon about how she should not have done that. Then the governor said, "It's time for you to leave," and Wesley said, "No, I haven't even started," but the governor insisted, so he was sent back to England. As he went back, there was a storm at sea and there was a real danger that the ship would be lost if the storm went on. There were some Moravians over in a corner and they were praying and singing and rejoicing. Wesley walked over to them and said, "How can you be so cheerful on this day when you may die?" They said, "Well, if we die, we will go to be with the Lord," and Wesley thought to himself, "How can they be so sure? What more have they done than I have done?" That is who Paul is writing for, people with that misguided question, "What good deed do I need to do in order to be saved?" With that question on his mind, Wesley went back to London, and he went to a church at night. There are a couple of things in this story that you should never do: one thing is denounce the governor's family in a sermon. You also really should not denounce anybody's family in a sermon, or preach against one person. It does not work and it is not right. Besides that, there is another thing you should not do (although this one did work) and that was that somebody was reading a 230-year-old sermon. The good thing is that it was a really good sermon; it was a sermon by Luther, actually a preface to his commentary on the book of Romans. While that was being read, Wesley understood that the way to become right with God is by faith, not by works. What James is saying is that once you are right with God, you must produce works, and if there are no works then that indicates that you are not right with God. That is the thesis of James, and really, the entire New Testament agrees with that. The entire New Testament teaches that.