

97-01-05a

So, as we continue, if you'll turn in your Bibles to James. James chapter 2 begins by talking about faith. Faith versus works is what we're going to be looking at this morning.

And chapter 2 starts out by saying, My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. So, right away, he's assuming the faith of the people that he's writing to, right? He says, you've got this faith and you're holding it, but don't hold it with partiality. And this harks back to what he was talking about in chapter 1, verse 21.

Actually, 19 through 21, he says, So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Our whole study in Romans has been, what does produce the righteousness of God for believers? And it's not anger at the things we see around us. It's not deprecation and criticism and division and throwing rocks at our fellow believers, especially those who legitimately, we discern, are far from the truth and not walking the way they should.

Getting angry and pointing fingers and engaging in the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Even when our opinion is correct, our criticism doesn't produce righteousness. So he says in verse 21 of chapter 1 of James, Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to deliver your souls.

And he's talking to believers, and as we have seen time and time again, *sozo*, *soterios*, the Greek words that are often translated save or salvation. *Sozo* is S-O-Z-O or S-O-D-Z-O, depending on how you want to treat that zeta. And *soterios*, S-O-T-E-R-I-O-S, these are the Greek words, and most of the time in the New Testament, they talk about deliverance in time, deliverance for believers, deliverance in the sense of redeeming the time, making our lives count in the plan of God, not being in the grip of sin, not being in the power of circumstance and so forth.

And that's why he's talking to these believers about receiving with meekness the implanted word, which is able to deliver their souls. They've already been delivered from the lake of fire. This is deliverance in time.

And then he says in verse 22, but be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. This was the problem in the church to which James addressed this letter. They had teaching, they had the word, but A, they weren't necessarily receiving it with meekness.

And it wasn't having the desired effect. They were getting the word, they were getting the teaching, they were believers, but the reason he exhorts them to receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to deliver their souls, is that that's not what was generally happening. And so he's exhorting them to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Hearing the word, accepting the word, having no argument with the word as it was taught, that wasn't the problem in this church. The problem was after hearing it, after accepting it, after deciding that they had no argument with it, it wasn't cycling through their soul and producing a change of behavior. We've been studying this whole concept as we've looked at divine guidance, as we have looked at the righteousness by faith in Romans, that this is what's supposed to happen.

It has been compared accurately, I think, to respiration, where you have intake and you have exhale. You have the process that is extremely important whereby we take in the word of God. It's processed in our soul.

It becomes the object of faith. But that second decision point that we talked about on Friday night, there's another decision point besides assembling, besides hearing, besides accepting the word as true, and besides making it the object of faith and treating it as reality, there is another decision that is the decision to obey. We can grant that something is true.

We can believe it and treat it as reality and yet fly in the face of it. This happens all the time when no one denies that it's safer to wear seatbelts than to not wear seatbelts, but there's some people who just fly in the face of that and don't wear them anyway. We know that speed kills, that speeding down the highway at 85 or 90 miles an hour is extremely dangerous, but there are teenagers who would never argue against that, accept it as true, believe it to be reality, and yet put the pedal to the floor and wrap themselves around various immovable objects and kill themselves and others, flying in the face of what they know to be true.

We as believers can do the same thing, and it is not enough to have sat in Bible class and to have heard wonderful truth and to accept it and believe it to be true. It has to motivate us to obedience. That's what James is talking about, and you'll notice that in the beginning of his book, chapter one and chapter two, he says it's the word implanted in your soul that's able to deliver, but it needs to result in a change of behavior.

It needs to affect our walk. Several places in the New Testament, the word *peripateo* is used. We're going to see it this morning over in Ephesians.

Peripateo, *peri* means around, like a perimeter. It comes over into English. *Pateo* was the word to walk, and to walk around became a synonym for lifestyle.

How do we walk around? What do we do when we walk around? The word of God needs to affect our walk, our life, and this is what James is addressing. It's important to understand that concept as we go to our scripture reading now this morning in James chapter two, verse 14. This is a familiar passage to us, but watch for the relationship, the cause and effect, the before and after of faith and works as we review this familiar text.

James chapter two, verse 14. What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but

does not have works? Can faith deliver him? Now, we're talking about someone who says they have faith. This is in the realm of believers.

We're not talking about someone who says he's saved and he's really not. We're talking about someone who claims to be living the life of faith. We have this all around us today, don't we, in Christianity.

Many different strands, denominations, belief systems abound. And many people say they're living the life of faith and that they're hewing to the narrow road and so forth. They say they have faith, but does not have works.

This means that it isn't producing that lifestyle, that peripeteo evidence that should come from genuine faith. It ought to make a difference. We're gonna be looking at what these works are exactly as we study this morning.

But this is what James says. What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can faith deliver him? If a brother or a sister, notice the realm in which we're talking here. A lot of people miss some of the details.

A brother or a sister. We're talking about the environment of believers. A brother or a 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? We're talking about the realm of profit. We're talking about the realm of bearing fruit in the body of Christ.

Here's a fellow believer. You say that you have faith. You say that you've taken in the Word of God.

It's your reality. You're wanting to be declared righteous by faith. And yet, there are obvious opportunities to live out that truth that you're not exploiting, that you're not taking advantage of.

Is that really a living faith? Or is it just an academic nod to the truth that is not reflected in the decision to obey, the decision to implement, the decision to have it make a difference in the peripeteo walk of life? Remember how he started this chapter in chapter two. My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus with partiality. Someone comes into your assembly, has gold rings, fine apparel, and there's also a poor man in filthy clothes.

You pay attention to the rich man in the fine clothes and you ignore the poor man. Do you really have faith? Do you really have the reality of God's viewpoint in the soul that says it's not the external, it's not what this man can do for me, it's not what he can potentially put in the offering plate. It's reflecting the value that God places on every person who has a desire to assemble and to worship and to hear the Word of God.

What kind of viewpoint are we really expressing? We say we have faith, and yet, it doesn't work itself out in love. That's not love to disregard someone because we see no advantage in paying attention to them. We see no personal gain.

That's what he's talking about later on in the chapter as well. You say, depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body. This is a reference back to that poor man who visits the assembly.

Thus also in verse 17, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. This is the claim to faith. This is the claim that is made up in verse 14.

Someone says he has faith. That faith, if it's not resulting in obedience, it's dead. 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. What's the contrast that he's drawing here? People say they have faith, but there's no evidence of it. Here is James using himself as an example saying, I will show you the fact that my faith is genuine because look at the impact it has had in my life.

Look at the difference in the decisions and the priorities and the actions in my life because my faith is alive and my faith makes a difference. You believe that there is one God. Here's an example.

You say, I've got faith. I believe that God is one. I believe in the essence of God, the character of God.

You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble. But do you want to know, oh foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Do you want an example? And then he's gonna go and cite the example of Abraham.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Interesting contrast to Romans chapter four where Paul uses the very same man and relationship with Isaac his son to make the point that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. And now here's James arguing that Abraham, when he took Isaac up the mountain, is justified by his works. What are we talking about here? Both James and Paul acknowledge that Abraham's faith came first, don't they? There was the word, the implanted word, the promise to Abraham that he would have a son, that through that son many nations would come and that all the earth would be blessed and so forth.

So we have that in common, but there's a different emphasis in Paul and in James. Paul points out the priority that faith came first and that God declared Abraham righteous at the point that he had that genuine faith. Because Abraham had that genuine faith, because his belief in what God had said was so strong, it was strong enough to impel him up the mountain and be willing to

sacrifice his son and inflict physical death on Isaac, knowing that God had promised that through Isaac would come his fulfillment of promise and that all the nations would be blessed and that he would have a prosperity and a posterity and a seed that were innumerable.

He believed that so strongly that his actions reflected it. James is pointing out that if you've got genuine faith, there's going to be obedience that follows and that obedience is going to evidence the fact that you believe. So there's no contradiction, as has been sometimes assumed here.

It's simply a matter of emphasis. Paul points out that faith has to come first because the problem in Israel, Jewish Christianity, was that they thought that works were righteousness and they didn't see the role of faith that had to be the cause and the reason for those works. James is addressing a completely different audience.

These are people who claim faith but aren't making any effort to obey, who ignore one another and despise the poor man who comes to assemble and worship and who have no evidence of love for one another and no manifestation of the fact that that faith is really alive and making a difference in their thinking. Same truth applied to two different groups. Do you see, in verse 22, that faith was working together with his works and by works, faith was completed? What is the goal of faith? It should make a change.

It should transform. It should be the basis of the reflection of God's righteousness. 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.

You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And this justification is the evidence of completion of that faith, the evidence that that faith is real. God declares righteous, he's quoted that verse in 23.

Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. This was years before he carried Isaac up to the altar and prepared to sacrifice him. But the verification, the proof, especially in the eyes of men of Abraham's faith that God had already recognized and already accounted for righteousness was the obedience that was manifested in his walk, in his works.

Verse 25, likewise was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way. She believed that God was the God of Israel. She believed the word of God that Israel was going to be given the land and that the inhabitants of the land would be driven out and conquered.

She believed that and she was willing in one view to betray her own people or to aid and abet what would have been an enemy and to do something that in the eyes of her citizenry was punishable by death. But she was willing to do that because of what she believed. Her faith worked itself out in the decisions of her daily life even when there was a lot on the line.

Both of these examples are life and death, aren't they? Isaac and Rahab. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. That's our Scripture reading for this morning.

Let's take a moment now to prepare ourselves for the study of the word of God in Romans, keeping in mind that for these things to be used by God to transform us and to be the basis of faith and obedience, we have to be free from distraction, free from the inhibitions to the ministry of the Spirit that can be there because of leftover sin, because of a lack of forgiveness of others, because of our need to be cleansed and to be restored to full fellowship with God. So let's take a moment to examine our souls and prepare ourselves for the study of the word of God. Father, we thank you again for the privilege we have of assembling together, of being built up and edified through our fellowship and the mutual ministry of spiritual gifts for all of those manifestations of your grace that exist in the situation where two or three are gathered together.

We pray now that as we look into the truth of your word in Romans, that God the Holy Spirit will minister these things to us and that as a result, we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. We know that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans for the express purpose of correcting a misapprehension that prevailed in that church, a misapprehension that was being communicated and being encouraged by Jewish Christians in the church.

There were three or four different categories of believers in this group. You had Jewish Christians of two different kinds. You had Jewish Christians who believed that to be pleasing to God and to live a life of righteousness, one had to keep the law and observe the deeds that were enumerated in the law.

You also had Jewish Christians who understood that the goal of the law, which was righteousness by faith, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and that keeping the ordinances and performing the actions that were specified in the law was not necessary to be pleasing to God. So you had those two categories of Jewish Christians. Then you had Gentiles, and in many cases, the Gentiles weren't sure which camp to fall into.

They were being pulled in one direction by the legalists, the Judaizers, who said, well, it's fine to believe in Christ. He's the Messiah, we accept that, but that doesn't set aside the need to keep the law. You need to be circumcised.

You need to keep the feasts and offer the sacrifices. And then you had the other set who understood grace and understood the change of dispensations and understood that God was requiring something higher and something greater. So Paul writes the letter into the midst of this situation and comes down squarely on the side of grace, squarely on the side of the church age where there is now no condemnation.

He has defined the purpose of the law, which was to demonstrate the inadequacy of human effort

and human abilities to generate righteousness, that we had to trust God and be declared righteous by God, that that was what God was looking for all along. This was a message that was declared by the law and the prophets, and yet it had been missed in Israel. Because of Israel's misunderstanding, because they were seeking righteousness by works, just jumping to the chase and saying, well, obviously a holy life is going to please God.

They were just jumping right on the works train and skipping the step of faith, skipping the step of trust and transformation by God. And it didn't work. And as a result, God had let the age of Israel run for many generations, and generation after generation demonstrated their misunderstanding.

And in so doing, also demonstrated the inadequacy of human effort. God let that run for a long time. In every generation, there was a remnant in Israel who understood and were justified by faith and who pleased God by faith.

But as a nation, they missed it. They were believers, but they didn't understand the walk. And they were condemned as hypocrites and condemned as the Pharisees were by Jesus himself.

Now the dispensation has changed and there's a new point that God is making. And He has set aside the law and He has called us to something higher. There's a new destiny in Christ, a new purpose for believers in this age.

So Paul has demonstrated this. We've seen it, reviewed it many times. In this section of chapters 9, 10, and 11 of Romans, he is addressing, well, what about Israel? If God has moved on to a new point, they appear to have been set aside.

They appear to no longer be at the forefront of God's plan. What about His promises to them? What about those who still cling to that way of thinking? What's their fate? What's going to become of them? And so he starts addressing this in chapter 9 and he says he has a great burden for them. He makes the point once again that the purpose of God in putting up with Israel for so many generations was to make His name known, to demonstrate His riches of glory on the vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.

This prepared beforehand is something we're going to be seeing this morning. God in eternity past marked out what He was going to do in each different phase of human history. He said there's a phase where I'm going to put life and death before Israel.

I'm going to put the law of Moses before them and I'm going to say this is the description of the man who walks with me. A righteous man. This is what his life is going to look like.

And that's true, isn't it? The law of Moses is a lifestyle for believers. It's a lifestyle for a nation of believers. And consider a hypothetical.

Suppose that everyone in Israel in a particular generation was like Moses or Abraham or David. Let's just say that you have a whole generation that is characterized by that kind of thinking and

that kind of faith. What do you think they would do in the matters of daily life? Do you think that their behavior would conform to the requirements of the law? That they would look out for one another? That they would love their neighbor as themselves? That they would love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, and strength? Do you think that the requirements of the law would be difficult to keep for a man of that faith? It wouldn't be difficult at all, would it? In fact, the law of Moses really describes the type of life that a man of strong faith would typically live.

He would have his failures and he would recover from those failures with the trespass offering and the fellowship offering and so forth. He would express his thanksgiving to God in the thanksgiving offerings, the first fruits and the wave and heave offerings and so forth. And this would be the way that he would express the faith that he had, right? That's really what the law was designed to do.

It's a description of a man of faith, how he lives his life in the external. It's the James side of the believer's life. This is how he's going to look.

These are the kinds of works he's going to do if he's really a man of faith. But Israel missed the faith step and said, all I've got to do is look like this description and I'll be righteous and receive all the blessings from God. It's not unlike modern day.

We have so many problems with marriage. In any given year, there are twice as many divorces as there are marriages. And people have said, well, half of all marriages fail.

If you think about it, that's a statistical error because you have this huge pool of marriages that are neither created nor destroyed in any given year and half of those didn't fail. But the rate of divorces, the number of divorces in any given year is twice as many as the number of weddings. But what does that tell us? There's a big problem with marriage today.

It's misperceived, it's misunderstood and many of them fail. So as a response to this in the human realm, there have been literally thousands and thousands and thousands of books written about how to keep your marriage together, both in the Christian realm and in the secular realm. You've got Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars or whatever it is.

You've got the Dr. Ruth and you've got this Barbara, what's her name? Dark-haired gal used to have a TV show. She's got a whole series of books out on marriage. Tons of advice, tons of step programs and so forth.

So here's a guy who's going along and his marriage is really on the rocks. The fire is gone. The romance is out of it.

It's even less than a roommate relationship. Every time they get together, they just are antagonized. They get along better with anybody except their spouse.

They say, boy, I really need help. I'm gonna go get a book. So he goes down and gets some help book on marriage and the book says, here's what you need to do to improve your marriage and we'll just pick like three steps.

You've got to spend quality time with your wife. You've got to set aside time and not do anything except be with your wife and you need to communicate. You need to open up and reveal your innermost feelings.

You need to not be a closed enigma. You need to unburden yourself and really let flow out everything that's in your soul and you need to express affection. You need to show your wife that you love her by getting her roses once a week.

Take her out on a date. Just schedule a date as though you were dating. Pretend like you were dating.

Go and arrange a meeting and pretend like you don't know each other and introduce each other. And you know this is true. This has been suggested.

Many people have done this. This is a technique. You pretend like you don't know each other and you meet at a singles bar and go through the whole courting, groping phase to try to maneuver each other into a wonderful night of passion or something.

So this is suggested. So the man gets the book and he says, okay, so I do these things and the marriage is going to be great. So he comes home and he says, dear, for the next hour and a half, I'm going to devote myself totally to you.

Let's sit down here and this is quality time. Let's see, step two, unburden myself. Okay, let me tell you everything that's going on in my mind.

You know, I'm really ticked off that the laundry's not done. I went to my sock drawer this morning. I had no clean socks.

This really annoys me to no end. And another thing, let me just unburden all of the things that I find where you fall short and don't meet my expectations. And you know, my innermost fantasy is to get hooked up with an 18-year-old blonde that's got the following dimensions.

And this is really in the center of my soul. Let's see, what was step three? Oh yes, and by the way, here's some flowers. Following a set of actions, you can see the point.

Simply conforming to a pattern of behavior is not going to mend that marriage. It's not going to make a marriage. It's not going to create the reality that only exists in a relationship, a relationship of trust and a relationship of respect and a relationship of deep and abiding love and faithfulness and consideration and admiration and all of the things that make up a truly great intimacy between two people.

If that intimacy exists, if there is great consideration and respect and love and admiration, it may express itself in those ways and it may express itself in many other ways, many small things. But when that reality exists, it comes out in all different ways. And those ways are often unique to different couples and different marriages.

But you can't substitute the actions. You can't say, look, here's a great marriage and he gives candy once a week. Well, I'll give candy once a week and I'll have a great marriage.

I mean, we understand that in the human realm. But that was the failure in Israel is not understanding that simply performing the actions that characterize a man of faith would suffice to please God. It just doesn't work in the reverse direction.

And so that's the contrast. That's the point, is that you have to start with faith. It has to begin with relationship with God in the genuine sense.

The law was good. The law was holy. The law was a description of what people of faith would do if they existed in Israel.

But you just can't jump the faith step and start doing those actions and say, now I've got a great relationship with God. Now I'm declared righteous by God. So Israel missed the boat.

And generation after generation after generation, they missed the boat, missed the point, jumped straight to the description. And that's what happens today in our Christianity today. People say, you know, a great believer, somebody who's righteous in God's eyes and who is known and is pleasing to God, they're gonna have an experience of God.

They're going to feel His presence. They're going to feel the motivating power of the Holy Spirit. They're going to engage in great works of ministry and they're going to exercise their spiritual gift.

Well, I'm gonna get out and exercise my spiritual gift and I'm gonna engage in works of ministry and I'm gonna seek an emotional experience. And that's gonna bring me to the point of great closeness to God. And it's the same flaw in logic.

It's the same reverse thinking that Israel engaged in. And God had to put up with that for generation after generation after generation. Why did God put up with that so long in Israel? Why did He let the record of the Old Testament form and be written down and preserved for all time and all eternity? Why did God put up with that for so long? That's what Paul talked about in Romans 9. God wanted to show His wrath to make His power known.

He endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Because there's no excuse for this. It's not like an innocent mistake of ignorance.

Paul has reminded us what the Old Testament says here in Romans chapter 10 where he says, the word is not far off. The word is near us. It's in our hearts and in our mouths.

It's a spoken word. It's a rhema. It's out there in a concrete sense.

We have no excuse for making this mistake. The Israelites from generation to generation that jumped straight to works without faith, seeking their own righteousness instead of the righteousness of God are without excuse. That's how Paul introduced this letter, isn't he? He said, look at the unbelievers who go after all these things and they're seeking pleasure and they're so frustrated when they don't find it.

And they are puzzled and confused. Why am I miserable? Why am I diseased? Why am I heading in a downward spiral here? All I want is to have a good time. I just wanna feel good.

I just wanna be happy. I just wanna get something out of life. Why is everything happening to me? And Paul says in chapter one, they go after these things.

They know God as God and they don't acknowledge Him. They exchange His glory for other things. They are without excuse because what can be known of God is manifest to them.

It's evident in creation. God, the Holy Spirit reveals it. They are without excuse.

And we say, boy, that's right, they sure are. I mean, how can you look around and not know that there's a God and acknowledge Him? We've all come to that point. And then in chapter two, he says, and you feel free to point the finger at these people and say, look at them, they're without excuse.

You're doing the same thing. That's the introduction. That's the direction that this letter is taking.

And we're still in that direction when we get down here to chapters nine, 10 and 11. This was the mistake that Israel made and they're without excuse. This is the mistake that we are making today in Christianity and we are without excuse.

Going to rallies and joining God in His work and getting up to our armpits and elbows in ministry without the prerequisite step of faith and growth and transformation is to make ourselves a vessel of wrath, fitted for ruin. Israel went to ruin. The generation that wanted to go to the land of Canaan when they came out of Egypt didn't make it.

They went to ruin. Hebrews tells us that it was because the promises of God were not mixed with faith. They didn't embark on that out of faith.

They tried to go in under their own steam. And when things got tough, they had no power. They had no vision.

They had no belief that God would deliver as He had delivered for 40 years or would deliver them for 40 years. And time and again, God demonstrated His power. He delivered them at the Red Sea.

He gave them manna. He gave them water from the rock and so forth. But when that first generation, just a few months, within a couple of years at the outside of leaving Egypt, that first generation was at the Jordan and sent in the spies.

And no faith. The circumstances were too great. They wanted all of the benefits, but they didn't believe that the adversities could be overcome.

They didn't have any substance of God in their soul that He was real and that they could go and fly in the face of human wisdom, that they could fly into the face of numerical superiority and armies and chariots and so forth. They said, boy, you know, all those, look at the size of these grapes. Look at the size of all of the wonderful bounty and the milk and honey in the land.

But boy, look at their giants in there, their great armies, they're numerically superior. We're a raggedy bunch that have just recently been slaves. We're never gonna be able to seize that.

There was no reality of God. They didn't take the evidence of the Red Sea. They didn't take the evidence of water from the rock and manna from heaven and all those things and take the obedience step and cross the river.

And because of that, they dropped, they failed. They were believers and they went to ruin. And God had to wait for another generation who would trust Him to go in, a generation of believers who would trust Him for daily things and trust Him for victory.

So God endures with great patience these vessels that are prepared for ruin so that He can make known in 923 of Romans, the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory. God designed ahead of time that in this age, we would be united with Christ. We're special.

Old Testament saints are not in union with Christ. That may be kind of a shocking truth, but it's true. Old Testament saints are not in union with Christ.

They are not the body of Christ. They are not the bride of Christ. They do not share His sonship or His heirship or His priesthood or His election or His destiny.

That's unique to this age. We are special vessels in this age prepared for that specific glory. That's our calling.

Now, there are wonderful things to Israel. They are saved by the blood of Christ, but they're not in union with Him the way that we are. He is their King.

We are His bride. Israel is labeled as a nation and as an entity, the servant of God. The we are not servants, we are sons.

We have a different role. And it's politically incorrect to point out roles and to say that one thing is

subservient to another or that one thing is higher than another, but the Bible is replete with that. There are those who will be last and there are those who will be first.

There are those who will rule and reign with Christ and there are those who will not. And that is determined in our lives on a day-to-day basis by whether or not we go beyond the faith step to the obedience step. And this is the transition that Paul is making in Romans, having made the issue of righteousness by faith clear.

He's using the example of Israel in 9, 10, and 11, and he's going to move toward the idea of obedience. Now, this is something of an unpopular concept because we like to think that we're justified by our works. And as Christianity in general, we love to go to James and we love to go to Ephesians 2, 8 through 10 and say, oh yes, salvation is by faith, but we've been created for good works.

Good works, now that we're saved, good works are the issue. We've got to get out and do these works. That's what pleases God.

That's what it says in Ephesians 2, 9 or 10, along in there where he says, we've been created in Christ Jesus for good works. And oh yes, we acknowledge salvation by faith, but living righteousness is what we do. And didn't we just see that in James? Doesn't James say, I'll show you my faith by my works? The problem is we can say that, oh yes, I'm doing all these works because I'm a believer and because I think this is God's will for my life and this is the way to please God and to accomplish God's work in the world.

Are those things issuing out of faith? Are we really fulfilling what James is talking about when we say, okay, I'm saved, now let's get out and do the work of God. Let's minister, let's evangelize, let's make an impact. Let's join God in his work.

Well, we're going to pause and take our break and when we come back, we're going to look at the scriptures and see what is real and what is a human construct in that regard. But let's pause here and take a break. We're back now from our break and we're continuing to explore what scripture has to say about the relationship between faith and works.

It seems fairly obvious and straightforward to us when we look at it in the pages of scripture. The difficulty comes when we go forth and resume the daily implementation of our lives. And when we look around at Christianity in general, we find that these things that seem so clear and so obvious and so logical and right in scripture don't happen in practice.

And in practice, we live outside the directives and outside the plan that God has revealed in his word. The plan that we've expressed faith in. And this is that difference in deciding that something is right and accepting it and not arguing with it, making it the object of faith in terms of believing it to be reality and then going out and do we throw that next switch in the positive direction? Do we say, because of this, I am going to now live in this way? The pattern of my life, the priorities of my

life are now going to be X, Y, and Z. If we do pursue this path, we will find ourselves in a minority.

Always, Jesus stated that there are few who find the narrow path that goes through the straight gate that leads to life. And he was talking about believers. He wasn't talking about salvation.

The wide road and the broad gate that lead to ruin is populated with the majority of Christianity. And we will never be a huge church if we hew to these principles. We will never find ourselves in a stadium surrounded by thousands of cheering Christians who believe exactly the way we do because it's not popular and it's not commonly understood and it isn't pursued.

One of the things that we see, if you'll glance down at Romans chapter 10, actually the ending of chapter nine, verse 30, what shall we say then? The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith. But Israel pursuing the law of righteousness has not caught. The word therefore attained, that pursue and attain are companion words.

You pursue something so that you can catch it. And it literally says they chased it and they didn't catch it. They chased and chased and chased and did not catch, why? In verse 32, because not by faith.

You notice the other words are in italics and this is great emphasis. Why did they pursue righteousness and not catch it? Because not by faith. The whole process was not by faith, not out of faith, but as it were by works.

They stumbled at the stumbling stone. And he began chapter 10 by saying, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, actually doesn't even say for Israel, it says for them, is that they may be delivered. He's talking about believing Israel.

He's talking about Jewish Christians. He's talking about the people of God. Verse two, I bear them witness they have a zeal for God, but not according to epinosis, not according to full knowledge, not according to doctrinal knowledge.

Epinosis, E-P-I-G-N-O-S-I-S. Verse three, they being ignorant. This is the word that we get agnostic from.

What does an agnostic believe? He's not an atheist. Atheist says there is no God. A Christian says there is a God and his son is Jesus Christ.

An agnostic says, I don't know. Gnosis or noeo is the verb. Gnosis is the noun.

You put the letter A in front of it, which is a negative. Agnosis, agnostic, ignorant, I don't know. They are ignorant of God's righteousness.

It doesn't say they're ignorant of God. It doesn't even say they're ignorant of Christ. They're

ignorant of God's righteousness.

They don't understand what God is looking for, what pleases God, what God declares to be righteous. They don't know it. They're ignorant of it.

And they're accountable and responsible for that ignorance. Because they don't know God's righteousness, they are seeking to establish their own righteousness and they have not submitted to. This is hupotasso, H-U-P-O-T-A-S-S-O.

Hupo, H-U-P-O, means under. Tasso, to stand, to stand under, to submit, to place oneself under the authority of. They do not, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

This takes submission. It requires setting aside of arrogance, setting aside of ego, setting aside of one's prestige or one's standing. Being submissive requires genuine humility.

It doesn't mean that you're weak. It doesn't mean that you're somehow inferior. Some of the greatest human individuals that I have ever personally known were enlisted men in the service.

And they submitted to the authority of officers, many of whom, and in some cases, all of whom were inferior in terms of quality and character and wisdom and general overall worth to themselves. But they submitted themselves and it wasn't a remark or an indication of their quality or their lack thereof. It was a conscious decision on their part to submit to authority, to submit to a structure and to work within the confines of a system that was constructed to accomplish a mission.

And submission is not a sign of inferiority. In many cases, submission is a sign of superiority. It takes a lot more character to be submissive than it does to be overbearing.

Any worthless, shallow, non-fiber of character individual can be overbearing and can order people about and can take charge of something and muck it up. But it takes a person of character and a person of quality to be genuinely submissive and to subordinate their interests to a higher goal, the fulfillment of a greater mission. It requires self-denial.

In many cases, it requires self-sacrifice. It requires foregoing many of the things that give us pleasure instinctively. We look for approval.

We want to be acknowledged. We want to rise to the top. We want to be feated and congratulated and applauded.

And many times we have to set that aside. Being submissive a lot of times means being out of the limelight and doing your work and not being acknowledged. And that requires character.

It requires grace under fire. It requires many things that may remain hidden until the light shines on it in the day of judgment when God, who sees in secret, will reward openly. And to have the

foresight and the patience and the quality of character to fulfill that role is an incredible thing.

And not many of us have it. This was Israel's problem. They did not submit to the righteousness of God.

It requires submission. It requires self-denial. It requires setting aside what many of us crave in terms of recognition.

And wasn't this a problem of the Pharisees? They stood in the street corners. They put ashes on their head. They wanted to be seen and acknowledged for their righteousness.

It just sums up and characterizes Israel's problem. I want to be righteous, but I want to be sure everybody knows it too. And we can't do that.

That's not God's plan. What is it that gives us the moral fiber and character to be able to do that? It's the transforming power of the Word of God. To not only see those realities and acknowledge them, but to act in the light of them.

And to say, because this is the right way, I'm going to walk in that way. And to throw that obedience switch after we have thrown the faith switch.