FAITH THAT WORKS
JAMES // REAL RELIGION
James 2:14-26 // Mike Romberger
May 28, 2017

CRAIG: Hey, welcome to Mission Hills. So glad that you’re here, whether you’re joining us in the big room or down in The Mill or online. We’re just so glad you’re with us this Memorial Day weekend. And I am super thrilled to be able to introduce to you a guest speaker today. It was about a year ago that Coletta and I were meeting with the Search Team here at Mission Hills, trying to discern if God was leading us to become the next lead pastor here at Mission Hills. And at the end of that meeting with the Search Team, they asked if I had any questions. And I remember sort of looking over at Coletta and looking back at them and saying, “Yeah. Could I call Pastor Mike?”

Pastor Mike Romberger was the previous pastor here at Mission Hills, if you don’t know him. And I wanted to get to know him a little bit and find out who he was and sort of just his, I don’t know, his personality was and how it is that God had been using him, because I knew that if I was gonna be coming here, it was gonna because I was gonna be jumping into the stream of what God had already been doing, and I wasn’t looking to make a radical turn. And so I wanted to get to know Pastor Mike. And so they said yes, and I got a chance to talk to him for a while and really begin to get to know him and to love him so much so that Coletta and I flew out to California before we took the job here and spent three days with he and Jane. And it was really clear to me after that time that, you know, not only is he a man after God’s own heart, but he’s a man after my own heart too. His love for the word and his love for the people that God’s allowed him to shepherd so similar to mine that it was very clear that I got to jump into a stream of what God had been doing here for many years through Pastor Mike. And so it is with absolute pleasure that I introduce to you, for a lot of you, somebody you already know really well, and for some of you maybe don’t know him at all and for the first time, Pastor Mike Romberger.

PASTOR ROMBERGER: Thank you. ...Well, it is a delight. It is a delight for us to be here. And I thank Craig for his warm invitation and his welcome. That was from last night, he was here last night. And on behalf of our family, we wanna say, it’s great to be home and to be with you. And I wanna get you caught up a little bit with our lives. And for those of you that are new in the last two years, this might not mean that much to you. But those of you who have been longer than that, you’ll know our family. And then I wanna share about what we’re doing, and then we’ll get into the passage today. But I wanna get you acquainted again with our family.

Our oldest daughter, Megan, had a big event almost a year ago. And I’m gonna show you some pictures here. This is Megan on June 5th of last year. And Megan’s right here, in the second row today. And we look back on this day as our all-time favorite family day. This is that Mount Hermon where we served, and a beautiful setting there where she and Eric had got married. And Megan is still at Open Door Ministry. She’s been on staff there for four years, working with those people downtown in Denver. Here’s a second picture of the wedding itself, and Eric kissing the bride, and Aubrey. And well, next to her, I’m stuck behind there like Dad’s good behind. And anyway, a great, great day. So Megan’s here, and they live over in the Parker area here in Denver.

And then Aubrey, who’s here somewhere, maybe out in the lobby right now... Anyway, she is also living here in the Denver area, next picture there. That’s her dog, Brisco. They like to go up to the mountains and hike and all of that. She has been working in some of the public schools in Douglas County. In the area here, it was speech pathology. And also now she’s full-time at Target in Parker and works there in a managerial position and really likes that.

And then next is Noelle, and Noelle is in college. She is at Moody Bible Institute in downtown Chicago. This is a picture taken of her just of a few months ago in our area at a field of flowers in the springtime, the ocean behind there. And Noelle’s doing great. She loves Moody Bible Institute. And anyway, she’s at Mount Hermon this summer on summer staff working with the day camp,
which is elementary school kids. Her camp name is Olaf, if you know the story of “Frozen.”

And then I wanna show you our little short son who is now 6 foot 2 and 17 years old. That’s Caleb. Just a few days ago I say, “Hey, Caleb, come out here and get mom. I wanna take your picture and I wanna show them how tall you’ve become.” And I told him the last year, “I can still take you down though, but I can’t.” And anyway, and so there’s Jane as well. And if you haven’t seen Jane, she’s here. She just doesn’t wanna hear me preach four times for some reason on the same sermon, but you can see her. And Caleb this last, you know, two years...you can imagine the shift in his life, significant, new high school, new friends. And it’s been difficult. The last semester, we really saw a great turn, a lot of excitement and friendships and that. He’s following the Lord. He’s doing really well. But it wasn’t an easy go at the beginning.

I thought I’d answer some frequently asked questions of us in the last few years, like “Where do you live?” Well, we live at the campsite. We live at Mount Hermon, which is in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We live in the midst of the redwoods. We’re eight miles from the ocean. It’s a beautiful spot. We live in a two-bedroom A-framed cabin. I have a four-minute walking commute to my office. And one day, as I was standing out in front of our A-frame on the deck, a little girl walked by and she said, “You live in a triangle house,” which we do, right, in the midst of the forest there.

I had a number of people ask in the last few years, “Do you still preach?” The answer is yes, I preach at conferences at the camp, and then also I preach at churches in the Bay Area, local churches up there. And I get to do that from time to time, but I don’t preach, obviously, as much as I did when I was here.

I’ve been asked the question, “Are you now a Giants fan?” And the answer is never, never, that will never happen. And I’m still a Rockies fan, yes, still a Broncos fan. We went to a Giants-Rockies game in April and decked out in our Rockies gear, which they don’t even care, we’re so irrelevant. But now that we’re getting better, maybe we’ll actually get a beer spilled on us or something. “We’ve arrived!” But anyway, we just maybe happen to be staying in town an extra day to go to a game tomorrow. We’re gonna get to Coors Field tomorrow. But we do like the Warriors. That’s pretty easy to like up there.

And then the main question we’ve been asked, as you can imagine, is “How are you doing? How are you liking the change in your life?” And we love Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is a place that I’ve been going to this camp since I was six years old. It’s a place that I’ve had incredible encounters with God. There’s something about camp ministry when you set yourself aside for a few days or a week to be in beauty, hear great teaching, just to have a chance to kind of, you know, chill in life and get refreshed. It’s amazing what God does in a life in a setting like that. And we get to see lives touched and changed and transformed all the time. Last year we had over 85,000 people that came to Mount Hermon for ministry that goes on there.

But at the same time, it’s not been easy, and the change has been significant for us in all sorts of ways. And the first year, in particular, we grieved. We grieved pretty hard. We loved being here. We love being with you. We miss you, we miss this church, we miss Colorado, we miss our kids. I heard a line last year that was really helpful to me personally words. This person said, “It’s possible to love where you are and long for where you came from.” That’s been our journey. But now that we’ve just completed two years, really excited about what’s going on in Mount Hermon, excited about the chance to be a part of it, I feel privileged that God has allowed us to do that.

But one of the reasons I feel that way also is because of what’s going on here. When Craig and Coletta came out to Mount Hermon... And here’s a picture of us there. We were flying through the trees in a canopy tour there in the redwood trees. It’s literally some of the platforms that you’re on, and this zipline tour is 170 feet above the ground. But when Craig and Coletta came out and spent a few days with us, our hearts connected, like, immediately. It was a really special time. I hope you know how well you’re being led and taught here. Do you know that? Yeah. I talked with Craig from time to time on the phone. We text each other, sometimes emails. And you have a godly leader. You have somebody who cares deeply about you and someone who teaches you so well. I get to hear speakers from all over the country that come to Mount Hermon. We have some great speakers.
But I wanna tell you, you get fed so well. I’m a Mount Hermon stalker. Excuse me, Mission Hills stalker. I get online and I watch. I watch Craig at times and just see what’s going on here. Man, his Easter sermon was amazing. It was incredible. So, you’re in such great hands. Coletta is a great compliment to him. We couldn’t be more thrilled. Everything I hear from the elders and the staff and other people, just consistent all the way through of their godly leadership. So I’m so grateful for all of that, and it’s just...what a great future here at Mission Hills.

And I’m very also grateful for their open invitation to Jane and to me and our family to come back at any time. That means a lot. Some guys are not secure in their own leadership from a previous leader. And Craig and Coletta have been, “Come on, we want to here. We love to have you here.” So we’re very grateful for that as well. Well, let’s pray.

Lord, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this beautiful day that you’ve given to us. Thank you for this place. Thank you for this church. Lord, I wanna say to you, Lord, that we are so grateful for your guidance, for your leading of bringing Pastor Craig here. And, Lord, may You bless him and the elders and the leaders and the staff as they continue to lead this exciting ministry forward, Lord. We know this is Your place. This is Your church. And, Lord, now as we turn our attention to Your word, may You do what only You can do. May You come and move us from the inside out. Confront us where we need to be challenged. Love us where we need to be loved. Encourage us where we need to be encouraged. Comfort us, Lord, where need to be comforted. May You do that work in our lives. Today I pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

I have a question to have you ponder, and it’s this. Is your faith legit if you don’t live it out? Is your faith legit if you don’t live it out? I want you take your Bibles and turn them to the Book of James, James chapter 2, as you’ve been in the Book of James for the last few weeks. If you don’t a Bible with you, you can take one of the Bibles in the seat back in front of you. If you don’t own a Bible, Mission Hills want you to have that Bible as their gift to you. James is gonna answer this question of “Is your faith legit if you don’t live it out?” He must have written this because of a concern that he had. Maybe he saw people who were talking the talk, but they weren’t walking the walk and he was concerned about the legitimacy of their faith.

You know people like that? You know people who...they say stuff but you don’t see their life lived like that? Or maybe that’s you. Maybe that’s currently, to be honest, how you’re doing this walk with the Lord.

And James is gonna lay out a line of logic where he has one point and only one point, and he’s going to hammer that point home in several different ways. He uses a methodical well-thought-through approach to support his point here. And he begins with questions to get the audience to think, to ponder. He asked this in verse 14 of chapter 2. “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” He’s asking two questions here. The first question is, “What good is it if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?” You know, these are people who claim to have faith, but you can’t tell. You can’t see it in them. James is asking, “Do you have legit faith if you don’t live it out?” He must have written this because of a concern that he had. Maybe he saw people who were talking the talk, but they weren’t walking the walk and he was concerned about the legitimacy of their faith.

The second question he asked is, “Can such faith save them? Can such faith save them?,” which is just of the belief, but not the works. “Can faith without actions get you in heaven?,” is what he’s saying. And you might answer, “Well, of course, all you need to do is have faith. The Bible says that in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith and not of yourselves.” It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, lest anyone should boast about it.” Certainly all you need is faith. Let’s ask this question another way. Is it possible to have the deeds of faith, but not have faith? To have the deeds of faith, but not have faith? Can these deeds get you into heaven?

So, these days it’s popular, in a good way, for some of the largest CEOs of some of the biggest companies of the world to become great philanthropists. They’re literally giving away hundreds of millions of dollars to better the world. They’re helping water systems in other countries. They are helping with education, they’re helping with medical issues in faraway places. And they’re pouring hundreds of millions of dollars to improve the world. That’s all good. By their philanthropy, will they be able to get into
heaven because of that and that alone?

Or let’s make it a more simple illustration here. So, I remember a thing called snowstorms, all right. We haven’t had one in two years, although we’re in the mountains. We are 350 feet above sea level, and we’re 8 miles from the beach, so snowflakes do not come down where we are. But I remember the big storms, right? And I remember when they would hit to the point where school would be closed, work would be closed, sometimes church would be closed. It was those times when you just kind of hunker down, and everybody in the neighborhood...they would help each other out. I loved that. We’d all get out with our snow shovels. Some had snowblowers, some would take their cars, and they would, you know, move back and forth in the street to try to plow out an area so you could get out of the neighborhood. And it wasn’t like only the followers of Jesus went out with their snow shovels. No, everybody seemed to go out and help each other out because they were just caring neighbors. It had nothing to do with faith. Can someone who has no faith in Christ do good works and get into heaven?

Megan is involved, like I mentioned, downtown at Open Door Ministry. They have a table out here today, that’s why she’s here this weekend. And they do a great work down downtown. They take people from off the streets, people who have been abused, people who have had addictions, all sorts of difficult things in their life, people in the sex trade. They take them out of there, they put them in these homes and they do all they can through Christ as a center of it to bring them back to a good life. Well, just a few months ago, I was in a town called Watsonville, which is on the Central Coast of California. And they have a similar program, two years people off the streets, some of the similar reasons, try to rehabilitate them. But there’s zero faith at all involved in it, none. It’s just to help these people out. It’s a good work that they do. Can the good work that they do satisfy God so they get in because of their good works? Notice the wording in verse 14. It does not say, “Can these works save them?” But it says, “Can such faith save them?” Faith without works. The issue here is not if a person can be saved by works, because that’s contradicted throughout the Bible. But what is genuine faith? What is real religion?

And so for the next 12 verses, James pounds a point home as he provides three arguments to make one point. And what is his one point? His one point is this. You can see real religion with your eyes. You can see real religion with your eyes. You can see it in action. And he's gonna start with the first of three arguments to tell us what that's about. Argument number one, is about caring for needy people, which you did last weekend.

Love In Action, wonderful works that you did throughout the community to tell them that we love you, which you do at Life Center. We got to take a tour as a family last night of The Life Center for the first time. When we were here, it was just been purchased. But now to see what all has been done there was very exciting of what Mission Hills is doing there, great job there. Caring for needy people, James chapter 2:15-16. James writes, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; Keep warm and well-fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs. What good is it?” What good is it? He says, “A brother or a sister.” This is not talking about necessarily a biological brother or sister, but it is talking about familiarity. It’s not just somebody off the street that you’ve never seen before and you just somehow run into them and you’ll never see them again. This is someone that somehow is in your circle, someone that you go to school with, someone you go to church with, someone in the neighborhood, someone at the workplace, someone on the soccer field. Somehow you have some level of acquaintance with them. It’s not just somebody that you’re never going to see again, somebody that you might know their name, a brother or a sister. And you see them. It says, “Without clothes and daily food,” meaning this person needs immediate help. Daily food. This is a person who, if you just put it off a week or two weeks, they’re in significant trouble. They need help today. They need help now.

James says, “But you say to them, “Go in peace. Keep warm and well-fed, but do nothing for them.”” James asked the question, “What good is it, what good is that?” It’s like going to a grocery store, filling up your bags full of groceries. Now that we live in California, I miss plastic bags. New law, no plastic bags. It’s tough. You got your plastic bags full of groceries. You get out of the car, and there’s somebody by your house walking by and they’re acquaintance of your...you know them somehow, and somehow you know that they have no food in the refrigerator and no food in the pantry. They don’t know how they’re gonna eat their dinner that night. And while you’re filled with groceries and you’re walking up and you see them on the sidewalks, you say to them,
“Hey, good to see you. Hey, I’m praying for you.” And then you take your groceries inside, and the pantry that’s two-thirds full you fill up the rest of the way, and the refrigerator that was half full, you fill it up the rest of the way. That’s all you do.

James is saying talk is...what? Cheap. Talk is cheap. His point is that if you say that you have faith in Jesus, but you don’t help others in need, do really have faith in Jesus? Because Jesus cares about people in need. He cares about the disenfranchised. He cares about the poor. Pastor Craig taught on that last week. Your actions will legitimize your beliefs, is what James is saying.

So, Jane’s a part of a women’s Bible study through our church that we attend. She goes on Wednesday mornings to this Bible study. And one of the ladies in the Bible study, a few months ago, she lost her husband. Her name’s Janelle. Janelle lost her husband, and the ladies have done remarkable things to help Janelle out in this time of grieving for her. She was having trouble, as you can imagine, even getting out of bed in the morning to go to Bible study, to get herself together and to go. So they said, “You know what, Janelle? We’ll just come to you. You don’t have to prepare anything, you don’t have to clean anything. We’ll just come to your house, so you just have to get out of bed. That’s all you have to do. We’re gonna come to your place.” They have been bringing her meals, not just the first week, not just the second week. Now, for months they were bringing her meals to care for her. They have a schedule where the ladies go and they go and go on walks with her and to take her out so she has time with these other ladies. Some of the ladies have gone and spent nights with her. Months after the death of her husband, they continue to pour their hearts out to this woman.

Additionally, a woman in the same group just had her husband leave her. Her name’s Heather. Heather has a severely disabled child, her only child. And now she’s the sole caregiver of this child. Mother’s Day came recently, right? And Mother’s Day came and these ladies in this Bible study, they put together a basket of gifts because they knew that Heather’s kid wasn’t gonna give her anything for her Mother’s Day, and they brought these gifts to her. And they weren’t like, you know, bath oils, nothing like that. What it was, was every one of them had said to her with a card things like, “I’m gonna take you on a spa treatment. You and me, we’re gonna go together. I’m gonna take you out to a movie. I’m gonna take you out for a meal.” It was ways to be together, to encourage her, tangible ways to express love to this woman.

James says in verse 17, “In the same way, faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action is dead,” its dead. Faith needs to be accompanied by action or that faith is not alive, that faith is not real, that faith is not legit! Workless faith is worthless faith.

And then he goes to a second argument to prove what he’s trying to say about faith and deeds. The second argument is the faith of demons, the faith of demons. And you go, “What? The faith of demons?” Yeah. Look at verse 18, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith. I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.”’ Then he says this. Get this. “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and shudder.” See, what in the world is that all about? So let’s try to understand this, what he’s trying to say here.
So, who James has written his book to, his letter to, is to people who have been dispersed in all sorts of different areas due to persecution, followers of Christ. They are Jewish people who now have converted to Christianity. They are Gentiles who now are followers of Christ. Both Judaism and Christianity, of course, teach in one God, there's one God. In that culture, beyond that, a lot of them believed in multiple gods. But nope, there's just one God. He says, “You believe in one God. You do well to believe that.” But then he says this, “The demons also believe that and they shudder.” They shudder. You say, “How does a demon believe in one God, what is that about?” Well, demons were...they’re fallen angels. They used to be in heaven before they fell. I'll let Pastor Craig do a sermon on that. He can do that sometime so you get all the info on that. But they were in heaven at one time and out of rebellion against God, they fall, fallen angels. They know better than anybody that there’s only one God, and they shudder at Him because they know of His authority and they know of His power, and they know that someday everything’s gonna end badly for them, but they believe in one God. He’s saying, “You believe in one God like they do.”

Now, it was years ago when I was a much younger man than I am now that everything about faith kind of coalesced in one “Aha!” moment for me, where it wasn’t just the faith of my parents anymore, but it really became my faith when I understood this. When a light bulb went on that the ways of Satanism go diametrically opposed to the ways of the one God, the ways of what we look at in Christianity. In Christianity, you have the 10 Commandments from the Old Testament. In Satanism, we have 9 commandments which go directly opposed to the 10 Commandments. In Christianity, you have Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And in Satanism, you have a goat, diametrically opposed. In Christianity, you have, God has the perfect number of seven. And so, in Satanism, they do 666. In Christianity, you have a cross that’s upright. In Satanism, they invert it and go upside down. And when I realized that Satan was directly against not the other faiths of the world, but against the faith that I believed, that there's one God and He's the enemy of Satan, that’s when I knew this is true in every way.

So here’s what James is saying. The demons believe in one God just like you do, but the demons aren’t going to heaven. Why? Because of their actions! They will not prove in any way, shape or form, that their belief has led them to any kind of action. Their actions are horror-movie actions, right? Gore, violence, gratuitous sex, bitterness, unforgiveness, hatred. That’s all a part of the satanic world. They said they have a belief, but they don’t have the deeds. This is why James says in verse 18, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.” Do you remember James’ point? His point is, you can see real religion with your eyes. You can see it with your eyes. So his first argument is care for a needy person. Second argument is the faith of demons. And now, he gets into real-life examples.

Argument number three is real people with real religion, real people with real religion. Two examples of real people who lived in the past that are gonna help him with this point. In verse 20, he says this, “You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Do you want some evidence? And I’m gonna give you some evidence here, two examples of real people to provide proof of this argument that you can see real religion with your eyes. These two people are both in Matthew chapter 1 in the genealogy of Jesus, which means they’re in the line of lineage that brings the Messiah to this world, Matthew chapter 1. They are also in Hebrews chapter 11, which many call the Hall of Faith. It’s that area where they lift up the great people of faith from the Old Testament. Both of these individuals are in the genealogy of Jesus and in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews chapter 11. But beyond that, it couldn’t be more different. It couldn’t be more apart in who they were. One is a man and one is a woman. One is a Jew, one is a Gentile. One is revered as a spiritual icon, one is remembered as a prostitute. One is the great Abraham who’s the father of Judaism, the father of Christianity. And even Islam claims him as their father, huge spiritual icon. The other is Rahab, always referred to in the New Testament as Rahab the Prostitute.

James starts by giving an example of Abraham. In verse 21 he says, “Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s friend.” James is saying about Abraham that due to his faith in God, he acted. His actions were a result of his faith. Specifically, being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar. So you go to Hebrews chapter 11. In verse 17 it says this. “By faith, Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.” And due to Abraham’s faith, he responded with action. Back to James chapter 2:22, it says, “You see that his faith, Abraham’s faith, and his actions
were working together. By his faith led him to the action.” And this it says made his faith complete, to have both the faith and the deeds together made his faith complete, which means without both faith and actions that help me, Broncos fans it's incomplete. Good job. We miss that. Caleb and I still when we get to watch Broncos game, we’ll yell that out when we hear the crowd yelling it out.

And then comes a theologically highly controversial verse, verse 24. In fact, the Book of James...some biblical scholars think that it shouldn’t even be in the Bible. Some think that it teaches you go to heaven by your works and it contradicts everything about faith in there. And verse 24 is kind of the kingpin of that. And Pastor Craig on Thursday wrote me an email says, “How are you doing? Anything I can do for you before you could come out here?” And I said, “Yeah, yeah. You could have given me a less controversial passage. Thank you very much.” And he said that when he used to be an associate pastor he felt that the senior pastor there always gave him the hardest passages. But he's plenty smart, so I guess he could handle it.

But look at verse 24. James writes this. He says, “You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.” And you go, “Whoo.” Something that James was saying, that you were saved by works and not by faith. But that doesn’t square up with everything else that we’ve already looked at and read. What he says mirrors his first two arguments. So we gotta get this. That is, that if you are just about the right beliefs and not about the right actions, it’s not right. It’s wrong. It’s not genuine faith. It’s all talk, but no walk. And God’s not okay with that. It’s a combination of the two.

So, back in the Hall of Faith in Hebrew chapter 11, it says this about Abraham and his actions. So look at this, “He who had embraced the promises...” So Abraham embraced the promises, what were the promises that, through Isaac, his son, that there would be descendants, as many as the stars in the sky, as many as the sand on the seashore?” Problem if you’re gonna kill your son on the altar and through him it’s gonna be all the descendants, how’s that gonna happen? Doesn’t have any kids yet. But he, Abraham, who had embraced the promises, who had believed God for these promises, who was about to sacrifice his one and only son even though God had said to him, “It is through, Isaac, that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham then reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. What that means is this. Abraham had such a belief in the promise that through Isaac that God was gonna bring all these descendants that even when God said, “I want you to kill Isaac. Lay him on the altar and sacrifice him,” he was willing to do so because he believed that, “Okay, I’m gonna do this out of obedience to God, because I believe in His promise, and I believe He can even raise Isaac from the dead. And maybe that’s how He’s gonna accomplish this. But I know He’s gonna accomplish this because of my belief in Him. Here comes my action.” Wow, the depth of his belief to be able to put his son on an altar like that. Abraham’s faith moved him to action.

James says there’s another example that I wanna share with you, too, and that’s about Rahab. Rahab is the woman who lived in Jericho. And the spies from Israel came to check out Jericho, because they wanted to take it down. It was in the Promised Land, they wanted to take it down. And so this lady is a prostitute. Maybe she had a brothel. I mean, where should outside guys go hide if they’re in a foreign area? Well, probably a brothel is a good place to go do that, because that would be where maybe visiting men would go, and you wouldn’t think much of it. They go to this place and the authorities find out there’s foreigners there. They wanna find out and make sure that they’re not spies, not gonna cause problems. And they go, “Where are these guys?” to Rahab. Then Rahab says, “Oh, they were here, but they’re not here anymore. They’re gone. You can catch them if you hurry up.” And all the while she’s hid these guys from them to great peril to herself. If she got found out she could be, you know, certainly put in prison or killed for her lying to them. And James says this about Rahab in verse 25. “In the same way, was not even Rahab the Prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?” Don’t miss the first words, “In the same way.” In the same way as Abraham, the great pillar of the faith, that the Jewish Abraham is compared in the same way to Gentile Rahab who’s the prostitute, because God doesn’t play favorites. It’s an even playing field.

Listen to Rahab’s faith in God from Joshua chapter 2, her words to the visiting spies. This is what she says to them, so this is how we know she has faith in God. She said, “We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you
came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely
destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear, and everyone's courage failed because of you.” Now get this line. “For
the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.” She said, “We have heard what your God did, and I believe in your
God. And because of my belief in your God, therefore, I’m hiding you here.” Her faith led to her action just like Abraham, same
principle, same truth. And then in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11:31, it says this of Rahab. “By faith the prostitute, Rahab...”
She can’t get rid of that designation. “By faith the prostitute, Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those
who were disobedient.”

And get this. Rahab is the only woman mentioned in the Hall of Faith. There’s all sorts of men on there. There’s a long list of
them including some of the stalwart like, you know, Noah, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, and a whole other long list. And in the
middle of all that is one woman, Rahab, because her faith led to action. You knew that she had legitimate faith by her actions,
by her deeds, by her behavior. You can see real religion with your eyes. Three arguments with one point.

Do you remember verse 14, where we started, where James said, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to
have faith, but has no deeds. Can that faith to save him?” We find his final answer in verse 26, “As the body without the spirit is
dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” As the body without the Spirit is dead...as a body without a living breathing inner spirit is
dead, so too faith, if it doesn’t have deeds, is dead. It’s worthless. It’s useless. It’s fake.

So why did James work so hard to make this point? He spends a lot of time trying to unveil this, but why? Since I haven’t talked
to him specifically, I still think I have a pretty good reason why. I think he saw people who were faking it, talking to talk, but not
walking the walk, and then believing that somehow because of the good things they were doing, that they were gonna be in,
that they were gonna be in heaven when their deeds and their faith did not mesh together. He’s thinking you can go to church
and you can sing a song. You could drop a little money into the offering. Do your good deed for the week. But then, away from
here, there’s no thought about God. There’s no thought about the principles that are in the scriptures. There’s nothing about your
belief that causes you to act. You go off on the road and you live a totally different life on the road. When you’re at the workplace,
you’re totally different person than you’d ever be in church. Behind closed doors in your home, there’s no thought of nurturing
your life with Lord, learning from him, being in his word or being a changed person. You say a few things to please somebody.
You come here because it makes you feel a bit better. But really, in reality, all you have is talk, but there’s no action behind it.
And you’re gonna die someday, and you’re gonna find out that you didn’t go to heaven, and don’t be one of those people. That’s
what I think is behind why he writes what he writes.

You see, when Jesus comes into a life, He transforms it from the inside out. He makes us different. So we begin to think
differently than we ever did before. We begin to care for people who we would have never cared about before. We would give our
money away to the things that we would have kept for ourselves in the past. We will have kindness that we didn’t think was
possible, forgiving people who have hurt us. We will care about things like integrity and decency and loving people regardless
of how they respond back to us, if they care about our faith or not, we’ll still love them regardless. When Jesus comes into a life,
we get changed that our behavior takes on the characteristics of who He is. You can see it. Doesn’t mean you’re perfect, because
you won’t be. Doesn’t mean you won’t struggle more. Doesn’t mean there won’t be those times you go, “Why did I do that? What
was I thinking? Why did I say that? I should have done... I hurt that person. I wish I hadn’t have.” But when Jesus comes into a
life, He changes it from the inside out, and you can see the change and the difference. It’s palpable. It’s real. It’s a transformed
life.

I would hate to end this time and not call for you to be able to have an opportunity to get away from being a poser, from not
being legit. To come to the Lord and say, “You know what? It’s like James knows me so well. And yep, that’s true about me. And
yes, I’m not the real guy, the real guy that you think I am.” And today, get serious about giving your life to Christ and letting Him
transform you from the inside out and being a true, genuine follower of Him.
And so I want you to bow where you are. Just take this time between you and God. Don’t be thinking about the person next you. Don’t be thinking, “Oh, I hope so-and-so is listening.” No, no, this is between you and God right now. Let truth be told that if people knew your life away from this place, they would know that you’re a poser. And right now, you know that God is calling you to Himself to say, “No, I’m gonna change and I’m gonna center my life on You, Lord. I’m gonna ask You to come into my life. I’m gonna ask You to forgive me of my sins. I’m gonna now ask You to transform me from the inside out, that my life behavior will coincide with my beliefs.” If you wanna do that today, I’m just gonna pray a prayer and ask you to follow along with me. Just make it your own prayer to the Lord. Dear Lord, God, I believe in You. I believe that You are the one God. I believe that Jesus came, died for my sin, and I ask You to forgive me of my sin. Lord, I’ve been a pretender, and You know that. So today I receive You. I ask You to come into my life to transform me from the inside out, to help me be who You want me to be, to act like You want me to act, that You’ll be able to see my faith in You by my actions. Lord, I give myself to You, to live for You the rest of my days.

And if that’s been the prayer of your heart this morning. I’m gonna ask you sometime today, in some tangible way, to tell somebody who is a follower of Christ what you did, to not keep going without being public about it, but to tell somebody, tell somebody maybe in a prayer ministry, a friend here or for somebody else you came with or somebody at home or somebody on the phone. Tell somebody today. Lord, we give You thanks for how You care about every part of our being. You care about our actions. You care about our beliefs. You want them meshed together. Lord, may we follow You in such a way that what we do on the outside shows what You’ve done for us on the inside. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.