

# REDEMPTION CHURCH

Guest Speaker, Mike Edwards | "A Big Idea from my Big Brother"

## JAMES 2:14-26

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup>So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup>But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup>Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup>For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

This week Mike Edwards shared valuable insight and lessons from the Book of James, believed to be authored by the half-brother of Jesus.

**Big Point:** There is an eternal difference between a *living faith* and a *dead faith*. Pastor explained the point from the text to three types of people: theology nerds, story lovers, and critics/skeptics.

### Notes:

**Theology Nerds:** James says, "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." We might see an immediate problem: does this contradict the teaching of Paul?

- "For by works of the law no human being[c] will be justified in his sight..." **Romans 3:20a**; **Eph 2:8-9**; **Galatians 3:3-6**.

It's a big issue –THE dividing issue with Rome/Orthodox.

However, what appears to be a contradiction isn't as much of a problem as it may first seem. Language can be used for effect, and how we use language (like *justify*) can change over time.

- We're made right by Christ, but we prove we're right with the works that Christ has for us. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." **Eph 2:10**

Works are not how we become or stay saved, but how we know that we are. So we are saved *by faith alone*, but not by a faith *that remains alone*. Saving faith is a living faith.

**There's an eternal difference between a living and dead faith.**

**Story Lovers:** The story of Father Abraham from Genesis 12-25 sets the stage for God's people and culminates in one of the stories in the Bible that turns people off.

- God calls *Abraham* (originally *Abram*, *exalted father*) from his land/familiarity to be founding father of his nation and ultimately *all people of faith*.

**The move of faith will always push us out of a comfort zone.**

- God makes a covenant with him –promising his offspring

## Hebrews 11:17-19

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

## Philippians 2:12-13

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

## Hebrews 11:9-10

*By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

## NOW WHAT?

Pray for strengthened faith that produces His works in us! *"I believe; help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24)

will be like the stars ([Gen 15:5-6](#)); but, by the next chapter, Abraham intervened and had Ishmael with servant Hagar.

**Note: Our plans are never better than God's plans!**

- God appears again and changes his name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah, *mother of nations* ([Gen 17:17-18](#)).
- 25 years later, Isaac is born! Then, another call; the call of calls. ([Gen 22](#))
  - **What this isn't:** an actual child sacrifice (Molek).
  - **What it is:** a test of Abraham's faith compared to that in false gods.
- He considered God able to raise someone from the dead and said God would provide a lamb ([Gen 22:8](#)).
- God didn't just **spare** Isaac, **He provided** a ram; and Abraham didn't just **say he'd trust and obey, he did it** (put his faith where his mouth was). **Abraham had faith in the works of God.** Today, this would be letting Holy Spirit work in and through us for the good works God has for us.

**Critics & Skeptics** (ranging from agnostic to antagonistic): We ALL live by faith –in something. Even the demons believe but tremble (dead faith).

**Believing is entrusting your life to something, not just agreeing with its validity.** One can struggle to put their faith/trust/belief in Jesus, but Jesus exists either way. C.S. Lewis argued we must accept Him as either liar, lunatic, or Lord. We must focus on the real Jesus of the Bible, not one manufactured by culture. Of COURSE 'He gets us', but do we get Him?

There are several reasons we get stuck, but our text today covers the common one for remaining skeptical/critical of the Christian faith:

**CHRISTIANS ARE HYPOCRITES! YES!** James agrees! We all are, aren't we?

- The "ideal" vs. everyone/everything else (We don't stop using money because fake/counterfeit exists do we?).
- Hope for hypocrites: Jesus wasn't a hypocrite. He was the real deal (and the IDEAL).
- Our own hypocrisy may be blinding us to the faithfulness of Christians too! Christianity is good for the world: charity, art, science, culture, literary advancements, education, ethics, the legal system, just-war theory, marriage and family, slavery & civil rights, freedoms of speech and religion...
- We need to look beyond our hypocrisy to God's faithfulness.