

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Thank you, Gwen, Dave, we appreciate the ministry of our young people. Of course, Dave graduating last year. I had the joy yesterday being with the quartet at the Lima Baptist Temple in Lima, Ohio. Great attendance. The flu has affected them like it has the rest of us, but they had somewhere around 1,475 and Sunday school. A great morning service crowd and great crowd last night. The quartet just a tremendous job at the banquet on Saturday night and in Sunday school and Sunday morning and Sunday night. They had them do six songs last night. So they were somewhat sung out by the end of the day, but they're doing a very fine job and a great ministry. And we had the privilege of seeing a number come on assurance of salvation and coming for baptism. Just a great day, and we're thankful for the blessing of God. I'm sure the rest of you who are out ministering also were used as well.

Paul H. Dixon:

We started singing a chorus last week. Oh sweet wonder, Jesus the son of God, how I adore him. Oh, how I love him. Jesus, the son of God. I was walking to the dining hall the other day and a young lady behind me was singing it, so that's good. I want to hear you sing it this morning. Let's lift it up and sing it out. (singing)

Paul H. Dixon:

You know Jesus, my Lord and savior. Jesus, the son of God. Have you ever met him or known his favor? Jesus, the son of God. I want you to specially think about it, in light of the message and the portion in James we're going to study today. Think about it personally. Now sing it. (singing)

Paul H. Dixon:

[inaudible 00:03:28] and sing it out. (singing)

Paul H. Dixon:

James chapter two. If the first chapter of the book of James says show your faith in the warfare. The second chapter of the book of James challenges us to show our faith by our works. And we notice the contrast between a genuine real love to a false love in verse 1 through 13.

Paul H. Dixon:

Last Monday, we noted the picture, then the paradox, and finally the pronouncement. Today, we want to note verse 14 through 20, and we will study a genuine faith or the contrast between a false faith and a real faith. The first 13 verses dealing with the genuine love or the opposite of that, and the last verses dealing with the genuine faith or a false faith.

Paul H. Dixon:

I want you to note, first of all, the profession beginning in verse 14. The profession, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils or the demons also believe, and tremble.

Paul H. Dixon:

These verses and the verses to follow have to be some of the more difficult verses in the New Testament to understand. I would suppose there has been more controversy over this passage that I have read and again, the other verses that we will be reading today than any other section of scripture in the New Testament. I'm sure you are aware that Martin Luther was willing to scrap the entire book of James and say that it did not belong in the canon of scripture because of what I have just read. He said it was a right strawy epistle. The reason being, he was so convinced his life verse being the just shall live by faith. That justification is by faith and that James was contradicting that. That somehow James and Paul do not agree.

Paul H. Dixon:

I think we need to see what Paul says. A finger in James chapter two and a flip back to Romans chapter three. Does James contradict Paul? Does James teach salvation by works or even a combination of faith and works, and Paul teach salvation by faith? Romans 3:28, "Therefore" Paul says, "we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." A very plain statement of scripture. Paul goes on record, salvation is by faith and it's apart from the deeds of the law.

Paul H. Dixon:

Turn again, if you will to Galatians 2:16. This great epistle of Galatians that speaks to the matter of salvation dealing with the works issue, the law issue, the Judaizers. Galatians 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Again, a very plain statement of scripture. Did James contradict Paul? I think not, and I will show you why in just a moment, but may I suggest this, that James being the earliest of the epistles, Paul certainly knew what James had written. We would assume that Paul had the opportunity to study James before he even would write Galatians and Romans.

Paul H. Dixon:

It is also interesting that in the book of Acts, Paul appeared before the council of Jerusalem on this very issue, as to what part the law and those things that had to do with Judaism would have to do with the new church that was being established, the relationship to Christ, the entire issue. And the decision of that council was announced by chairman James. And so we certainly would, again, conclude that at least if we had both of them on the platform this morning, they would say we are in total agreement. And yet we would come back and say, but James... As we go back to chapter two, it seems that you are not saying the same thing that Paul is saying. Well, I believe he is. He's just looking at it from a different light.

Paul H. Dixon:

It's important when we think about the profession, that you take your pen and circle in verse 14, the word "say". "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say." Give lip service to the fact that he has faith and have not works. Can faith save him? And the revised version has this, "Can that faith save

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

him?" Can that kind of faith save him? A wordy faith when we say we have faith, but there are no works to back that up to demonstrate that can that kind of faith save him in. In verse 16, and one of you circle it again, "Say unto them." Verse 18, "Yea, a man may", circle it again, "say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

Paul H. Dixon:

I think it also interesting to note that John Calvin said, "We are not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works." That's worth writing in the margin of your Bible. We are not saved by a faith plus works, but by a faith that works. Again, he insightfully said, "Faith justifies the man and works justifies the faith." And I believe you will see that as we work our way through this portion.

Paul H. Dixon:

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." The word "tremble" is an interesting word. The Greek word translated tremble here is only found one time in the New Testament and it's on this occasion. The Latin word for tremble that is used here carried over into the English language is the word for horror, and both the Greek word and the Latin word mean standing straight up. And it has the idea of someone who goes through such a frightening experience that his hair stands straight up on his head. And James is saying the kind of fear, the kind of trembling that comes to the demons because of their knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done causes their hair to stand straight up. This is not just some kind of normal fear, but an unusual fear that brings trembling and shuddering.

Paul H. Dixon:

James does not condemn orthodoxy, rather, he compliments it. "Thou believest that there is one God." You have a good doctrinal position on God, who he is, you do well. But your position is not any better than the devil, than the demons. They believe this so much that it actually causes gray fear. It affects them emotionally. And perhaps the application would be, does your understanding of God... Does your knowledge of God affect you to that degree? For you see, I am convinced that the devil could join many of our churches if we just examined him on his doctrinal statement.

Paul H. Dixon:

He could walk down the aisle of one of our churches and a pastor could him and say, "Why are you coming?"

Paul H. Dixon:

And he could say, "I want to join your church, and I am coming on a profession of faith. I want you to know that I believe in Jesus Christ. In fact, I knew him in Heaven. I was there when he was there. We used to rub shoulders together. I know Jesus Christ that well."

Paul H. Dixon:

"Oh, but wait a minute, sir. Do you believe that he was born of a Virgin?"

Paul H. Dixon:

"Absolutely."

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

Paul H. Dixon:

"But do you believe that Jesus Christ was sinless?"

Paul H. Dixon:

"No doubt about it."

Paul H. Dixon:

"Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on a cross for sinners?"

Paul H. Dixon:

"I believe that Jesus Christ died for the sin of the world."

Paul H. Dixon:

"Do you believe that Jesus Christ arose from the dead?"

Paul H. Dixon:

"Oh yes. He literally bodily arose from the dead has ascended to the right hand of the father and is coming again."

Paul H. Dixon:

Well, it looks like we ought to recommend him to the deacons. There shouldn't be any question about this. He probably would agree to join the choir. He might even want to take a Sunday school class.

Paul H. Dixon:

"But sir, wait, just a moment. I understand that your lifestyle has not been the best. Sir, I would like to know, are you willing to admit that you have sinned against God? In fact, as I read my Bible and Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, you have obviously rebelled against God. And are you willing to repent of what you've done against God and deal with your sin and then receive this Jesus Christ by faith for your forgiveness and salvation?" And he'd walk out the door. Intellectually. He has it all together, but he has never repented and put his faith in Christ. It is just an intellectual faith, which is not faith at all. It is just a profession. It is just someone who may know the plan of salvation, but does not know the person of salvation.

Paul H. Dixon:

Therefore, we do know that it's possible to have a great theological statement to have an intellectual position and not really know the Lord. May I give a warning to some of you young theologians. I know that some of you know more now about theology than you will ever know the rest of your life, and that's an amazing thing, but most of us have experienced that in the dormitories when we were freshman and sophomores, we knew more at that particular juncture than any other time since. The older you get, the more you find out you don't know. But when you first come in contact with some truths and it's enlightening, all of a sudden you have a great grasp of it all.

Paul H. Dixon:

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

Let me give you a warning. I was talking to one of our very fine professors this summer, and we were talking about some with their great doctrinal discussions. I certainly do not put that down because I think that's very profitable. It's stimulating. But sometimes with a very poor attitude. A very egotistical attitude, "Ah, I have arrived and you have not. It's too bad. If you were smart as I was, you'd have this all figured out like I do." And they begin putting others down and become quite haughty and quite proud. And there's a certain air that they carry themselves with. And I've listened to some tapes of some men like this, who are not college students. And this faculty member said, " [inaudible 00:19:14] Dixon, I'm not even sure that some of these people are saved." He said, "Intellectually, yes, they can argue. Intellectually, they've read all the books and they've studied all the great theologians and what they have to say. But their attitude makes me wonder whether they've really been converted." It is possible to have an intellectual faith, but not a saving faith.

Paul H. Dixon:

But there's another side to this coin. It's possible to have an emotional faith that is not saving faith either. If you don't believe that, you just study the parable of the seed. And the parable of the seed teaches that there are those who make emotional decisions and are never converted. In fact, I think our churches are filled or maybe not filled with people like that. People who get into various services, whether they be regular services of the church or evangelistic meetings or children's meetings or what have you. Everything is geared to the emotion and people make emotional decisions. They don't understand what they're doing, and they go out the door and they last for a period of time, and then they're just gone or maybe they never even come back. The parable of the seed teaches that there are people who make emotional decisions, don't know what they're doing, and don't get converted.

Paul H. Dixon:

The key word in the parable of the seed when you study it in Matthew 13 is the word understanding. The only one who gets saved is the only one who understands it. Now, I'm not saying that emotions do not enter in when you're converted, because they certainly do in various degrees. But my friend, if you do not understand the gospel, if you do not understand your sinfulness and your lostness, you cannot be saved. If you do not understand who Christ is and what he's done for you, at least to the degree of Calvary. At least to the degree of an empty tomb. If you do not understand to a degree that you must repent of sin and receive Christ by faith, then you cannot be converted. I'm not saying you have to understand the entire Bible, but there have to be basic things in your understanding.

Paul H. Dixon:

So again, it comes back to the word that we find so much here in scripture. It's a matter of balance. There needs to be a proper understanding and a proper emotion. But James does say that there are those who make a profession who, obviously, like the devil are not converted. So we look at the profession, now let's notice how this reveals itself in the practice. In the practice in verse 15 through 17, what happens is a brother or sister is without clothing and without food, and this professing Christian says to them, "Oh, depart in peace. God bless you, brother. Be warmed, filled." Pat him on the back, say, "I sure hope you find some clothes for your body and food to eat." Nevertheless, you don't give them anything for the body and you don't give them any food for the stomach. What kind of profit is this? How have you helped them? Just by your blessing? Even so, faith, if it hath not works is dead being alone.

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

Paul H. Dixon:

And so James is saying, and again, you must remember this in the context of what we have already read in the second chapter about the rich man and the poor man, and what we read in the first chapter. They're having evidently a great deal of problem in that early church over this very issue.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now he moves into what I would call the proof of genuine saving faith, and he uses two Old Testament illustrations in verses 20 through 25 that these Jewish people could understand. And the first one is Abraham, "wilt thou know, O vain man, wilt thou know that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our faith justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Wait a minute. Again, an apparent contradiction. James says that Abraham, when he offered Isaac upon the altar was justified by his works.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now Paul addresses Abraham too. Finger and James 2 back to Romans 4:1, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father has pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works." Wait a minute. Sounds like he's going to put down Abraham being justified by works. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Paul H. Dixon:

Paul is saying that Abraham again was justified by faith when he believed God and was counted unto him for righteousness. When did that happen? Verse 20, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

Paul H. Dixon:

Evidently, James and Paul are talking about two different events in the life of Abraham. And this is your assignment for next week. I want you to write it down. I want you to study Romans 4 in the light of Genesis 15, and I want you to study James 2 in the light of Genesis 22. For you see in Romans 4, Paul is talking about when God came to Abraham and gave him the promise, both to Abraham and to his wife, that though they were old they would bear seed. That he would become the father of the multitude. And when you get to Genesis chapter 22, that's what James is talking about when he offered Isaac upon the altar, and that is 30 years later.

Paul H. Dixon:

So, when Abraham believed God, it was counted unto him for righteousness, justification, salvation; but 30 years later, there was another opportunity to justify his faith, to demonstrate trade his faith. And

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

there, when he offered Isaac, he was justified by works, not for salvation, but those works said, "Hey, Abraham, really exercised faith 30 years ago."

Paul H. Dixon:

There are not degree of faith, but it always cooperates with works and is called upon from time-to-time to display special acts of obedience. And I believe that this is a great illustration of it that James gives to us, here in James 2 in the life of Abraham. And then, another illustration in verse 25, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" Again for your assignment there, study Joshua 2:1-22, and Joshua 6:17-27, and Hebrews 11:31.

Paul H. Dixon:

And to simplify it and to condense it, in essence, Rahab believed God before the spies ever came to her house. And the fact that she hid the spies was, again, an act... They were works that justified the faith that she had already exercised. The scripture is plain, we are not saved by works. The scriptures says it's not by works which we have done, but according to his mercy, he has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. We are saved by faith. Titus 1:16 says they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him. Paul said again, in Titus 2:14, we are a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Paul H. Dixon:

Let's quote together Ephesians 2:8-9. You've all memorized it. Together, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." And that's where we usually stop. And I'm not asking you to quote this, but several of you could. The next verse, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." There it is. Ephesians 2:8-9, we're saved by faith, not by works, but the result of that saving faith of Ephesians 2:10, the works that should be in our lives.

Paul H. Dixon:

Is it possible that you are here, a student at Cedarville College and you only have made a profession, but you don't know the Lord? In a crowd like this, I'm convinced there's some who would not yet be converted. And all I can do is add what Paul said in essence, what I think James is saying here, examine yourself to see if you be in the faith. True saving faith.

Paul H. Dixon:

If I can help you, don't hesitate to come to my office. A young lady came just a couple of weeks ago, but to share with me that through the ministry of Pat Bates and others, she'd been converted. Any of our administrators, faculty, would love to sit down with you and talk with you and answer your questions. If you have any doubts, please come to us. Let's pray together.

Paul H. Dixon:

And before I pray, I would even say to those listening on the radio this morning, that if you've never been saved or if you have any doubt about it, call us here at the college. We'll be glad to come to your

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 5: A Genuine Faith
February 11, 1980

home if at all possible and sit down with you and go over the gospel and explain it to you and answer your questions.

Paul H. Dixon:

Father, thank you for this chapel, for this passage. We thank you for salvation by faith, all such great grace, we marvel for the Lord Jesus who makes it all possible. For any who are listening here in this auditorium or by radio, and were not saved, may thy spirit do the work of conviction and conversion. Bless now our college family through this day in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.