

Grace by Faith or Works?

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

James 2:14-26 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor 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. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. 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? **As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.**

Matthew 15:18-19 **But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**

Matthew 7:18-21 **A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-9 states plainly that we are saved by _____ not by works.

Again in Acts 16:31 he tells the jailer to just simply _____ in Jesus and he will be saved.

But James, also an Apostle (James 2:17 blue, underlined) seems to contradict this? Is he saying that you must do good deeds to be saved?

Because of Acts 16:31, many people think that just *believing* Jesus is who He says He is, is all it takes to be saved. This is referred to as “cheap-grace.” Why do you think James says “deeds” (works) are needed too?

In verse 19 James states a core belief of the Jewish faith. Besides the Jews, who else believes this? _____ Does this knowledge save them? _____

Understanding how the Gospel works is not enough for salvation. We must realize that Jesus died for _____ which brings about a deep attitude of _____ in our hearts. (Pick a word for the blank from these suggestions: indifference, gratitude, anger)

The distance from our brain to our heart is about 18 inches.

Intellectual faith (just understanding how it works) must become a personal commitment to Christ as **LORD** in our hearts.

We must make the 18” connection from *head knowledge to heart indwelling.*

Read Matthew 15:18-19 and 7:18-21. When we say and do bad things where did the thought to do it originate? _____

True faith naturally brings about a change in how we speak, act, and feel.

James is not saying that we need to do good works in order to be saved. He is saying that you’ll know a persons faith is authentic because their deeds will naturally reflect the fact that love for Jesus is in their hearts.

“Abraham believed God...and he was called God’s friend.” WOW! Would you like God to call you His friend?

In what way could others tell that God is the LORD of your life and is your friend?

Lesson Plan: Grace by Faith or Works?

Preparation: Read the verses on the lesson plan. Also familiarize yourself with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book mentioned below.

The Goal:

The goal of this lesson is to compare what Paul says about salvation by grace alone compared to what James says that faith without works is dead. In many of my other lessons the kids have learned that they are saved by the death of Jesus on the cross. They can not lose their salvation by doing bad things or having unconfessed sins. However, passages in James can be a bit confusing, and I've heard some pastors preach falsely, that you must also do good works to get into heaven. More importantly is for the kids to make "*the 18" connection.*" detailed in the lesson plan.

Leading the lesson:

Begin by reviewing Paul's statements that we are saved by grace through faith. Then read the passage in James for them and ask the questions. Allow plenty of time for answers and do not be afraid of long pauses while they think.

The phrase "cheap-grace" was coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book "The Cost of Discipleship." He says, "cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ." We will cover discipleship in future lessons.

Today we are emphasizing the movement from simple *head-knowledge* (just understanding of the Gospel), to *heart-indwelling* (having the Holy Spirit deep in our hearts leading us to a rich relationship with God). Jesus makes a link between Paul's theology and James by telling the Pharisees, "**Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**" (Matthew 23:26) We use two other statements from Jesus in the lesson plan also showing that if the HOLY SPIRIT is in your heart good deeds and actions will naturally follow. This is what James is really saying.

Relationship with God is like a friendship. Ask these questions at the end of the lesson plan: What things prove you love (or like) someone? The answers we are looking for are: 1. You know all about them: what they like and don't like; what makes them sad, angry, and happy; what touches their hearts; favorite color, food, music, habits and aspirations. 2. You want to spend time with them ahead of others. 3. You tell them your thoughts, secrets, cares, worries, and fears. 4. You use a particular tone of voice and facial gestures like smiles that convey your feeling for them. 5. You might give them presents, cards, or flowers.

Ask, "How can we have a friendship with an invisible God?" Give plenty of time for answers. Try and relate them to the points listed above. Then ask the final question.

Close with Prayer:

Ask the kids for prayer requests. Check and see how God has worked in their lives since last week. Encourage them to spend time with their friend God this week. Pray for your kids.