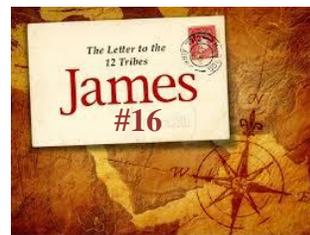




Chico Alliance Church
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“Faith that Works” Pt 2

Today we continue our discussion of the nature of true or genuine faith or belief. The whole book of James paints a portrait of genuine faith.

- I. **Faith’s response to trials 1:2-27**
- II. **Faith’s response to partiality and prejudice 2:1-13**
- III. **Faith’s True Nature 2:14-26**

REVIEW

Any attempt to understand Scripture must include an understanding of the specific words inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The verb form appears 248 times and translated believe, trust or commit.

The noun form appears 244 times and is translated faith or belief.

That makes nearly 500 references to the act of believing or the concept of faith.

The core concept of this term indicates an inspiring persuasion concerning a person or proposition that generates action. It describes a persuasion that inspires action.

At a general level...

Faith is sufficient intellectual and emotional persuasion regard a person or proposition to inspire ready response.

There are several factors to consider in this definition. Sufficient persuasion. Persuasion that causes us to embrace the person or proposition. Sufficient persuasion to inspire ready response. Such persuasion hinges on a credible person and a valid proposition.

There must be sufficient persuasion to inspire response. You cannot divorce belief from action. Belief and action are two sides of the same coin. Biblical faith centers on the character of God and the authority of His propositions.

Faith is God’s sufficient intellectual and emotional persuasion regarding His person, promise, power and purpose to inspire our ready response.

Faith without corresponding response or action is not faith at all. Action without a link to God’s will is not genuine faith. Spending all my savings on some venture apart from God’s will is not faith. Talking about giving money to a cause directed by God is not faith either. It becomes true faith when in response to God’s prompting, I give the money to the cause He called me to support. Saying I trust in what Jesus did on the cross to pay for my salvation and then try to pay for it myself is not faith. We are saved by God’s grace by responding to His persuasion in our heart to trust Him. True faith requires both intention AND action.

That is the central point James seeks to make in this section of his letter.

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith/belief but does not have works/action? Can **that** faith/belief save him? James 2:14*

Notice he did not ask can faith save him? We are saved by faith. He asked can **that** faith i.e. faith divorced from action, save him. Mere intent to trust Jesus for salvation does not save. Mere intent to obey scripture does not generate growth.

As the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from response/works is dead. James 2:26

The whole of our interaction with God requires genuine faith.

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Rom 14:23

That is a daunting statement.

God implants truth into our heart. (Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ)

Hebrews identifies Jesus as the author and perfecter of faith.

We personally embrace that truth. (mental and emotional)

We act (will) on or respond to that truth.

We trust God for the outcome.

Our action is based on a sufficient level of divine persuasion concerning the truth and the God who said it. The Bible communicates tons of truth requiring a faith response. Many claim to live by faith but fail to act on the things He reveals to us. James already emphasized the necessity of hearing AND doing the word of God.

Abraham did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith/belief, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Romans 4:19-21

Divine persuasion inspired Abraham's belief in God demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice his son.

Divine persuasion inspired Rahab to believe in God and risk her life by protecting the Israeli spies.

Notice the extreme contrast James choice.

Father Jewish Abraham

Sinful Gentile Rahab

Both received salvation by a faith that worked.

Without faith/belief it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6

- Without it there is no salvation. (Gal 3, John 1:9)
- Without it there is no spiritual growth. (Gal 3)
- Without it you cannot please God and even stir His wrath. (Heb 11, 3:17; Ex 3-4)
- Without it there is no rest. (Heb 3-4)
- Without it there is no life. (Gal 2:20)
- Without it there is no victory. (1 John 5:4)
- Without it there is no endurance. (James 1:2)
- Without it there is no answered prayer. (James 1)
- Whatever we do without it sin. (Rom 14:23)
- Without it there is no hope, joy or peace. (Rom 15:13)
- Without it there we are unprotected and vulnerable (1 Pet 1:5; 2Tim 1:12; Eph 6)

Faith is God's sufficient intellectual and emotional persuasion regarding His person, promise, power and purpose to inspire our ready response.

The father of a demonized son asked Jesus to increase his level of persuasion.

Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." Mark 9:21-24

Christians do not act on “blind” faith. The strength of our conviction rests on verifiable data. We are persuaded because of...

1. **God's eternal character and purpose as revealed in Scripture**
2. **God's past faithful fulfillment of His promises in Scripture**
3. **God's revealed promises regarding the future**
4. **God's continual inner witness through His indwelling Spirit**
5. **The testimony of others regarding the faithfulness of God.**

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. Romans 1:12

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1

6. **Our personal history regarding the faithfulness of God in our life.**

All these things develop a strong foundation that generates confidence and inspires ready response. Genuine faith in the character and promises of God always leads to response.

Faith is God's sufficient intellectual and emotional persuasion regarding the person, promise, power and purpose of God to inspire our ready response.

Here are some categories of faith.

Fantasy Faith – Lapses in our trust

James exposed those who said they have faith but had no corresponding evidence to confirm the genuineness of their faith.

Saving Faith – the faith necessary for rebirth

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:11-13

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

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Galatians 3:2

Jesus talked about some at the end times who will claim they followed Him, but He will deny He knew them. They were without saving faith. Only faith in the right person and proposition saves. We must put our full trust in the person, work and words of Jesus.

Living Faith – the faith necessary for continued spiritual growth

Paul wrote that our perfection in Christ also comes by hearing with faith.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith... Hebrews 12:1-2

We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:6-7

The writer of Hebrews cited two whose life demonstrated their faith.

By faith Abel willingly offered God an acceptable sacrifice.

By faith Enoch lived pleasing to God and was taken to heaven without dying.

Faltering or failing faith

There are times when we lack the level of persuasion to inspire ready action.

Jesus rebuked the disciples several times for their lack of faith Mark 16:14

Jesus refused to do many miracles in one town because of their unbelief Matt 13:58

Hebrews warns of an evil unbelieving heart. Heb 3:12

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail because of his denials Luke 22:32

At times, the struggles of this world challenge our level of persuasion to trust God.

Fear and worry is a lapse in faith in God's promises or power.

Depression is a lapse in faith concerning God's provisions.

Anger is often a lapse in faith concerning God's purposes.

Loneliness is a lapse in faith concerning God's presence and care.

Nearly every struggle that seems to crush us can be traced to a lapse in faith. James warned about doubting
James warned about the instability of the double-minded person.

Paul faced his struggles with firm faith in Jesus.

We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am **persuaded** that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39*

Scripture urges us to continually encourage one another concerning God promises power, provisions, purposes and presence. We come alongside others in their struggle and urge them to continue in the faith. Paul and Barnabas returned to those that had previously embraced Jesus.

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

James urged his readers to rescue those struggling in their faith.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. James 5:19-20

Hebrews 11 extensively addresses the nature of genuine faith and highlights two more categories of faith. The writer first offered a kind of definition.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

There we see here the strong “persuasion” factor. We are persuaded to the point of assurance, hope and conviction. Also notice the “unseen” factor. Faith almost always involves some unseen or mysterious aspect that necessitates inner persuasion from outside of ourselves. The writer of Hebrews cites numerous Old Testament faithful followers of God who trusted Him in a variety of life traumas and difficulties. They exhibited a level of persuasion concerning God or His promise that enabled them to readily respond.

They trusted God amid difficulties.

They trusted God concerning things yet unseen.

They trusted God despite possible even probable personal risk.

Conquering Faith – the faith to overcome impossible obstacles

By faith Noah believed God concerning the coming judgment and built an ark.

By faith Abraham believed God about a promised son and found salvation as well as a heritage of blessing for the whole world.

By faith Sarah trusted God to fulfill His promise of a child.

By faith Isaac passed on God’s promise to his children.

By faith the parents of Moses defied the Pharaoh and hid Moses.

By faith Moses forfeited present riches of Egypt for greater future riches in Christ.

By faith Moses sprinkled the Lamb’s blood on the doorposts and avoided death.

By faith Joshua faced the walled armies of Jericho and saw God crush them.

By faith Rahab hid the Israelite spies and not only found salvation for her and her family but was included in the genealogy of Jesus.

By faith judges, prophets and kings conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. In that list we see Daniel, the three Hebrew men in the fire, the judges, King David, Samuel. None of them fully realized, in their lifetime, the ultimate promise of a city prepared by God.

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Hebrews 11:16

Enduring Faith – the faith to endure difficult circumstances

After a listing of faithful but unlikely conquering heroes, the writer mentions some who did not get release from difficulties but the ability to endure through them.

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Hebrews 11:35-40

The common factor in all of them has to do with a sufficient level of persuasion concerning God's person, promise and purpose to inspire enduring faithfulness and obedience in difficulties. Some enjoyed a powerful outcome in their lifetime, others did not find release until after their death.

The next chapter challenges us to follow their example in our race of life.

- Run with endurance.
- Lay aside anything that hinders a faithful run.
- Look to Jesus for sufficient faith to readily respond to the race.

Not everything is clear to us. God doesn't give us the whole picture. God doesn't even promise us release from pain and suffering in this life. That is why we must live by faith in God's person and work.

Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:12-13

It is good to test our faith and trust in God at every level.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5

What does your current response to your life situations say about your trust level?

James instructs us to count it all joy. James instructs us keep on enduring. These responses are only possible as we entrust our souls to a faithful Creator who is the author and perfecter of our life of faith. He promises to provide God's sufficient inner persuasion regarding His person, promise, power and purpose of God to inspire our ready response. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit comes at the point of genuine faith.

“Lord I believe, help my unbelief.”