



**SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**Tuesday, 03/01/2022**

**Scripture: James 2:20-21**

**TITLE: Which Came First?**

Which came first? The chicken or the egg? Or maybe a better question is who cares? Christians generally don't debate this topic. But one that is a constant debate is which comes first? Salvation or works?

Well, this debate should be settled because Christ settled it two thousand years ago. But let's see how this passage from James can cause confusion. This is what James said in James 2:20-21 (CSB).

*Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless? Wasn't Abraham our father, justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar?*

You may remember that for the last few verses, James has been adamant that faith without works is dead. He would say it is useless. Yesterday, we discovered that even the demons have a belief in God. They know the Bible. They know doctrine better than any theologian, but knowledge and intellectual belief don't save anyone.

Now, most people agree with that. But then, when we read passages like verses 20-21, it would appear that James is maybe saying that salvation is not by grace but works, especially for people like Abraham, were realized by their actions. I mean, James did say that, Abraham was justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar.

Well, again, this is where context and a little bit of digging help us. In chapter one, James recognizes that our salvation is by grace. He said, *“By his own choice, he gave us birth by the word of truth”* (James 1:18). And here in chapter 2, in verse 23, James declares that Abraham's salvation was not of works but instead was by faith.

So what is James saying by *“Abraham was justified by works”*? He was saying that he was justified or recognized as saved or having real faith by his actions. It was not his salvation was given because of his obedience. It was the recognition of his actions. This is what is meant by justification in this passage.

This has been James' whole point: faith is not faith if it is not realized in our thinking, speech, and behavior. Such faith is not saving faith. Faith that fails to transform is not real faith. Challenging words and challenging thoughts. But James doesn't want any of us to be deceived.

So here's my challenge for you today: put your faith on display.

We aren't saved by our works. Our faith is validated by our actions. So put your faith on display. We don't do it for praise or personal glory. We do it to glorify God and point people to Jesus. So today, find one practical way to put your faith on display. And should it get noticed, point people to Jesus.

When Jesus is glorified through our salvation, we will win the day.