

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz production
Week 47
James

This episode is sponsored by Staker Parson Materials and construction. I know you're thinking "Whaaat.. Sponsored?". Yes, the Staker Parson company has been so valuable in this latest project that we have been doing.

About six months ago we broke ground on the safe haven ranch for women in Crisis. It is a 5 acre mini ranch that is going to house women in crisis that need a place to stay to get away, and start a new life, facing the world with confidence, health and hope for a brighter future. There are going to be huge gardens and animals, even career training so that these women are able to provide for themselves and their children as they begin a new life.

The Staker Person Material and construction has been a huge help with their donations to the project. The website for this particular project is under construction and will be up soon for you to learn more about the progress. If you would like to contrite or help in any way you can donate or contact us by going to CFMpodcast.org, again that is CFMpodcast.org

I am super excited about the topic for this week. It is in the book of James and goes right along with what we discussed last week about faith. If you recall we defined what faith is and how we can have more of it in our lives. This week we will discuss what an increase of faith does to us and how we can know that we have a growing faith within.

But first we need to clear up some mis-information or mis-translations of these verses in James. James 2:20 reads "that **faith** without **works** is dead".

There are some within the church of Jesus Christ, the catholic church, Jehovah witness, and many other religions that use this verse to teach that we are saved, or rewarded or emitted into heaven with these 2 traits: Faith and works. They teach that it is faith and works that save us.

This teaching is not doctrinal nor correct in any form. We see the same message in second Nephi which reads:

"for we know that it is by **grace** that we are saved, after all we can **do**." (2 Nephi 25:23)

This verse as well is used and mis translated to mean something different from what it truly means.

Please allow me to share an illustration I heard with you in order to make my point.

Let's assume that a few of us were going to have a competition on who could jump the highest. So we meet in a high school gym and the wager is that whoever can get close enough to touch the basketball rim is the greatest of us and wins the game. So little johnny goes first and takes a

running leap as high as he can and gets within 2 feet of the hoop. Good job little Johnny you killed it. Then your neighbor Joe takes a leap and just brushes the button of the net. One by one we each take a turn in proving how good we are at this contest of skill and good genetics. Some may get a kick out of watching such a silly contest. But let's say for a moment that now the contest is altered. Each one of us is going to try with all our might to jump as close as we can to reach the moon. Yes, the moon. So we each take a turn and muster all the skill and ability we have to try and jump to the moon. Now, you say this is not so amusing because we will all, no matter how skilled or talented, fall so completely short of the goal. It's almost embarrassing how each of us is so bad at trying to jump that far. Even the very best of the best, though they may jump much higher than we can, in comparison to the distance it is still a monumentous failure. As some perspective in 1993 Javier Sotomayor set the world record for the standing high jump of 8 feet. Very impressive, at least until you realize the distance from the earth to the moon is 238,900 miles. So though he can jump 8 feet and you or I might be able to jump two to three feet it really makes no difference because we are both still hundreds of thousands of miles away from the target.

This is the same with our salvation. There is literally nothing that we could or should do in order to save ourselves from our sins. Paul tells us in Romans 3:

“There is **none righteous**, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the **way**, they are together become **unprofitable**; there is none that doeth **good**, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12)

There is no act or works that we can do in order to obtain salvation.

Brad Wilcox said it this way:

“He paid our debt in full. He didn't pay it all except for a few coins. He paid it all. It is finished.”

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/brad-wilcox/his-grace-is-sufficient/>

That is what Jesus said as he hung on the cross and fulfilled His earthly ministry and paid the debt for our salvation. “It is finished”. Please notice that He did not say: I did my part, the rest is up to you, or now that I paid for their sins, if they will keep all the rules and do everything I ask them perfectly then they can go to heaven.

No, think about how powerful and complete those words Jesus used as He gave up the ghost, It is finished. This could also be translated as: It is complete.

So then, what does James and Nephi mean with their verses of works and faith? It helps if we look at this verse with context. James is writing to a group of people that believed that all they had to do was accept Jesus as their Lord and they would be saved. They believed that they didn't have to do anything including work, or be a decent human being. They believed that because Jesus died for them that they literally had no responsibility in this life to do anything.

And also, what is very important to understand is that James is not talking about salvation. He is talking about faith. And Nephi was referring to what they were to do in order to teach their children to believe in Christ. In fact in the very next verse Nephi explains what he meant by the previous verse. “By Grace we are saved after all we can do” he says then listen to this explanation: “**24** And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we **keep** the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. **25** For, for this end was the **law** given; wherefore the law hath become **dead** unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith;” (2 Nephi 25:24-25)

See, the point to all of this is that we are not saved by our works, or by our faith plus works. We are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by his grace alone. But this doesn't mean that there is nothing to do. In fact it is the exact opposite. Our works come into play as an evidence of our faith. As an outward expression of our inward commitment to and gratitude for Jesus and His infinite atonement.

This is the anagogy that Brad Wilcox uses:

“Christ’s arrangement with us is similar to a mom providing music lessons for her child. Mom pays the piano teacher. Because Mom pays the debt in full, she can turn to her child and ask for something. Practice! Does the child’s practice pay the piano teacher? No. Does the child’s practice repay Mom for paying the piano teacher? No. Practicing is how the child shows appreciation for Mom’s incredible gift. It is how he takes advantage of the amazing opportunity Mom is giving him to live his life at a higher level. Mom’s joy is found not in getting repaid but in seeing her gift used—seeing her child improve. And so she continues to call for practice, practice, practice.

If the child sees Mom’s requirement of practice as being too overbearing (“Gosh, Mom, why do I need to practice? None of the other kids have to practice! I’m just going to be a professional baseball player anyway!”), perhaps it is because he doesn’t yet see with mom’s eyes. He doesn’t see how much better his life could be if he would choose to live on a higher plane.

In the same way, because Jesus has paid justice, He can now turn to us and say, “Follow me” ([Matthew 4:19](#)), “Keep my commandments” ([John 14:15](#)). If we see His requirements as being way too much to ask (“Gosh! None of the other Christians have to pay tithing! None of the other Christians have to go on missions, serve in callings, and do temple work!”), maybe it is because we do not yet see through Christ’s eyes. We have not yet comprehended what He is trying to make of us.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen has written, “The great Mediator asks for our repentance *not* because we must ‘repay’ him in exchange for his paying our debt to justice, but because repentance initiates a developmental process that, with the Savior’s help, leads us along the path to a saintly character” (*The Broken Heart* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989], 149; emphasis in original).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said, referring to President Spencer W. Kimball’s explanation, “The repenting sinner must suffer for his sins, but this suffering has a different purpose than punishment or payment. Its purpose is *change*” (*The Lord’s Way* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991], 223; emphasis in original). Let’s put that in terms of our analogy: The child must practice the piano, but this practice has a different purpose than punishment or payment. Its purpose is change.”

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The works that we do are evidence of our inward faith and commitment to Christ. If we were to say that we are Christian and not do anything that a Christian would do, would anyone believe that we were what we say we were? If you say you’re not an alcoholic and yet you drink all day every day, the evidence would show that you are in fact an alcoholic. It’s just like the old adage says: Actions speak louder than words.

So if we are truly committed to Jesus and our faith resides solely in Him and His atonement then how we live our lives and how we treat other people will be evidence or as the scriptures put it, the fruit of our faith. What James is referring to is a living faith. A faith that produces fruit. Because the opposite as he implies is that we say we love Jesus, but then we treat others poorly, we don’t help the poor, we abuse our spouse or children: this is evidence that we don’t really Love Jesus and that we are not truly Christians. Thus our faith is a dead faith. To which the Jesus, the master of the vineyard said: “**19** Every tree that bringeth not forth good **fruit** is **hewn** down, and cast into the fire. **20** Wherefore by their **fruits** ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:19-20)

Here is the problem. Well, not really a problem but a dilemma. This sounds like a chicken and the egg proposition. Meaning that; which one comes first. We know that after we have been born again and receive the baptism by fire we are naturally going to want to do good around us and help others in need. But, is it possible that if we don’t yet have a testimony or a deep conversion or relationship with Christ that we could possibly cultivate that testimony by doing good works and by doing those good works our testimony begins to grow and blossom because of the light that comes into our lives from doing it? See what I mean be the chicken and the egg proposition? We know that works follow true conversion but might we consider that the true conversion came about because of our willingness to trust that God would bless us if we chose

to do good and act according to His will. In either case we will find that though works do not save us, they sure do help in our attempt to come closer to the Savior and our loving Father.

May our faith be fruitful as we declare to the world that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. May they look into our eyes and see His light that shines through us. May we allow Him to change us as we grow in faith and knowledge of His amazing grace, this is my humble prayer...

In His sacred and holy name, Even Jesus Christ, Amen.