

# SUMMER 2

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's a very great pleasure to be with you. As a matter of fact, a year ago I was speaking at the CMS Summer School in Brisbane, and I was able to warn them that Paul was coming this year, and that they needed to tighten their seatbelts for an in-depth study of whatever it was going to be.

I was so amused that we had the car alarm and no one did anything at all. It's one of the wonderful features of modern life, isn't it, that you hear these alarms and do nothing at all about them.

I was driving a hired car in England a couple of years ago, and I made some mistake with the key and the lock, I think, and the beep started happening and filled this little country town, and a man came over to me and said, Are you stealing that car?

And I said, No. He said, Oh, that's all right then. And it struck me as we heard that car making its noise, obviously wanting some kind of attention, that people who listen to alarms and don't act on them are like those who read the Bible and don't act on the Bible.

Well, what a challenging book James is, and I'm sure that you had a very rich time, those of you here last Wednesday night, when Paul talked through James chapter 1.

[ 1 : 28 ] And you might note in our Bibles on page 980 in James chapter 1, that in a way, verse 19 of chapter 1 begins the theme of hearing and doing the word.

And that theme of hearing and doing the word continues through the latter part of chapter 1 from verse 19, and certainly through to the end of chapter 2, verse 26, and I suspect continues with a special warning to teachers in chapter 3.

But I'm very relieved to say that Paul will be dealing with chapter 3 with its solemn warning for teachers next week, and I'll just try and deal with chapter 2. Now it's very easy for us to read through the book of James, and imagine James giving us lots of instructions and saying again and again, Be good, be good, be good.

But I want to point out to you, it's very important that you understand that James has a deeper message than Be good, be good, be good, be good. Because of course God has a deeper message than Be good, be good, be good.

And it's very important that we remember that, that God has something deeper and richer to say to us than Be good. Because what our society thinks is that the Christian message is Be good, be good, be good.

[ 2 : 56 ] No wonder they think we're a bunch of hypocrites. Because they know they can't be good, and they suspect that we can't be good either.

But of course, as I hope every person in the building tonight realises, the Christian message is much deeper, much richer than Be good.

The Christian message is about the work that God does within us to change our character. And that's brought out in two very moving verses in chapter 1.

I'd like to point to them before we tackle chapter 2. Look, for example, at chapter 1, verse 18.

Talking about every good and perfect gift coming from the Father of Lights in verse 17.

And the particular example that James gives of every good and perfect gift is in verse 18 of chapter 1. In fulfillment of his own purpose, he gave us birth, notice this, by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruit of his creatures.

[ 4 : 11 ] So God's work within us, God's work in the human soul, is to bring us to birth as believers. And some of you, no doubt, will remember the day in which that occurred for you, in which God gave you new birth.

You knew when it happened it wasn't something that you'd achieved, it was the gift of God. Now for other people here, that new birth may have been a gradual and slow experience, and it was only at

the end of that experience that you realized that when you'd come to faith in Jesus Christ, the great work that God had done within you.

But, to anybody here who thinks the message of James is God telling us be good, be good, be good, please realize that James' message is deeper than that because, of course, God's work is deeper than that.

So, 1.18, in the fulfillment of God's own purpose, he gave us birth by the word of truth so that we should become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

And notice in verse 18, the instrument of new birth is the word of truth, the message of truth. It is as we hear the message of God, the word of truth from God himself, that God gives us new birth.

[ 5 : 30 ] We're born again, as Peter puts it, to a new and living hope. And then notice too, in chapter 1, verse 21, the same theme of the word of God comes again.

Therefore, rid yourself of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness. And here it is, welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save yourselves.

So, the word of God, the message of God, the gospel of God, the truth of God, the word of God, first of all, gives us new birth, and then is the word which has, which is implanted within us, and has the power to save us.

And what James is doing in chapter 2 is allowing the Christian to write to give themselves a kind of health check. Are they indeed those who have been born again by the word of truth?

Are they indeed those who've received with meekness, welcomed with meekness, the implanted word that has the power to save your souls?

[ 6 : 45 ] People in the world imagine that the Christian message is this, that there's a kind of ladder of goodness, and some people climb up a little way, and some people climb up a big way, and what you have to do as a Christian is to climb all the way to the top and then God gives you a handshake and says, welcome.

Well, I hope you know that's not the Christian message, that's not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that God comes down, right down to the bottom of the ladder to where we are, and embraces us in his Son.

He doesn't just say, now you're a changed person, now be good. He puts the principle of goodness within us, we are, we've become a kind of first fruits of his creatures by the word of truth, and we welcome, we receive verse 21 of chapter 1, with meekness, the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

Well, before we look at chapter 2 with its very solemn warnings and very serious test of Christian commitment, I'd like to thank God in the words of chapter 1 verse 18 and then verse 21.

Oh God, we're so grateful that you explain to us what you've done in our lives, and we thank you that every good and perfect gift comes from you, and that in fulfillment of your own purpose, you've given us new birth by the word of truth, so we've become a kind of first fruits of your creation.

[ 8 : 17 ] And we pray tonight that you'd help us to welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save our souls. Please work this miracle of meek obedience within us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, whenever other people are ill, and they complain about a toothache or something like that, I think, imagine complaining about a toothache.

I mean, what a fusspot. I mean, toothache's nothing at all. Of course, when I have toothache, things are radically different, and toothache becomes the major problem of the human race, and certainly the major obsession of my day and of my life, and I just wonder that other people aren't more sympathetic, they're so cold and hard-hearted.

Well, the great thing about James chapter two, is that we can look at other people's faults and think, how ridiculous, imagine making that mistake.

And it's great fun, isn't it, looking at other people's sins and wondering how on earth they could be so silly, because we wouldn't make these kind of mistakes. Well, I hope that the mirror of the word will see ourselves in the mirror of the word tonight in some small way.

[ 9 : 41 ] my brothers and sisters, James chapter two, verse one, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

Notice the question is, James' question is, not do your acts of favoritism indicate that you're not yet obeying Jesus Christ properly, no, the question is, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

So, James' idea is that the Christian life is, from first to last, an expression of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, that all our godly actions, all our goodness, flows from our trust in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think in that word glorious, in verse one, there's the key to the mistake that the people are making in chapter two.

For, of course, if you really believed in the wonderful glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you wouldn't be bemused by those who come in to your assembly with gold rings and fine clothes.

[10:56] If you knew what true glory was, that is, the glory of Jesus Christ, you wouldn't be bewitched by worldly glory. If you knew what true, lasting glory was, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though rich became poor, that through his poverty we might become rich, if you knew the true glory of God in Jesus Christ, then you wouldn't be confused by the world around you.

That is, if you knew true riches, you wouldn't be put off by worldly riches. If you knew true power and honor in Jesus Christ, you wouldn't be bewitched by worldly power and honor.

power. And I think that like the people in James Day, we can easily be over-impressed by strong, successful, and wonderful people.

And whenever I go into a news agents and look at all the magazines that are available, I see the way in which each one of them features successful, wonderful, glorious people.

But their success, whatever it was, cake making or kayaking or fixing alarm clocks or whatever their success might be, or body building, that's one of my favorite ones, I love looking at those ones, imagining what I might be one day in the resurrection, not till then I might say in the resurrection.

[12:24] You can see before you these wonderful portraits of human glory and achievement, you know, those wonderful house and garden things where nothing's out of place and everything is absolutely beautiful all the time, touched up of course by the photographer, not actually as beautiful as that, or it's like those cakes which people make, you can never make food like the food magazines because they use colour all the time to make it look more wonderful and clever photography and things like that.

We're so easily bewitched by worldly glory and James is saying don't measure everything by the glory of Jesus Christ, measure everything by the glory of Jesus Christ, then you won't be bewitched by the world.

Well, verse 2 is a slightly embarrassing verse for Anglicans because when bishops arrive they often have gold rings and fine clothes in the assembly and according to James we ought to tell them to sit down to the back and anyway, I hope this isn't being recorded of course, very important to respect bishops and when I become one I'll expect that kind of respect.

Okay, so here's the church and remember these are poor people in James' day, they're under great pressure, they're, most of them are poor people and they're under considerable trial and we discover persecution.

Now let me tell you, if you were a persecuted church, the very sin you'd be liable to commit would be to kowtow to wealthy and powerful people.

[14:09] Imagine if you were a church of untouchables in India and someone of high caste came in. You'd bend over backwards to welcome them, wouldn't you?

Or if you were a Christian in Afghanistan, and you were a miracle of miracle, you were in a Bible study and the chief of police came in, why, you'd be licking their boots, wouldn't you?

And that's exactly what's happening here in James' day. For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes come into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one taking the fine clothes and say, have a seat here please, bishop, while to the one who is poor you say, stand there or sit at my feet, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Now I'm sorry to say, you don't have to go back very far within Anglicanism to find churches in which the wealthy own their pews and the poor sit where they may.

My great aunt was still renting her pew in Hultinity Q in 1953 when she died. And if you rented a pew, you owned it.

[15:27] It was your seat. You paid for it. And indeed, in the old days, that was how vergers or church cleaners made their money, by pew rents, kept the church going.

So within Anglicanism, and those who aren't Anglicans will have to excuse me for this comment, but only recently we had a kind of institutionalized welcoming of wealthy people.

Now of course, the kind of sins that churches commit always reflect the kind of sins that society commits.

churches are worldly in the ways in which their societies are worldly. I was visiting Pakistan a few years ago, visiting some missionaries there, and there were a few stories about financial corruption in the church, and I was really shocked at this.

And the missionary with whom I was staying, John Biles, said, don't be too shocked by this worldliness of the church in Pakistan, because the church in Pakistan is worldly in the way in which the society is worldly, but if some Pakistani Christians came to Australia, they'd see that your church was worldly in the way in which Australian society is worldly.

[16:50] so what the people these Christians are doing in James chapter 2 is not doing something unnatural, they're doing something perfectly natural, which is to have in our mind an idea of who are important people and who are unimportant people, and to pay special attention to the important people.

Now please notice what James says about this practice in these churches. He's not just saying it's wrong. Look at the reasons.

They begin in verse 4. When you do this, when you take notice of the one wearing fine clothes and say, have a seat here please, while to the one who is poor you say, stand there or sit at my feet, notice the first reason, verse 4, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

And why is it to be a judge with evil thoughts if you welcome a rich person and don't welcome a poor person? Because you're not seeing them as God sees them.

You're seeing them with a human perspective and not with God's perspective. And our aim must be to have the mind of God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Notice the next reason in verse 5.

[18:11] Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters, has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he's promised to those who love him? Please let verse 5 sink into your understanding.

You see, what the church is doing, what the Christians are doing is honouring and welcoming the rich person, choosing them to give them a great welcome. And in verse 5, James says, no, no, God has chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith.

So, not only are you making a mistake, you're also doing exactly opposite to what God is doing. Do you know how God begins to convert a nation?

My missionary policy to convert a nation would be to get all the rich people and convert them. All the influential people, I'd choose all the influential people. The kings and the governors and the magistrates and the leaders of society.

Those are the people like, do you know how God does it? He always converts the poor first. And that teaches everybody humility, doesn't it?

[19:26] Because then you know what the rich have to do? They have to learn from the poor. Very good training for them, isn't it? I had a friend who was involved in a parish mission in a wealthy part of England.

And it was a very sort of plush, upper-class church where people rode horses and things like that. And they were slightly embarrassed because they had a very ordinary vicar who didn't speak with a posh accent.

And one of the church wardens said, look, you know, we think things will really go forward here if we can just move this vicar on to somewhere more appropriate for his gifts, which was code for gifts appropriate for his accent.

And we'll get somebody who's more suited to our church, which meant somebody who spoke with a plum in their mouth, if you see what I mean. And my friend, I very quickly said, I think this is very clever, he said, well, if you won't receive the word of God from your vicar, you'll never receive salvation from a poor Galilean carpenter.

Well, why is it that God's chosen the weak things in the world? That's what Paul says, isn't it? Not many rich, not many of no people who will be saved. He says, in 1 Corinthians 1.

[20:55] Why does God do that? Why does God choose to convert people through unimpressive people? Why does God use unimpressive people so much?

Because unimpressive people point to the cross of Jesus Christ. Christ. And those who will only be saved by majesty and glory and power would never go to the crucifixion of a Galilean carpenter,

would they?

But we have to let God humble us so that we will receive the grace of God and the kindness of God from people who whom we would otherwise, frankly, despise.

One of the risks of being a visiting speaker is that people always honour visiting speakers. And I sometimes think when I visit a church and people are clucking around me, I hope you honour your vicar every week as much as you're fussing about me today.

I hope you ask for his autograph. I hope you want his picture taken. All that kind of stuff. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom he's promised to those who love him?

[ 22 : 29 ] James has made the same point, hasn't he, back in verse 9 of chapter 1, Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up and the rich in being brought low because the rich will disappear like a flower on the field.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field, its flower fails, its beauty perishes. It's the same way with the rich. In the midst of a busy life they will wither away. Well, who are the people we bring out in our evangelistic crusades?

As token converts we bring out the heroes of our society, don't we? the sports person or the governor or the judge or the general who's a Christian?

Seems to me if you follow what James is saying you'd bring out someone who was not admired in society and that person will get up and say, well I was in the gutter and Jesus saved me.

God has chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he's promised to those who love him.

[ 23 : 41 ] And if you are rich, if you're wealthy, you'll know how hard it is to be rich in faith. It's hard to be rich in faith when you're rich in possessions and security, financial security, because you don't need God.

And if you're a poor person, you'll no doubt be a person who is rich in faith, because you have nothing else to hang on to except God. thank God for your poverty.

But their mistake is in verse 6, you dishonoured the poor. Then notice the next reason why they're really being very silly. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court?

It's not they who blaspheme the excellent name that's invoked over you. You have to understand that here is a church being persecuted by wealthy people. And no wonder then when a wealthy person comes in, they fall over backwards to bow down to them and count out of them and say, oh, it's just wonderful to have you here.

You know, it would be just wonderful if you became a Christian and joined our church. It's an obvious mistake to make, isn't it? And Paul is saying, James is saying, don't be silly bullies, don't be stupid about this. Why on earth do you honour rich people when they're the ones who oppress you?

[ 24 : 55 ] And they drag you into court and they blaspheme the excellent name, that is Jesus' name, that is invoked over you. And you'll see some of the oppression, of the rich in chapter five.

Move on to chapter five, verse four. James is here having a go at the rich. He says, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out.

And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. So the context is not just that Christians are being oppressed, it is that the poor are being oppressed.

That's the context. And so if the poor are being oppressed, then of course poor Christians are doubly oppressed. Well, the next reason why they are making a mistake is in chapter two, verse eight.

Do you do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to scripture? You shall love your neighbour as yourself. That is, your poor neighbour as well as your rich neighbour. James isn't saying, welcome the poor and tell the rich to get lost.

[ 26 : 05 ] He's saying, love your neighbour, rich and poor alike. That's the positive message. So we shouldn't read the first seven verses of chapter two and think that what the church should do is to welcome the poor and reject the rich, because the big message is there in verse eight.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. But this means, James points out in verse nine, if you show partiality, then you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Partiality means choosing one neighbour over another. And then the fairly frightening verse ten, in that section, for whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

For the one who said, you shall not commit adultery, also said, you shall not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery but you murder, you've become a transgressor of the law. So speak and act as those who have been judged by the law of liberty.

For judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who's shown no mercy. But finally, of course, the good news is mercy triumphs over judgment. When you can't imagine somebody thinking, well, I haven't committed adultery but I have murdered and I'm okay.

[ 27 : 22 ] Let me tell you, there are occasions in which I go through a red traffic light. I always wave at the camera, you know, give it a cheery wave, and think to myself, that was a stupid thing to do.

So the next traffic light, if I've done that, even though it's green, I stop. So, if they ring me up and say, you went through a red light, I can say, but I stopped at a green one and hope that'll kind of balance the books.

Well, you might think that's a fairly odd way to drive and it does annoy the people behind me at the green traffic light, I might say. And the idea is that if I make this mistake, then I can balance it up with this.

But that kind of bargaining with the traffic authority and the police doesn't work. And that kind of bargaining with God doesn't work.

It's like a diet. There's no use saying, I haven't had sugar all day, but I drank a quart of cream or something like that, you know. I'm still on my diet. I'm not having any sugar today.

[ 28 : 34 ] I've just gorged myself with cream. It just doesn't work, does it? And you can't treat God that way. You can't say, well, you know, I've disobeyed you there, but, you know, I'm very obedient over here.

God's not filled by that. So the sin against which James is warning is one which must be taken seriously.

Well, I hope now you think to yourself, I can understand why those people made that mistake. I hope in some way you can see how we might make that mistake ourselves now.

And I hope that by God's word through James, where warned against it. Now, the theme of being hearers and doers of the word continues in verse 14 with the theme of faith without works is dead.

This continues the idea of not committing adultery and not murdering. That is, you have to keep the whole law. That is, your faith has to result in works.

[ 29 : 45 ] What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't have works? Can faith save you if a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, keep worn and eat your fill, yet you do not, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs?

What is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. Someone will say, well, you have faith and I have works.

And I've certainly heard Christians talking that way, you know. I'm the believing person and you're the good works person. Well, James is saying, no, you can't say here are the keen believers over here and the people who do all the good work over here.

You can't say here are the orthodox believers here and here are the people who actually get around to doing the ministry over here. No, you need faith and works together.

Show me your faith apart from your works and I by my works will show you my faith. For you believe that God is one, verse 19, you do well, but even the demons believe and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren?

[ 30 : 52 ] Wasn't our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and his work is the lovely phrase, faith was brought to completion by the works.

I love that. Faith was brought to completion by the works. Now, if you're a person who's a firm believer, if I asked you, do you believe in Jesus Christ?

You'd say, yes, certainly. I believe in Jesus Christ. Then a fair question to ask out of tonight's study is, how is your faith being brought to completion?

How is it flowering? How is it expressing itself? That's a good question for Christians of every age, isn't it?

Because I notice in myself and in my contemporaries, who are in the prime of life, I think, that we've been people of faith for a long time and we were people of works and then we got a bit tired of being people of works and so we're taking a rest and letting other people do the good works for a

change while we have a breather and we might come back to good works and we're really desperate near the end.

[ 32 : 06 ] But you see, if you're a person of good works, then you must be a person of faith. There must be faith in you.

And if you're a person of faith, then we must be able to see the good works. Now, the fascinating thing is that I think that lots of good works that Christians do that don't recognize themselves. And I think one of the most attractive things about Christians is people have vibrant, strong faith and they won't recognize the good works they're doing all the time because they so naturally spring from that faith.

You see, it's not the case that God gives us faith and then leaves the good works to us. It's not the case that God says, I forgive you and make you a person of faith and give you eternal life.

Now, you get on with the good works. It is the case that God works so powerfully in us when he makes us believers that the faith that he puts within us, the change, the transformation that he achieves within us will, must bring forth good works.

[ 33 : 28 ] God can't believe in us. It's a wonderful truth. So at the end, God can quite justly and easily judge us by our works. Because true faith in Jesus Christ is always expressed in works.

Good works. Good, good works. Donald Coggan was out here doing a mission in the 70s, I think it was. He was asked to be a teacher of Canterbury. And a man came up to him and said, you saved me last time you were here.

I think that meant that the man had become a Christian last time Donald Coggan was in Melbourne doing a mission. Donald Coggan said, first question was, how's your wife?

And the man said, ah, well that's a long story. Donald Coggan was saying, if you say you've got faith, brother, where are your good works?

Where are the lovely, Christ-like, godly, beautiful, attractive, good works that naturally flow from true faith in Jesus Christ?

[ 34 : 44 ] It's very important that we understand the Bible speaks with one voice on this subject. There is no contradiction between St. Paul and St. James.

Please turn back in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2. Chapter 1, sorry. No, chapter 2 it is. Page 950.

950. And I'm sure these verses will be very familiar to you, but I hope that in the light of James chapter 2 we can see them with new clarity.

Page 950. Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 8 to 10. And I think when we read these verses, it's verses 8 and 9 that we hear and think about.

Paul's message of grace. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And just to underline it for those who are a bit slow, this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God.

[ 35 : 48 ] Then for the really slow, not the result of works, so that no one can boast. Paul doesn't mind underlining things, does he? Just he knows that we're sometimes slow to learn.

And that's an inclination is to think that we are saved by works. And Paul says we're not. We're saved by grace, by God's free gift. And even the faith that we have is not our own doing.

It's the gift of God, not the result of works so that no one may boast. That's right. We're saved by God's grace. And we receive that by faith. And that faith through which we receive God's grace is the gift of God.

But then look at verse 10. It's a wonderful verse. For we are what he has made us, that is, as believers, listen to this, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Please notice in verse 10, Ephesians 2.10, Paul's made the same point three times. First of all, he says we are what he has made us.

[ 36 : 54 ] Then he says that means we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. That is, we've been created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Our new creation in Christ Jesus will result in good works. So good works, that is, works that honor God, works that serve our brothers and sisters, works by which we love our neighbor, these are not artificial or remote from us.

They're not alien to us. They're what we're created for in Christ Jesus. So God leans down from heaven and makes a new believer created in Christ Jesus.

And that act of creation is so powerful that it will result in good works. That's what we're made to do. And then here's the point the third time, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life, or as the old version had it, which God prepared beforehand for us to walk in.

So please notice the way in which verse 10 balances verses 8 and 9. Verses 8 and 9 are about the fact that we've been saved by grace through faith.

[ 38 : 10 ] This is not our own doing, it's the gift of God, not the result of works that one may boast. Is that the end of the story? No, it isn't. Here's verse 10. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

So good works aren't the cause of our salvation, but they are the fruit of our salvation. It's not that we get faith because of our works, but it is the case that we are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Well, back to James chapter 2 as we finish. I love the way in which, in the latter part of James chapter 2, he gives us two contrasting and splendid examples.

Our ancestor Abraham, and every Jew of course, and I think most of the people James was writing to were Jews who'd become Christians, was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that faith was active with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. Thus the truth fulfilled it, said Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

[ 39 : 33 ] Yes, it was by faith that he was saved, but the fulfillment of that faith was his acts of righteousness, and he was called a friend of God. So you see that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

Or as we might say, a person justified by faith, which always results in good works. And the second example is not one of the heroes of the Old Testament, not a man but a woman, Rahab, the prostitute from the city of Jericho.

And you might remember when the people of Israel come into the land and about to sack Jericho and pull the walls down by blowing trumpets loudly. A good idea, by the way, for your building program, if you want to get some walls down without paying a builder, just wander around playing a trumpet rather loudly.

Well, Rahab made the right decision, and she welcomed the messengers, and sent them out by another road. So God does choose extraordinary people, doesn't he?

Abraham. He chose Abraham when he was a nobody, and made him the father of many nations. And he chose Rahab, the prostitute, the Gentile, the non-Jew.

[ 40 : 49 ] And she too was justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

But, my brothers and sisters, we are not dead. We're alive, aren't we? We should welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

God can be so strong. God can give you faith in Jesus Christ. And God can give you the power to do good works.

That's the great majesty and compassion and power of God on whom we depend every moment of our lives. May God's word bear fruit in our lives and bring much praise and honor to him.

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