

Day Five

James 2:14-26



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

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without **giving** them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also **faith** by itself, if it does not have **works**, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have **faith** and I have **works**.” Show me your **faith** apart from your **works**, and I will show you my **faith** by my **works**. 19 You **believe** that God is one; you do well. Even the demons **believe**—and **shudder**! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith** apart from **works** is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father **justified** by **works** when he **offered** up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that **faith** was active along with his **works**, and **faith** was **completed** by his **works**; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted to him as **righteousness**”—and he was called a **friend of God**. 24 You see that a person is **justified** by **works** and not by **faith alone**. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute **justified** by **works** when she **received** the messengers and **sent** them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also **faith** apart from **works** is dead.

I. Review

A. So far we’ve been studying some of the first Truths communicated from God to the New Testament church.

B. Day 2

1. We’ve learned the Purpose of Suffering and the Nature of God.
2. We learned that the response of a person who doubts the nature of suffering and God is instability.
3. And we learned the answer for us when we’re unstable is to . . .
 - a) Repent of our sin.
 - b) Learn the purpose of suffering and nature of God. (James 1:2-18)
 - c) Choose to believe the nature of suffering and God. (v. 6)
 - d) Don’t blame God for your spiritual struggles. (v. 13)
 - e) Ask for wisdom. (v. 5)
 - f) Choose to be joyful. (v. 2)
 - g) Boast in how God is working to exalt us in our humility and be thankful for the suffering. (v. 9-11)
 - h) Tests
 - (1) The Test of Perseverance in Suffering (1:2–12)
 - (2) The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:13–18)

C. Day 3 — We learned about the Nature of Truth.

D. Day 4

1. We learned about the Nature of the Lie
2. We learned about the response of those who believe the Truth.
3. We learned about the response of those who believe the lie.
4. Tests
 - a) The Test of Response to the Word (1:19–27)
 - b) The Test of Impartial Love (2:1–13)

II. The Nature of _____ Faith

- A. Dead faith does not have works that align with God’s Word (the “works” being the responses of people who understand the Nature of God and the Nature of Truth which were outlines earlier in his letter). (2:14)
- B. Dead faith cannot _____. (2:14, 17)
- C. Dead faith can talk the talk, but doesn’t walk the walk. (2:15-16)
- D. Dead faith is no good/useless. (2:15, 20)
- E. Dead faith is dead. (2:26)

III. The Nature of _____ Faith

- A. Living faith is evident because of its conformity to God’s standard. (2:18, 22)
 1. Living faith gives to the needy. (2:15-16)
 2. Living faith responds to belief in God. (2:19)
 3. Living faith sacrifices all it has to glorify God. (2:21)
 4. Living faith sacrifices itself to glorify God. (2:25)
- B. Living faith _____. (2:14, 24-25)
- C. Test — The Test of Righteous Works (2:14–26)

IV. The Controversy

A. The Tension

1. Romans 10:9-11, *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’”*
2. Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

B. The Resolution

1. If these verses are irreconcilable, then James has to be removed from the Bible. For this reason, early on, James was one of the books of the Bible that was the most contested. But if there really is a contradiction, then the Bible isn’t trustworthy, and we have a much bigger problem.
2. However, there is no genuine contradiction here.
3. What is _____?
 - a) The Nature of Faith
 - (1) Faith, trust, and belief are synonymous terms.
 - (2) Faith is trusting something over which you have no control. Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

- (3) Everything we do grows from faith. We can't control anything outside of ourselves, so we have faith every time we sit down, get in a car, and take a bite of food. We can put it this way: *We do what we do, say what we say, and feel what we feel because we want what we want. We want what we want because we believe what we believe about God, His Word, and ourselves.* (Tree Illustration)
- (4) The Bible teaches us that there are actually four types of faith.
- Damning Faith is a fake-faith.** It's the faith confused with mere knowledge. As we already mentioned, knowledge is a collection of information, but faith is the living-out of that information as one trusts it to be true (James 2:14-26). This pseudo, damning faith leads to death eternal for it is nothing more than intellectual acquisition and affirmation that doesn't produce righteous behavior (2:14-26).
 - Deceiving Faith is a partial faith.** This trust is extended to a *selection* of God's revealed truth but withheld from weightier doctrines necessary for salvation (Acts 26:27-29; Luke 8:13; Matthew 7:21-23; **James 2:19**).
 - Saving Faith is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on man when they are called to salvation** (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 6:64, 10:27-29; Romans 8:30; I Corinthians 1:9; II Timothy 1:8-9).
 - Sanctifying Faith is the progressive trust a believer places in God as he is exposed to more truth in the Scriptures, accepts it as true, and accordingly works out the spiritual life received at regeneration.**
- b) The Object of Our Faith
- We exercise our Living Faith in Salvation
 - Ephesians 2:8, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith."*
 - God's grace comes to us through faith, is applied to us in justification, and results in our salvation. That salvation is provided and secured by God Himself. John 10:27-30, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."* Salvation will never die, and we use that reality to assume that our faith in God never waivers.
 - But salvation isn't a fruit that grows from our faith. It comes from God through our faith.
 - Therefore, the security of our salvation has nothing to do with our faith. And it's a good thing too. How many of us have ever doubted our salvation?
 - We exercise our Living Faith in Sanctification
 - The fruit of the Spirit — the works of faith — though they are Spirit empowered, come and go based off the strength of our faith.
 - Mark 4:39-40, *"And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?'"*
 - The point is this:
 - Salvation is an act of God's grace — not an act of faith.
 - Salvation is an act of God's grace — not an act works.
 - Therefore, Paul can say that works do not save us.

- (d) But salvation is an act of God's grace granted to us *if* we believe Him (through faith).
- (e) And since genuine faith *always* produces works,
- (f) James can say that if you truly have faith through which God imparts His saving grace, there will be evidences of that faith.
- (g) This whole section was written by the Holy Spirit because there was a new dispensation. The Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost and was at work in all believers in a way He had never been at work before.
 - i) The Holy Spirit wanted Christians to know the relationship between faith and works.
 - ii) He wanted them to know what was expected of them.
 - iii) No doubt there were many people in the early church who claimed to be followers of Christ, but who weren't practically following Christ, and the Spirit wanted that dealt with. Consider:
 - (1) Demas — II Timothy 4:10
 - (2) Simon the Magician — Acts 8:9-24

V. The Question

A. So what if I don't have any righteous works?

B. So what if I *sometimes* don't have righteous works?

1. **Your sin was the result of not believing God.** It was the result of calling God a liar and choosing to believe the Lie. If you've ever had the genuine Fruit of the Spirit, you're still saved, but you're not applying your Living Faith to your sanctification.
2. **Repent and believe God.** Turn from believing the Lie and trust God's Word. In Matthew 3:8 Jesus told the pharisees that they need to "*bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*" Here, Jesus ties repentance and salvation together. Here the Fruit of the Spirit is the same as the fruit of repentance. If we truly are born again, when we are confronted with God's Word, repentance should be our knee-jerk response. This is why in Matthew 18, Jesus says that a person who doesn't repent should be treated as if they're unsaved.