

## Thursday, January 11, 2024 • Read James 2:14–26

Questions from the Scripture text: What does v14 first ask about the faith that is being described here? What does it call those whom it is asking? Where did the idea come from, that there was faith? But what is this “faith” without? What does the verse conclude by asking about this “faith”? What hypothetical situation does v15 use as an analogy? What does one of them hypothetically say (v16)? But what does he hypothetically do? What does the end of v16 ask about his words? What point is this making about “mere-words-faith” (cf. v17)? What will someone say, to divide the two (v18)? What does this verse challenge that person to show? What is the implication about such faith? What does the writer say that he will show? By what? What does this imply about not only the “someone’s” faith but also about his works? To what new sort of faith does v19 now refer? What particular point of theology does it believe/say? What does the verse say about that theological point? But who else believes it? What do they do, to show that they are not getting any benefit from this theology? How does v20 now address this hypothetical man? What does v20 intend to prove (cf. v17)? Who/what does v21 offer for that proof (cf. Gen 22)? What did Abraham’s works show (v22, cf. Gen 22:12)? What had previously been said about his standing (v23, cf. Gen 15:6)? When v24 says “faith only,” what “faith” is it talking about (cf. v14)? What was behind Rachel’s action in v25 (cf. Heb 11:31)? How useful is the body in v26? How useful is the “faith” in v26?

**What if a “believer” does not care to obey God’s commandments?** James 2:14–26 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **anyone who claims to believe in Christ but remains unchanged does not actually believe in the actual Christ**.

**Royal liberty demonstrated by works.** In the first half of the chapter, the Scripture had talked about the royal law and the law of liberty. Christ, Who saves, brings the believer into a life of obedience to His commandments. As vv1–13 taught, a believer must not show partiality in the church. But if someone does not obey the royal law, has he been made part of the kingdom? And if someone does not obey the law of liberty, has he been liberated? The rest of the chapter now answers, “no.”

**Mere words are unprofitable.** v14 starts by asking about profit, not because we and our profit are primary, but because Christ is real. A faith that does not profit or does not save cannot possibly actually have been into Jesus Christ, or else our lives would be demonstrating that Jesus doesn’t make a difference. God forbid!

v15–16 is not a lesson on how we need to love one another with more than words. That is true, but it is actually assumed that we know this in v15–16: if we are accustomed to loving with mere words and not actions, then we have reached a level of irrationality that these two verses don’t even conceive of. Rather, “loving with mere words” is a quite obvious example to show that faith, also, must be more than mere words!

**“Dead faith” (faith without works) is no faith at all.** When v17 talks about dead faith, it is using “dead” to refer to that which is not actually faith at all! Just as “love” which was mere words was not actually love at all! Reading v18 in light of v14–17, we see that the point is that the person who thinks that faith and works can be separated has neither actual faith nor actual works. The man who proposes to show one without the other may be sure that he has neither. Neither faith nor works can be separated from the other. Without faith it is impossible to please God (cf. Heb 11:6), and whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (cf. Rom 14:23).

**Merely theological faith is not saving faith.** v19 reminds us that accurate theology is not, by itself, saving; or, the demons wouldn’t need to tremble. “God is one” is a reference to the Shema, the fundamental confession of Deut 6:4, which represents the whole of biblical theology. But the demon that agrees with Deut 6:4 is still not keeping Deut 6:5. Accurate theology is not faith, and there will be many in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels, who believed much accurate theology (as the devil and his angels do).

**Faith without works is “fool’s faith.”** We heard about “fool’s salt” in Matt 5:13. The word translated “foolish” in v20 not the same word, but it is conveying the same idea. It is actually the word for “empty” or “vain,” and the same word is used in the same way by the apostle Paul in 1Cor 15:2, 14, 58 (so much for the idea that there is tension between Paul and James!). Someone who thinks that he has faith without works simply does not have faith at all.

**Faith with works is true faith.** No, the works do not save. Gen 22 does not somehow override Gen 15:6, just as v21–22 do not somehow negate or question v23. Rather, God shows that Abraham was, indeed, justified through faith back in Gen 15... by sustaining that faith to produce the works in Gen 22. In justification, God called him His friend. In sanctification, God made him to live like His friend. And this is what produced the works in Gen 22. This is why Heb 11:17–19 presents that very incident as an example of faith. That entire chapter lists example after example of faith being demonstrated by works.

**Friendship with God and union with Christ make a difference.** Again, the only works that are actually “good” are works that proceed from saving faith. Saving faith will always demonstrate itself in works and true works can only proceed from saving faith. How could God making Abraham His friend not have made a difference in Abraham? And now, He calls us not only friends but children (cf. Jn 1:12, 1Jn 3:1) through our union with Christ.

Is it possible that this adoption would not make a difference in our works? Absolutely not! To try to separate works and faith is to discount friendship with God and union with Christ. So, while our works do not justify, any attempt to separate works from faith is hostile to the heart of biblical religion... Namely that God is making sinners into His friends by faith, that God is uniting sinners to His Son by faith!

**No “faith only” faith. Though faith alone justifies, it is not actually faith if it is alone.** The word “justified” can mean “vindicated,” as it may in v24. But it really is just concluding the thought that began in v14: that without works, there actually isn’t any faith.

v25 picks another evidence listed in Heb 11 (cf. Heb 11:31)—perhaps selecting Rahab precisely because no one would have believed the words of this harlot if there were not actions demonstrating the genuineness of the words.

v26 makes a new comparison. It would be ridiculous to say that someone is still alive, after the soul has departed, just because their body is still there. So, it is also ridiculous to say that somebody has faith when there are no works together with that faith. Without the soul the body is not alive, and without works the faith is not alive.

**How is your friendship with God and union with Christ being displayed in your life? What difference has He made in you?**

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for the extent to which we treat faith in You as if it is merely an idea, or words, or accurate theology. In Your powerful and loving salvation, You turn sinners into Your friends, and even into Your children. Forgive us for assuring ourselves that we are Yours, even when we are comfortable living for ourselves. Grant unto us repentance. Work in our lives so that our own works will show the difference that You make when You save. For we ask this all through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP15 “Within Your Tent Who Will Reside?” or TPH461 “Blessed Are the Sons of God”**

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

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James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26. These are God's words. What does it profit my brother and if someone says he has faith, But does not have works. Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to him to part in peace, be warmed and filled.

But you do not give them the things which are needed for the body. What does it profit? That's also faith by itself if it does not have works. It's dead. Put someone will say you have faith and i have works. Show me your faith without your works. And i will show you my faith by my works.

He believed that there is one god you do well, Even the demons believe and tremble. But do you want to know a foolish, man? That faith without works is dead. Was not abraham our father justified by works. When he offered Isaac, his son on the altar.

Do you see that faith was working together with his works? And by work's faith was made. Perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, Abraham believed god and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of god. You see them that a man is justified by works.

Not by faith only. Likewise was not rehab the harlot. Also justified by works. When she received the messengers and sent them out another way. First, the body without the spirit is dead. So faith. Without works, is also dead. Also.

So faith without works is dead. Also. So far the reading of god's inspired and And then toward

So, in the first 13 verses of chapter 2, remember he Was treating the problem. In the churches of Brothers showing partiality to the rich. And again, the poor Which of course, is a violation. Of the law of god, the commandments. And not only a violation of the sixth commandment and of the ninth commandment.

But also remembering that the ten commandments are the commandments of jesus. That we take as character and his commandments. As. Uh, requirements. Upon us for. He is our king and we are in his kingdom. And so his law. The moral law of the ten commandments and the applications of the implications of God's character and jesus's character for our life.

With that law is the royal law. It's the law that the king demands of us and even more preciously. It's the law that describes what jesus himself. The king is like and it's also the law of liberty. That we having been liberated by jesus, not only from the guilt of our sin.

But from the power of our sin and the condemnation, Of the law, the law then. Describes to us. What jesus is freed us to be? And how jesus has freed us to be able. To live. So there's this royal law and law of liberty. And obedience to his commandments.

That is a necessary consequence of and fruit of his work in us. Now we know of course we are not justified. We're not made right with god. By what we have done, but what christ has done and yet the only way Of being united to christ. The only instrument Through which this standing with god, comes by what jesus has done.

Is by believing into him. But this believing into him is not a mere collection of words. As if it can exist without works. The works. Do not give us our standing with god. But without works. We cannot say that we have faith. Because faith is more than mere. Words.

And that is the point of The portion that is before us now. He asks, what does it profit? What use is it? Because faith into jesus, faith, that actually obtains jesus himself is going to be worthwhile. It would be very offensive. To the lord. Jesus christ to say. That you could have him.

And it make no difference in your life. Well, the reason faith. Um, Justifies or as an instrument, through which we are justified. Is not. Because we say the right things or, or agree with the right things, Is. But because it obtains jesus himself. Christ. Our righteousness. So, his obedience counted for us, Atonement.

Counted against our sin and wiping out, the guilt of our sin and the wrath of god, due to our sin. But it's he himself, who is our righteousness and he himself, who is our A tournament. And so this sort of faith saving faith rather. Uh, must be a faith that makes a difference because it is into jesus and jesus makes a difference.

She says, what does it profit my brother? And if someone says he has faith, but does not have works. Can faith and there were putting it in quotes. Can the faith? That is just what he says. And doesn't make a difference in your life. Can that quote, unquote faith?

Save him and of course, the answer is not at all. Because real faith is not just what someone says. It is something that god works in a person. To make him rest upon And believe into be united with. The lord jesus. Now, this is true not just of believing into jesus, but also loving our brother or sister if our brother or sister is naked and destitute to daily food, and one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warm and filled.

But you do not give them the things that are needed for the body. What does it profit? So you can see how he uses that phrase. What does it profit? To show that this is an analogy. Now, it's true that you should love your brother or sister with more than words.

That's actually not the truth being taught here. That's assumed. If someone has, Uh, you know, thinks that it's love to merely have feelings or merely say things. And not to actually act in care for others. Notice you're not supposed to choose between one of those love should say those things love, should feel those things and love should do those things.

And if any of them are missing, there's not love Right. This is something that we're supposed to inherently know. But we are so self-deceived and deceiving others that we're messing up, even the love so that it doesn't work as a metaphor. For many people here, but he is assuming that we know, That love includes all of those things.

Or else. It's not love at all. So, similarly with faith, Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works. Is dead and the word dead here means. It's not faith at all. It may have an appearance of faith. Uh, but it as as alive, As a corpse has an appearance of a person.

And yet without the spirit, the corpse is not alive. It's dead. And, and it's not. A person. It will be raised again. Uh, for Being reunited with the person's soul. In the last day.

So a faith that is mere words without works. Is No faith at all. He comes the first 18 says, someone will say you have faith and i have works. And you hear what he's saying there. He's saying You know, people can have different parts of faith. Uh, you know, if you have the Uh, the faith part and i have the workspart.

Show me your faith. Without your works. Notice, he's flicked it around here because the guy said, You have faith and i have works. And so that was the idea that the two can be separated. The two can't be separated. In fact, if you don't have faith, all of your works are are bad.

He was 11 says without faith. This is impossible to, please God, Romans 14. Whatever does not proceed from the faith is sin. Romans eight, those who are in the

flesh. Cannot please god. And so, Not only is faith without works dead. But without faith, they're actually are no good works.

Anyone who thinks his works, are good. Apart from resting in the lord jesus christ, apart from christ's life in him, his works are bad. This is the problem of the scribes in the Pharisees, right? They thought their works were pretty good that even god is sort of a little bit impressed with their works.

But they didn't believe in jesus. Their works were evil. We just heard, didn't we? In matthew 5 are Righteousness, must succeed that of the scribes and the Pharisees. For us to enter the kingdom. Matthew 5 verse 20. And so he says, someone will say you have faith, and i have worked some of your faith without your works.

And i will show you my faith by my works. One of the ways that i know, I have believed into jesus as he's making the difference in my life and he's the one. Who's for just in, good works for me. One of the blades. I know that these works that he's producing in me are good works.

Is because i have believed into jesus. He is all my hope. He is all my life. He is all my righteousness. He is all my atonement. There's all my purpose, he's all my pleasure. Christian, is someone for whom To live is. Christ. That's how he knows. His works are good.

Yes, you can measure an outward, conformity to the law of god. But god, looks not only on the outward appearance but also on the heart. And it gets very Um,

Tricky, i was gonna say Harry. Like my old physics teacher used to say about a very difficult complex problem. It gets very tricky. To try and evaluate it. Uh, your heart, by the bible we should And praise god. His word. Reveals and thoughts, the reveals, the thoughts and intentions of our hearts and Exposes us.

But our hearts are deceived full above all things. There's a lotus. Remember that? Saving faith. And the works that proceed from saving faith. Always go together and that's why he says, I will show you my faith by my works. Not only is, Uh faith that is mere words, not faith.

Even accurate theology by itself is not saving faith. How do we know that? Because there are these creatures that have accurate theology called demons, And they are not saved. They are more accurate than their theology. Even than than many who say the same things. Because at least the demon is kind of making personal application.

All right, you believe that there is one god you do. Well, even the demons believe. And tremble. They believe that god has won this. This confession that god is one comes from Deuteronomy 6:4, here, israel, shema, it's royal. You always your god. You always one And it's, uh, it's Used as a summary for all.

Correct accurate theology that has taught in the bible as a whole. Demons have accurate theology. And they even have applicational theology. Isn't that what they reckon? When they recognized jesus? They cry out in fear. You know, we know who you are in the holy one of israel. Have you come to destroy us before the time?

Many people have accurate with theology and don't even make any application of it. So the demons are ahead of them. But even accurate theology and applied theology, Are not by themselves saving faith. Because the demons have them and they are not saved. And so someone thinks someone who, of course, we want our theology to be as accurate as possible.

And we want our theology to be applied as consistently and carefully and genuinely, as possible. But if we think that saving faith comes from either, Of those two things or both of those things together, then we deceive ourselves. Because saving faith is a believing into jesus, that actually changes us.

And produces works. Turns us from god's enemies as the demons know themselves to be In verse 19 into god's friends. As he says about abraham and The end of verse 23, says he was called the friend of god and so he says to you want to know, oh. And the New King James says foolish, man.

Better translation, be empty man or vain man.

When he's using here, the same sort of language that The apostle Paul uses in 1st Corinthians 15. In several places.

Verse two, verse 14 and verse 58 in each place. He uses the word vein or empty in conjunction. With someone having believed to mean that. They claim to have believed. They think they have believed but they haven't actually believed. Or they haven't actually been united to christ. They aren't actually going to be raised with christ.

And so this language, you foolish fellow, he's talking about someone who is Who thinks he's a believer, but his self-deceived He says do you want to know? Oh Vein man. That faith without works. Was is dead? He says, was not abraham our father justified by works when he offered our Isaac because Isaac his son on the altar, Do you see that faith was working together with his works?

Now, he's not saying, you know, he had faith back in. Verse fifth back in genesis, 15 verse 6, And then in genesis 22 and it was time to to offer, Isaac, he added works and now that he has faith and works, then he can be saved. No, he was saved.

He was counted righteous and genesis 15 verse 6. But that righteousness was through. Being made god's friend. Just as we know now, that that when we believe we're not just made god's friends, we are adopted as God's children. Because we are united to god's son. And living in this side of pentecost.

Not only were you, we unite to god's son by the work of the spirit. He pours out the spirit who dwells in our hearts by faith, so that christ dwells in our hearts by faith. By the by the indwelling of his holy spirit. And so, This will. Display itself in our lives.

In fact, when hebrew is 11. Describes what abraham did and He was 11 17 through 19 that. He offered Isaac because he figured he would get him back from the dead. Because god is able to raise the dead, and god was the one who told him to do it and So in his friendship with god and his dependence upon god and his believing, He was enabled to do.

The works, the faith produced the works. The faith wasn't missing something. Until the works came along. So we must read verse 22 very carefully in order to read it correctly. Because he says, do you see that faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect.

Not that the faith in itself. Was incomplete. But god makes the believer into. What god has called the believer and he does this to everyone whom, he brings to faith. And if he is not doing this, if we think that we are, we believe, if we think we are counted righteous with him, And yet we're not seeing any fruit or any evidence or any difference.

In us a difference that could come only from jesus. Then whatever we thought about ourselves was empty or vain this word that is translated foolish. In verse 20.

So, verse 23. Recognizes that abraham was righteous at the moment of faith. He was a friend of god at the moment of believing But that. These are realities, not ideas, not collections of words. And the reality produces. Works in the life.

And so we need to take all of verses 14 through 23. As the background for a verse 24 so that we don't read verse 24 incorrectly. You see, then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. And reading it as a summation of the previous.

Uh, 10 versus we see that it's saying you see, then that a man is justified by a faith, that works. And not by a faith. That is alone. Right. The works are not gaining his standing with god. The works belong to the saving faith. And it is through that saving faith that he was united to christ is through that, saving faith.

That christ is counted for him. As righteousness. So when you believe You are united to christ, when you believe, Christ is counted to you. For you as your righteousness.

And when you believe into jesus, He changes, you doesn't he He produces works in you. The old way of saying it is, We are saved by faith that We are saved only by faith. But we are never saved. By a faith that is alone. We're saved alone by faith.

But we are not saved by a faith. That is alone.

So he says likewise was not rehab the harlot. Also justified by works. He's not saying that she gained the right standing by what she did, is he But what he's saying is, i mean, think about What rehab looked and sounded like, You know, she was a prostitute from jericho.

If she says, oh, i believe in yahweh. Then. Unless there's some actual difference. We would also those are empty words. She is self-deceived. She's trying to deceive others. She's a fraud. But you see what she did. Is because she believed in Yahweh, that she was more afraid of him than she was of what the men of jerka would do to her.

It's because she believed in y'all way that she welcomed the people of yahweh and hid the spies and sent people away and sent them often another direction. And so, we need to remember that. Uh, We need to have a humble view of ourselves and not think of ourselves as more reliable than that gentile harlot rate had.

An incidentally becomes like, the isn't the great, great grandmother of david. Maybe i've got the wrong number of grades. But we must remember that before. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Why would we believe ourselves? If we said, we believed in jesus, And it made no difference in us, that's no more believable than if a gentile harlot.

Says she believes in him and doesn't do anything different. Are we really more reliable? More trustworthy in ourselves. No. And so he uses her as Kind of this ultimate example, in verse 25. Before concluding again, for as the body, without the spirit is dead. You see a body? You do not see a person.

You see something that belongs to a person? And belongs to christ. But you do not see the person do you. As the body, without the spirit is dead. And we don't go up to corpses and say, get up, let's go. Remember to do your chores tomorrow. That would be insane to tell that to a dead body wouldn't have severe.

Remember to do your chores tomorrow. The body without the spirit is dead. And so we should not expect faith to save me. If it doesn't have works. That's not faith. It looks like faith. As an empty shell, that might have been faith. If there was any actual animating reality to it inside, But i faith, that is mere words.

Is not real. There is no animating reality. There is no work of god. In the man. There is no union with jesus. And without jesus, Without jesus, of course there's no actual righteousness. There's no actual atonement. It's all in him. And that's why faith without works is dead. Because faith without works is a telltale sign.

That it doesn't have. Him. And if it doesn't have him, it's not saving faith at all, isn't. The lord give us to rest in him. To rejoice that we have him. To give evidence in our lives. By his grace, by his spirit, applying him to us jesus to us.

To have the works that go with saving faith. Because, All of it comes from him. And then, Father in heaven. We thank you that you have given your son. To be our righteousness, to be our attainment, to be our life. To be our goodness. When we pray that your spirit would continue applying him to us.

Lord, the In completeness and imperfection of Our sanctification is often a trial to us. Because it hides from our eyes. Um, Some of what christ is doing and has done in us. So help us to keep looking to him and resting upon him and grant lord. That as your spirit applies him to us.

You would give us to see fruit, you would give us to see the effect. That we may know that he has done this and that we have him and are in him. And his name also, we ask it, amen.