

### Lead-in

This year our vision is to conquer St. Clair County and the nations for Jesus Christ, one gospel conversation at a time. We boldly believe that **Faith in Jesus Christ works** and that the gospel is the answer that the world needs, good news that will change your life. This is the title of our sermon series in the book of James: a faith that works. Today we look at a specific action of our faith, what you **claim** vs what you **do**.

One man found out the hard way that there is a major difference between knowing and doing. Every year revelers from around the world head to Pamplona, Spain to take part in the running of the bulls. The festival draws hundreds of thousands of people from around the world to Pamplona, a city of around 300,000. Fifteen people have been killed in the bull-runs since records began in 1911.

**Bill Hillman**, a 32-year-old Chicago-based journalist, is an expert on the event. He even co-authored a book subtitled "**How to survive the bulls of Pamplona.**" But on July 3, 2014, just knowing about bull running, even knowing enough to write an instruction manual on bull running, wasn't enough. A 1,320 pound fighting bull named **Brevito** lagged behind the pack just before entering the city's bull ring at the end of a rain-slicked run in the annual festival. At the opportune time, Brevito gored Hillman in the right thigh and a 35-year-old Spanish man in the chest. Both men recovered, but the co-author of Hillman's book 's told *The New York Times*, "We will probably need to update the book."

It's one thing to claim to know, it's quite another to live it out, this is the truth that the Word communicates today.

### Grace is opposed to earning not effort- James 2:14-26

**Which is it? Works or Grace? (2:14)** this passage is possibly one of most controversial verses in the NT. Taken at face value, it appears that James is saying grace, unearned favor is not enough. When compared to another famous NT section, we seem to find tension.

Paul boldly affirms: **Eph 2:8** For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— **9** not from works, so that no one can boast.

James argues that **2:17 In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.** How can we reconcile on one hand that we are saved entirely by grace and it is NOT of works and yet faith, if it has no works at all is dead?

I believe one scholar best combines both truths, **"Paul is dealing with obstetrics, with how new life begins; James, however is dealing with pediatrics and geriatrics, with how Christian life grows and matures, and ages."**

**Here is a truth we must embrace, grace is opposed to earning, not effort.** You are saved by grace through faith, it is nothing you do, because it is Christ who worked on your behalf. **Grace brings you into relationship, it's the Work of the HS through you that proves relationship.**

Which is it, works or grace? Yes! Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

***If you aren't what you claim, (2:14) what good is it?*** This idiomatic question was a common way ancient writers introduced rhetorical dialogue. James is saying, **"don't answer that."** What good is it if someone claims to have faith, can such faith save? The second question is framed in such a way in the Greek that it assumes an expected, **"no."**

I can sense James' feathers ruffled as he writes to the church, and at the same time his heart is breaking. **Some have used grace as excuse to neglect their Christian duty to be salt and light.**

**Some claim faith, others confirm faith.** It is one thing to claim (2:14), or to say (2:18) you have faith, but talk is cheap and a faith that is in word only is useless (2:20). **The works of love are not an added extra to faith,** but are an essential expression of it. If you aren't what you claim, what good is it? Can an empty profession save? **NO! IF you aren't what you claim, what good is it?** Now, the Word gives us some concrete examples.

***Your faith is confirmed by what you do (2:14): 4 examples*** The first situation of saying vs doing concerns a brother or sister who lacks food or clothing. The Greek word **gymnos** is a word that often means naked. Its where we get our word gymnasium, so called because Greek men competed naked in sporting events. In the ANE, nakedness or lack of decent clothes symbolized both **poverty and shame. How would you respond?** What if you merely pray for that person or offer a blessing, "go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed." **Here is a tip, get a job!** This remind me of a story I read

A young boy, on an errand for his mother, had just bought a dozen eggs. Walking out of the store, he tripped and dropped the sack. All the eggs broke, and the sidewalk was a mess. The boy tried not to cry. A few people gathered to see if he was OK and to tell him how sorry they were. In the midst of the words of pity, one man handed the boy a quarter. Then he turned to the group and said, "I care 25 cents worth. Church, your excess is designed to meet someone's need—  
Derwin Gray.

These works are the works of love, such as caring for those in need, not showing favoritism, being humble, and slow to speak. In essence, the works of the Spirit are the **sum total of a changed life brought about by faith! Your faith is confirmed what you do!** This is such a foundation for our soul, James gives three more examples.

Next (2:18) James opposes the one who sees faith and works as two separate but equally valid methods of showing genuine Christianity. Some will say... The Word insists that **correct doctrine by itself is insufficient**. With biting sarcasm he praises the theology, but mocks the hollowness of their faith. Knowledge alone will not save. In fact, knowledge puffs up and prevents steps of faith toward Jesus that are necessary for abundant life.

**You see, Satan and all of his evil hordes are monotheists.** They know there is one God. They know **שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:** of Deutornomy 6:4. And, the demons even do something about their belief, they tremble violently when they think about the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The word means to **shudder slightly or bristle**.

**Right belief that does not lead to a righteous life is of no value.** My heart breaks when I think of the many who have a right theology, who walk an aisle, raise a hand, but are not righteously abiding in Jesus. They have demonic knowledge but not faith! **Demons shudder, disciples surrender!**

Now James brings out the big guns, Father Abraham. The patriarch of promise who left the land of Ur to follow the Lord. The one who was promised that Yahweh would bless all nations through his son Isaac. The one who when asked to offer Isaac on the alter chose **trust** in Messiah over **self-preservation**.

**Abraham was willing to prove his faith as real because he was willing to act upon it.** Abraham's faith was not mature until he acted upon it and in the process he **learned more about God's character**. **Do you believe God enough to act upon**

**your faith?** What is most precious in your life? Would you offer that to the Lord if asked?

And then there was Rahab. A prostitute living in Jericho. Let me remind you **that no little girl dreams of becoming a prostitute**. This only happens when horrible things, and horrible people, treat you like a commodity and you become so despondent you feel as though you have no other way (think Les Mis)! And yet, this woman was justified.

Alongside the famous and celebrated Abraham, James places an obscure Gentile woman of low moral character. Through **Rahab, Jesus reminds us that anyone is capable of acting on his or her faith—whether a patriarch or a prostitute**. Your faith is confirmed by what you do.

**Response- So what?**

**For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead (2:26).**

Faith that does not reveal itself in a changed lifestyle that glorifies God and **seeks his heart for the world** is dead, lifeless, workless, and worthless. It is not faith at all, it is only the **shell or the corpse of faith**.

Charles Spurgeon, the famed pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London describes faith in this way:

A tree has been planted out into the ground. Now the source of life to that tree is at the **root**, whether it hath apples on it or not; the **apples** would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root.

But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there is no bud, and when the summer comes there is no leafing, and no fruit-bearing, but the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is **dead**, and you are correct; it is dead.

It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the **absence** of the leaves is a proof that it is dead. —Spurgeon

Is your faith flourishing today? Would that be your prayer? Maybe for the first time you realize your faith is only a shell, or a corpse. Maybe you shudder but you have never trembled. Would you today run to Jesus? The one who can give you new life!

**How big is the gap between what you believe (claim) and what you live?** I believe in prayer... I want people to know Jesus... I believe... What if today the gap went away.

What if today instead of claiming, you confessed and He works within you, and you live?!

As I pray, maybe you feel led to pray with someone, or at the altar. We will have prayer partners and pastors at the front who would love to encourage you. To talk with you about seeking Jesus.

You come. For those who need to begin the journey today, give them the courage to believe and come.

## Notes

### Key Concepts

- Claim of faith vs the confirmation of faith
- You are saved by faith alone but a faith that saves is never alone
- You work from grace/salvation not for grace
- Claim (2:14) → say (2:18) → senseless (2:20)
- “the apostle has been enforcing Christian practice. He now applies to those who neglect this, under the pretense of faith.” –John Wesley
- Good is looking for progress not perfection.
- To arrive at a correct definition of faith, James introduces four illustrations: hungry brother, troubled demons, Abraham, and Rahab (Motyer, 107).

**James 2:14** What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone **claims** to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?

**What doth it profit?** (τι το οφελος). Lit., *what is the profit?* Οφελος, *profit*, only here, ver. 16, and 1 Corinthians 15:32.

What good is it? This idiomatic question was a common way for writers of the time to introduce rhetorical dialogue, presenting an argument with which the author disagreed (ECNT, 129).

Save σωσαι connotes the concept of saving, maintaining, preserving

Works are not an “added extra” to faith, but are an essential expression of it (NIGTC, 121).

The second rhetorical question is framed in a way showing that it expected the answer “no” (Moo, 122).

**James 2:15** If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food **16** and one of you **says** to them, “Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it?

If. The greek makes it clear that the situation is hypothetical, so as to allow the reader to hear the example without becoming defensive (NIGTC, 121).

Go in peace in contrast to the healing of Christ and his blessing of peace following the active faith that transforms. **Depart in peace (υπαγετε εν ειρηνη). Compare υπαγε ορ πορευου εις ειρηνην, go into peace, Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50. ειρηνη).** Compare υπαγε ορ πορευου εις ειρηνην, *go into peace*, Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50.

### **Without clothes**

The Greek represented is gymnos/naked the word from which we derive “gymnasium” so called because Greek men competed naked in sporting events (Moo, 124).

Nakedness or lack of clothing can symbolize both poverty (3:17) and shame (Rev. 3:18).

Your excess is designed to meet someone’s need –Derwin Gray

If you want to give a hungry man a tract, wrap it in a sandwich –Spurgeon

**17 In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself.**

The example was crass and would have shocked many pagans, let alone people accustomed to the OT prophets and the application of the laws of charity in late Judaism. It was clear that such a person could not have heard the teaching of the community; his faith was empty (NIGTC, 122).

James assumes that ‘faith’ includes works. This faith is the saving faith of a life lived in sanctification (ECNT, 131). This faith is the saving faith of a life lived in sanctification.

Works, according to James, are the works of love, such as caring for those who are in need, not showing favoritism, being humble, or being slow to speak. In essence, works are the sum total of a changed life brought about by faith (ECNT, 132).

Whereas Paul denied the need for pre-conversion works, James emphasizes the absolute necessity of post-conversion works (ECNT, 132).

“A faith which is purely doctrinal and does not result in pious action is a dead sham, totally useless for salvation” (ECNT, 132). –Davids.

On one hand, they (examples) give a concrete example of the kind of unconcerned for the poor that James deplors among his readers (Moo, 126). The words of an uncaring

believer who fails to act to help a person in need are as useless as the profession of faith of a believer who does not have deeds.

**James 2:18** But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works. **19** You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder.

James uses the device of the imaginary objector to further his argument for the inseparability of faith and works (Moo, 129).

## **But**

James seems to be introducing someone opposing his statement in v.17 regarding faith being dead in itself (ECNT, 132).

James is opposing the one who sees both faith and works as two separate but equally valid methods of showing genuine Christianity (ECNT, 134).

## **Good/ You do well**

James insists that correct doctrine by itself is insufficient. With biting sarcasm he praises the objector’s theology. Here he bitterly mocks the hollowness of their faith (ECNT, 134).

## **Demonic Belief**

Satan and all the evil hordes are monotheists; even they know there is only one God and that his loyalties remain undivided. The demons do something about their belief: they tremble violently when faced with the one true God of the universe (ECNT, 135).

The demons perfectly illustrate the poverty of verbal profession in and of itself. They are among the most “orthodox” of theologians, agree wholeheartedly with the Shema (Moo, 131).

**Tremble** (φρισσοῦσιν). Only here in New Testament. It means, originally, *to be rough on the surface; to bristle*. Hence, used of the fields with ears of corn; of a line of battle bristling with shields and spears; of a silver or golden vessel rough with embossed gold. Aeschylus, describing a crowd holding up their hands to vote, says, *the air bristled with right hands*. Hence, of a horror which makes the hair stand on end and contracts the surface of the skin making “gooseflesh.” Rev., much better, *shudder*.

The word tremble means more they just slight shuddering; it refers to uncontrollable, uncontrollable, violent shaking from extreme fear (ECNT, 135).

James uses an extreme example to make his point that the demons are so certain of the existence of the one true God that they are horrified, but even that does not bring them to salvation (ECNT, 135).

**James 2:20** Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?

Useless κεε = empty, foolish, worthless

**Dead** (νεκρα). But the best texts read αργη, *idle*; as of money which yields no interest, or of land lying fallow.

“Faith that lacks works does not work!” ECNT, 136.

**21** Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar?

**22** You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made complete, **23** and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness**, and he was called God's friend.

Abraham was willing to prove his faith as real because he was willing to act on it, so that he was brought to salvation at the end (ECNT, 136).

Abraham's faith was not mature until he acted upon it. In the process he learned more about God's character, further bolstering his faith (ECNT, 137).

**24** You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. **25** In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route?

## Justify

Most Christians take their understanding of the verb justify from the writing of Paul who uses it to denote God's initial verdict of innocence pronounced over the sinner who trusts Jesus Christ in faith. In another sense the meaning of dikaioo

means to demonstrate to right or to vindicate (See Matt. 11:19). On this reading, James would be claiming that Abraham was shown to be right by his actions (Moo, 135).

Faith cooperates with works.

**Works (2:26)** (τῶν ἐργῶν). Note the article: *the* works belonging or corresponding to faith; *its* works.

They do not speak of the same works: St. Paul speaking of works antecedent to faith; St. James, of works subsequent to it. –John Wesley

Paul speaks of Christian faith (trust in Jesus) and Jewish works (obeying the law so as to justify oneself), whereas James refers to Jewish faith (pure monotheism) and Christian works (good deeds that flow from salvation) ECNT, 139.

“Paul is dealing with obstetrics, with how new life begins; James, however, is dealing with pediatrics and geriatrics, with how Christian life grows and matures and ages (ECNT, 139).

### **Rahab**

A larger question is why James chooses Rahab for his illustration when other, more illustrious examples were ready to hand. Alongside the famous and celebrated ancestor of the Jewish people, a friend of God, he places an obscure Gentile woman of low moral character. Thus he implies that anyone is capable of acting on his or her faith—whether a patriarch or a prostitute (Moo, 143).

**26** For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Faith that does not reveal itself in works—in a changed lifestyle that glorifies God and seeks his heart of the world—is dead, lifeless, workless, and worthless. In reality it is not faith at all; it is only the shell or the corpse of faith (ECNT, 141).

### **Dead**

James speaks not of a half faith or a limited faith, it is dead (Motyer, 110).

### **Illustrations**

A young boy, on an errand for his mother, had just bought a dozen eggs. Walking out of the store, he tripped and dropped the sack. All the eggs broke, and the sidewalk was a mess. The boy tried not to cry. A few people gathered to see if he was OK and to tell him how sorry they were. In the midst of the words of pity, one man handed the boy a quarter. Then he turned to the group and said, "I care 25 cents worth. How much do the rest of you care?" (James 2:16) points out that words don't mean much if we have the ability to do more.

Every year revelers from around the world head to Pamplona, Spain to take part in the running of the bulls glorified by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*. The festival, a heady nine-day mix of partying and adrenaline-chasing, draws hundreds of thousands of people from around the world to Pamplona, a city of around 300,000. Fifteen people have been killed in the bull-runs since records began in 1911. The most recent death occurred five years ago when a Spanish man was gored.

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