

# Is Your Faith Real?

*Epistle of James*  
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**Bible Text:** James 2:14-19  
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 2. The epistle of James 2. We're delighted this morning to have some special guests with us who drove a long way from South Africa. Missionaries in South Africa that we've had the privilege of ministering together with and encouragement and prayer for over 10 years now and they are here for over a week for ACBC. Sybrand will be bringing the word next Sunday morning here so look forward and be praying for him and look forward to what God is going to do in our midst next week. But we're so delighted that they were able to come back to America to visit and to get to catch up with them, so I know you'll want to take a moment today and then next week, he's going to have to leave pretty quickly after the service so you may want to try to make time today to say hello. They've got to get to the airport next Sunday.

Anyway, turn with me, as I said, to James 2. We're going to be looking at verses 14 to 19 this week. We looked at the entire passage, James 2:14-26, last week in an overview sort of way because I mentioned to you that this passage is one of the more controversial passages in the New Testament. It's one of the most misunderstood and one of the most misused texts. It's often distorted and misused by Roman Catholics to seek to undermine the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone and they like to read James against Luther, but they're really reading James against Paul. And as we said last week, the question that we considered last Sunday was do we need to reconcile James and Paul? Are they really at odds? And the conclusion we came to last Sunday is, of course, they're not at odds, they're friends. What James is teaching is completely consistent with what Paul is teaching. They're coming at it from different angles and the apparent contradiction, though on the surface of it when you first read it, it does appear to be contradictory and we know that there are many apparent contradictions in Scripture but all of them are not true contradictions. There are no true contradictions. But apparent contradiction. James said, "We are justified by works," three times in the passage. He says, "and not by faith alone," in verse 24.

But this when you really understand it carefully, it does not contradict Paul because you have to consider the context in which something is said. You make statements and we interpret, as we learn as we grow up, you learn how to interpret language in context. Certain words mean certain things in a certain context. You take those same words and you put them in a different context and they mean something different and that's what's

going on with the word "justified" here. James is using it differently than Paul, than the passages that Paul is said to use that contradict it.

Let me give you an example and this is actually something that was helpful in a book, "The God Who Justifies" by James White, he makes the point that James is talking about the evidence of justification, Paul, say Romans 3:28 for instance, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works." We maintain that a man is justified by faith and works have nothing to do with it. Paul is talking about the moment of justification, the process of justification. How is it that you enter into a justified position before God? He's talking about the moment of justification in Romans 3:28. James is talking about after the moment. He's talking to believers who profess to have had that experience and he's talking with them years later and saying, "What's the evidence in your life that that moment was real?" And they're using the words but they're using them from different angles.

Now the reality is when you read Paul carefully, he says exactly what James says in 2:14 to 26 in a number of other places because he is a good surgeon of the soul. And you need to understand what it is to enter into saving faith and what that process means and that is where what Paul is saying and what Luther recovered and the Reformers recovered is, the way you enter into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is by faith alone apart from works. The moment in which you enter the narrow gate of salvation, you're entering it by faith, trusting completely in the finished work of Christ. None of your works come with you into the kingdom.

Now, if that's happened, your faith which started out alone and had to be alone when you entered in, your faith will not and cannot remain alone. Good works will follow. But the good works are not what we do to be saved, the good works are what we do because we are saved and are evidence of the fact that we are saved. That's essentially how you reconcile it and they are using the words, as we often do, we use words in different context and they mean slightly different things. I mean, every word is that way. You know, the word "love," in certain context it means the love of God; in certain context it means the love a man has for a woman; in certain context it means the love you have for your favorite soft drink. Pretty different meanings. None of those meanings are illegitimate or wrong, it's just a matter that you have to interpret the word in its context and that's the case here.

So James is basically talking to people who profess to be believers. These are Jewish believers in Jesus that have been spread across the Mediterranean world by persecution. James is aware that they're having a problem; that there is kind of an easy-believism that is afflicting many of these congregations of believers; that is that there are people who are teaching and believing and maintaining that you can just have faith and it doesn't matter how you live; that you can have saving faith but you don't look any different than you did before you came to saving faith. And he's aware of that and his whole book is a polemic against that. In fact, what we're reading in chapter 2, 14 to 26, is just really an echo of what he said in James 1:22 to 27 when he said, I mean, think how similar this is, "Don't be merely hearers of the word but be a doer of the word. Don't be merely a hearer

of the word, be a doer of the word. Don't be merely a person who affirms that he believes, but be someone who does and acts as one who believes." Do you see? He's saying the same thing. He's applying it in a different way because of the great need, our need to be sure of our salvation. So the title of the message this morning is "Is Your Faith Real?" Is your faith real? James is trying to help us examine our faith.

So let's read verses 14 to 26, focusing in there on verses 14 to 19 this morning.

14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come to you and to receive from you your word which is our life, and we confess to you our great need now of grace, the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help us understand these things and to apply these things to our hearts, that we might be true followers of Christ and that we might be more and more faithful and earnest in our walk with him. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Is your faith real? James is concerned that there are a number of believers, professing believers in the Jewish churches to whom he writes that have a faith that is not genuine faith. They have a faith that is a spurious faith or a false faith, a shallow faith, not a real saving faith. And in teaching this, he's completely consistent with all that Jesus taught and all that Paul taught. The New Testament is consistent. The Bible is consistent. I mean, we read earlier from Matthew 7 where Jesus basically says, "There are some who profess to be believers and who are even actively involved in the church and even doing some things for God." You remember he says, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, for many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?'" That is, preach in your name. "Did we not cast out

demons in your name? And I will say to them, 'Depart from me, you who work lawlessness, I never knew you.'" That is that the true works of faith are not evident in their life: works of godliness, increasing righteousness. You can be religiously active and yet spiritually deficient and so the issue, Jesus says, is not that one who hears my words. Remember he said that a man who hears the words and does not do them is like a man who built his house on the sand. The man who hears and does, builds his house upon the rock.

So James is basically echoing Jesus and Paul in the same way, though in Ephesians 2:8-9 he points out that we're saved by grace through faith and not of works, "For by grace are you saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast." In the next verse in Ephesians 2:10 says, "for we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." That is, that once you are saved apart from works, you are now set to work and you should see in your life works of righteousness. There will be periods of decline, there could be periods of backsliding, there could be periods of dormancy, but that the believer will be evident, it will be evident, the true believer in their life. That's what James is saying.

So is your faith real? I want to consider this message under three points this morning. These first six verses, verses 14 to 19, under three points to help us allow the word to examine us. The first point is there are two kinds of faith. According to James, there are two kinds of faith. This is clear in verse 14, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" There is a kind of faith, in other words, there is a kind of faith that does not save. That's what he's saying. The rhetorical question is meant to be answered no, of course not. If a man has faith and has no works, can that faith save him? He said there is a kind of faith that does not save. Now that, of course, implies that there is also a kind of faith that does save, praise God.

So there are two kinds of faith: there is saving faith and there is a shallow faith that does not save. James's purpose is to expose the danger and peril of this shallow faith to make sure that his readers are encouraged to enter into the rest of God, the rest that he talks about in Hebrews; to pursue genuine faith in Christ. His purpose is that we could examine ourselves and see if we have genuine faith rather than spurious faith or true faith rather than false faith or real faith versus an imitation faith.

There are two kinds of faith, now how can you tell the difference? That's the issue and James writes this to us and as he does, the application, the obvious application is in the question of the title: for each of us to examine ourselves and say, "Is my faith real?" Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:5 something very similar. He says in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see if you are in the household of faith."

Now this is very different than evangelical practical theology for the last 75 or 80 years. It has been, I mentioned easy-believism that James is writing against, the Scripture is against easy-believism but nevertheless, a kind of easy-believism has crept into evangelicalism over the last, like I said, 80-90 years. Now what is easy-believism? Easy-believism is the idea that if you pray a prayer, that if you say the right words to Christ, if you pray a prayer and you mean it, you're saved beyond a shadow of a doubt.

I had a friend who was counseling for a long time at a large evangelical church in Atlanta, a good reputation of church as far as committed to the inerrancy of Scripture, he counseled people after service, you know, at the altar calls that some churches have. He counseled after those altar calls and he was told, instructed, when you have someone pray the Sinner's Prayer, after they've prayed the Sinner's Prayer, you have them write it down in their Bible and you tell them this: anytime in the future if anyone questions your salvation, you open your Bible and you say, "On this day, in this place, I prayed and asked Jesus Christ into my life." That settles it. No doubt.

The problem is that that counsel is completely contradictory to the teaching of the New Testament. It is completely antithetical to the teaching of the New Testament. The New Testament does teach that at a moment in time when the heart truly looks to Christ in earnest faith, sincere faith, at a moment in time you are justified forever and you cannot lose your salvation, but that's not the same thing as teaching that when I think I was saved, I was saved.

You can think you're saved and not be saved. You could have an experience. I've counseled people before who were living in persistent sin as Christians, unwilling to repent, and I tried to bring up the Scriptures like this to them and say, "You know, if you really love the Lord, if you're really trusting in Jesus for your salvation, the Scripture teaches that you're going to want to obey him. It doesn't mean we obey him perfectly. We all sin, of course, but when we're confronted, when the Spirit of God is in you, you're going to repent and you're not repenting and I'm wondering about your salvation." I've had them say, "I know that I'm saved." I say, "How do you know that you're saved?" "I remember the experience that I had. I remember how emotional I was when I went forward and when I gave my heart to Christ. I remember even the enthusiasm and the joy that I had for a period of time. It was like everything had changed." I say, "Well, I don't know your heart. Only God knows. God knows those who are his, but in looking at your fruit, the Bible says I should be very concerned about you and should be calling you to really examine the reality of your faith. The fact that you had an experience and even joy for a period of time, reminds me an awful lot of what Jesus says in Matthew 13 about the seed that fell upon the soil, the sower that went out and he sowed and it fell upon four types of soil. Some fell upon the wayside and it was immediately taken up by the birds. That pictures Satan stealing the truth before it can penetrate the heart. Some fell among thorns and some fell on the rocky soil. Do you remember the rocky soil conversion? Apparent conversion? Because in Palestine, there is a lot of limestone underneath the surface and so there's some dirt but there's not depth of earth in certain places and so you think there's soil and the seed goes into that soil but it hits the rock and it starts to germinate and the way that plants normally grow is they grow down before they grow up. The root system begins to extend and when it gets fully extended, then it begins to grow up out of the earth. Well, the rocky soil, the seed that fell on rocky soil would grow down like every other seed but it hits the rock and it can't grow down any further and so it would actually spring up out of the ground first ahead of the seed that fell in good soil that is still building that rooted system. And the rocky soil, Jesus says that's like a person who receives the word with great joy yet in times of persecution, falls away. So you see,

the experience, you can't base your confidence and assurance on experience. You can't base it upon something you wrote down in your Bible."

Now, how do you examine yourself? Well, James wants to help us with that. How do you examine and how do you understand real faith? Now, I want to say one other thing: we are to examine ourselves but there's also, and it's so important for us as Americans to remember this, there is a corporate element in this idea. You see this in Hebrews 3 when the author of Hebrews says, "See to it that there be in none of you an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." He's writing just like James is to people who profess to be Christians and he says, "You guys, make sure there is not a sinful unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." We tend as Americans to think, the Western mindset, just of ourselves. Make sure that's true of me. Well, that's part of what that application is, but he's saying, "Make sure that in none of you." He's saying you have a corporate responsibility to look out for your brothers and sisters. If they start to stray, you want to make sure that a sinful unbelieving heart isn't developing in them that they fall away from the living God. And God uses our ministry to each other, our one-anothering, to keep us on track so that our faith will be proved genuine over time. Though genuine faith happens at an instant, it's proved out over time.

Now, there are two kinds of faith: genuine faith and false faith. The second point: these two kinds of faith have a radically different value. James makes this point emphatically with the question, "What use is it?" at the very beginning. "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works?" A key word there is the word "use." What use is it? This is translated by the ESV and the NIV, "What good is it?" The King James translates the same word, "What profit is it?" And it's repeated at the end of verse 16, the same exact Greek word. Do you see it in verse 14? "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works?" At the end of verse 16 when after he's told the illustration about, "'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" What good is it? What profit is it? And the idea is what value does it bring? What does it matter? How does it change anything? And the implication is if you have a faith without works, it is utterly valueless. It is completely worthless. It does nothing for you. This is also underscored in verse 20 when he says, "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" The word "useless" here, a different Greek word, this word actually in the Greek means "not work." Basically it's like he says, "Faith without works doesn't work. Faith without works is broken completely. It doesn't accomplish anything. A faith like this is of no value."

And he makes this point emphatically. I mean, the whole way James, you know, we've noticed this before, his style is emphatic in general. I mean, he's a person who says everything earnestly and you see this in the way that he unfolds this. He's asking question after question after question and then he uses the diatribe, the form of a diatribe. A diatribe is a literary device or an oratory device where you imagine an opponent and you put words in their mouth and then you answer the objections of the opponent. That's what he's doing in verse 18, "But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works.'" Then he does the same thing in verse 20, "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish

fellow." It's like he's talking to the objector and he's putting him in his place. And the word "foolish" means "empty head." He's actually saying, "Your thoughts are not very substantive here. Are you willing to recognize this, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"

Now, it accomplishes nothing, there is no benefit, nothing is changed for the person who has this kind of faith. What does that mean? It accomplishes nothing. Think about the message of the Gospel, the message of Scripture to the unbeliever. What is the position of the unbeliever according to the word of God? Before you were saved, what was your position? The Bible says that we are dead in trespasses and sins. We were dead spiritually. We were in our sins. The guilt and condemnation of our sins was all over us. We were by nature objects of wrath. That is, when God looked at us, what he rightly felt toward us in his justice was a desire to punish fully the wickedness of our hearts because we were rebels. And so we were in our sins, we were at that time separate from the communion with God, we were without God, without hope in the world. We were standing under the wrath of God in danger of the fires of hell. James is saying, "If you have a shallow faith, it has changed nothing, that is, you are still in your sins, you are still under the wrath of God. A shallow faith has made no difference. It cannot make any difference. There is no change, no benefit."

And he illustrates this powerfully in verses 15 and 16. He sets before us an illustration of the difference between words and deeds. You say you believe, but do you believe? You say you love Christ, but do you love Christ? "It's like if a brother or sister," verse 15, "is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled.'" Now think about that. Another Christian, professor of Christ, a person who professes to love Christ, a brother or sister is in great need. I mean, they don't have food. They are hungry. They don't have adequate clothing. They are subject to the elements and you basically see them out in the cold, hungry, and you say to them, "Go in peace. Be warmed and filled." And you walk away. James says, "What use is that? What did you do for them? Did that make any difference for them?" That probably made it worse for them, didn't it? "Hey, my brother and sister saw me like this and they did nothing." They certainly were no better off. He says, "What use is a profession of love for your brother or sister? I want you to have the peace of God upon you. I want you to have your needs cared for. I really sincerely earnestly want that. Good bye. I hope it works out for you." He says, "No. That's a sham. That's a lie. The heart is really not there. That's some kind of imitation compassion."

So in the same way, then, a person who says they love Christ and yet there's no difference in their life, there's no progression toward obedience, there's no movement toward holiness. It's not the perfection of your life, let's be clear on that. None of us can ever reach perfection. No one ever has except Jesus. It's not the perfection of your life, it's the direction, though. Is there real meaningful movement in your life toward righteousness? Is there a struggle with sin and a desire to put it off? Are you fighting against it? James says if you're not really doing that, if you're happy and content to continue to explode in anger and just apologize but you never change, or you never work at it by God's grace and his word and with the help of brothers and sisters, or if you're controlled by sexual

sin or anything else and you're not willing to seek holiness. I mean, it's difficult to get out of sin. He's not saying it's not difficult even for the believer. Of course it is. We're told in Galatians 6, if a brother is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual, you've got to go and help him out. We need help. It's not saying we're supposed to be spiritually self-sufficient in and of ourselves with the new nature we have. No, we need one another. That's why we need encouragement. We need other people encouraging us, one another, encourage one another day after day, as long as it is called today lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. He's not saying it's not a struggle. He's not saying it's going to be easy. No. It's not going to be easy. It is going to be a struggle but if you're content and complacent about sin, watch out. If over time there is no change, examine yourself.

James wants us to understand the urgency of this. I mean, what could be more important than finding out and discerning whether or not our faith is real? What is of more value than that? As I said earlier, there have been so many who teach errantly this and many of us have bought into some of that because we were surrounded by it and it appeals to the flesh, that is that you can have Jesus as your Savior and not as your Lord. This was a false teaching in the last century, that you can receive Jesus as your Savior but not receive him as Lord. Something that was sort of codified in the Campus Crusade teaching ministry, and there was a lot of good that came out of that ministry. I'm not saying that but this was a bad thing because you cannot have Jesus as Savior if he's not Lord. He will not receive you unless you submit to him and call him Lord. I mean, the Scripture is clear on that. You believe in your heart that God raised from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, then you're saved.

Now then, living that confession out is a daily battle but if you never were there, you're not saved. But there are people who act like that and so they act like you can just stay in your sins. If you just pray this prayer, you can continue in your homosexuality without even worrying about it. You just pray this prayer and you're saved. That is completely foreign to the New Testament. Jesus is one who delivers us. He came to deliver us from sin and so there must be the willingness to turn from sin even though it's going to continue to be a battle. Someone may still struggle with same-sex attraction for years and maybe for the rest of their life at some level, but the true believer is going to be fighting for holiness, getting help from other brothers and sisters to help them on that end.

So we must put away those unbiblical ideas. Salvation comes to those who call upon him as Lord and it does matter how we live. Not to enter into heaven, no, but it means you cannot be his disciple unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. You want to be my disciple, Jesus says? Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. Is that easy-believism? No. It means full surrender. Full surrender.

Now, James wants us to have a living faith, a saving faith, and saving faith means everything has changed. If any man is in Christ, he's a new creature. Behold, old things have passed away. All things have become new. And he now has eternal life. It's not something we're going to get. The true believer has it now. Even though we can't see it, we can't feel it, it is a reality. We have passed from death to life and James wants us to have that.



So there are two kinds of faith, we said our first point. Second point, these two kinds of faith have a radically different worth or value. The value of the one is completely useless. False faith does nothing. True faith is life eternal. Now the third point. Not only are there two kinds of faith and these two kinds of faith, secondly, have a radically different value, number three: these two kinds of faith have a radically different appearance. I use that advisedly even though at first glance it's a little bit unsettling because, in reality, we can't see someone else's heart. I can't see my own heart. I mean, we don't know our own hearts. God knows our hearts. But I can know my heart better than I can know anyone else's.

So how do you recognize true faith or false faith? James basically is saying you can recognize it with your eyes. The eye test. Now, it's not 100% but he's saying we need to learn to put the eye test to our life and with humility and love and a desire to bless our brothers and sisters, to one-another. And it's there in the key word he uses in verse 18 and that word is "show." "Someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works,'" this is when he's moving into the diatribe, he's imagining the opponent who says, "Listen, hey," he's basically saying, "You know, you have faith and I have works and you have this gift and I have that gift. It's like everything else, some people just have the gift of works and some people don't have the gift of works. I don't have the gift of works, you do. But I have faith." And James is saying, "No. It doesn't work that way. Works always accompanies true faith."

He says, "Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works." The show me idea. Show me. The verb here means "to bring into view; to make visible; to set on display; to exhibit." You set something on display, you exhibit it. It's clearly in view. And James is saying, "Your faith, we should follow Christ to such an extent that our faith becomes visible, and when this happens, this is a cause of great assurance. When your faith becomes visible, that's when you can really rejoice. Look at what God has done in my life, and other people are seeing your good works." Like Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works." They see your good works and what do they do? They don't rejoice that you're some kind of great special person, "they glorify your Father who is in heaven." By your good works they see, "That is a child of God."

So the outward evidence. These two kinds of faith have radically different appearance. Now the false faith, the appearance of the false faith is it has, it does have and it looks like true faith. Actually it's radically different appearance when you look closely, okay? Let me make that clarification. It's radically different when you look closely. It's not radically different at first glance.

And why do I say that? Because he says that the true believer and the false believer both say the same thing. Their words are the same. They both, as he said in verse 14, say they have faith. Their words say, "I believe in Jesus. I love the Lord. I'm trusting in Christ for my salvation." So they say the same words so at first glance it does look like you can't tell the difference but as you look closer, he's making the point, there is a radical difference in

appearance and the radical difference is seen in the works, the deeds. Its faith is demonstrated.

Now, it's interesting to compare. He used the image in verses 15 and 16, "If you see your brother or sister without clothing and in need of daily food and you just say, 'Be warmed and filled,'" you're loving in word, right? You're not loving in deed. If you don't take some food and give it to them, if you don't take money and buy them clothing or give them clothing, if you don't do something, your profession is empty.

Turn with me to 1 John 3:14. This is a great verse to even show the biblical understanding of Christian assurance. John is really talking a lot about assurance of salvation. That's his whole point. "I've written these things so that you may know that you have eternal life." Not that you have eternal life. That's what he wrote John's Gospel for and 1 John is written so that you may know that you have eternal life. John was written so that you may have eternal life. Do you see the difference?

So 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life," that is, we have assurance that we have true faith, how? "Because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Now look at the next verse and think about what we read in James. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Then he says in verse 18, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." The extension of what James was saying.

True love is seen in what it does. That's one of the most compelling things about 1 Corinthians 13 when you really look at it and study the way that love is described. There are 18 verbs that describe love and we get messed up a little bit in our English translation because it says, "Love is patient, love is kind." That sounds like those are adjectives, right? Love, it's patient, it's kind, but in the Greek, it says, "Love suffers long." That's the verb and we translate it "love is patient." But the idea is that your love keeps on suffering, keeps on suffering even as it's loving. Do you see how different that is in the feelings? It's not just like, "I'm patient. I'm just enduring." No, I'm loving and suffering. "Is kind" means "acts with kindness." It blesses. It's not just that it's kind. He's a very kind person so he never says anything. He's kind. No, being kind means you move out in kindness.

So that's what John is saying and that's what James is saying but look what John says after this, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him." Do you see that? That's assurance of salvation. When you're loving in deed and truth, when God's Spirit is moving in your heart and you are not closing your hearts to your brothers and sisters in need and you're moving toward them, this is one of the ways that God strikes a chord in your heart and the Spirit testifies with you you are a child of God. Look at the love that's flowing out of you. It's not you. We love because he loved us.

It's his love flowing through me. That's what he's saying. That's the way of assurance. And James is then saying, turning back to our passage in James, that if you don't have these outward evidences, if you're not experiencing that, you need to beware. You see, true love or true salvation, true faith looks radically different when you look under the hood of someone's life and he says this shows this ought to be evident. As Jesus said, he will say to those who are false professors, "Depart from me, you who work lawlessness." But the ones who hear his word and do his word, they are the true believers.

Now James, true to form, takes this and applies it even a little more firmly. This radically different appearance though at first it looks the same, when you really look at it more closely, it's radically different. It's diametrically opposed. A sham faith, a surface faith, a faith in word only, is radically different than a genuine faith and you can see it if you look more carefully and we are to help each other to do that. He's saying it's obvious but in reality, as we work through life, it takes a while to get to the point where you can really see these things. This is why we're supposed to help each other walk together, encourage one another, and it's in the one-anothering that we actually help each other become assured of our salvation. As you are loving one another, God working through you and the other brother or sister receiving your love from you, it's like you're both being built up in the assurance that, "Yes, God is among us." It's not that I've just had an experience. It's not that I can recite the Gospel clearly. No, the Spirit of God is working in me.

That's why this one-anothering is so essential and many of us are not walking in the kind of assurance we need to have or the kind of purity and holiness we need to have because we're not one-anothering. If we don't, if we neglect the means of grace, then the grace that may be genuine in me is not being fanned into the flame that would be burning; and the faith that we have may be genuine, may be of God and yet it's not yet evident because we're not walking in the way that God has called us to walk. This is why if you're feeling that today, what are you to do? Apply your heart in obedience to his word and as James said earlier, be a doer of the word. Be under the word but then try to work out practically, "How do I do this?"

This is one of the reasons that we're having the fellowship times after church. We talked about this last week and you'll be hearing more about this. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we're going to have food after church brought in and we're going to do this once a month on Communion Sunday. We're going to ask you to wear a name tag one Sunday a month, even though you know who you are. We think it will just help us build our oneness. Do you know how sometimes you think, "I know that person's name"? Do you ever have the thing where you keep calling the wrong name? You know the right name but you keep thinking in your mind, it's like it goes back to the wrong name and then you can't remember, "Have I got the right name or the wrong name?" So you don't say anything. Well, the name tags will solve that at least for one week.

And then also after church, we're going to, like I said, bring food in on that day, the Lord's Supper day, and we're going to, you can bring your own food or you can buy food. It will be food trucks, actually. Jess came up with a great title for it, "Fellowship in Food

Trucks," and I really like that. It's got a nice ring. The alliteration is really good and there are three points to it. No, seriously. Fellowship in food trucks and the idea is not just to eat, but it's to eat and have an opportunity of life on life. A lot of us are spread out. We come from a distance. Our lives tend to be busy. We've got to make time for being together and we hope that you'll do this more often. You can go and get food and come back. We're going to leave the building open until 2:30 every Sunday afternoon and somebody will be here to close it. A lot of us will be here too but, you know, not every week. It's not like it's required but it's an opportunity to say, "Hey," as you're talking to someone during church or between services, "let's spend some time together after lunch or at lunch today," and get to know one another and talk through things and share the struggles and it is in those moments we build one another up. That's what he's calling us to.

Now, James in verse 19, he adds emphasis and he says this, this is biting sarcasm. This is stinging sarcasm. It is Spirit-inspired sarcasm, yes. Not all sarcasm is Spirit-inspired but this is. But I want you to listen to this as if you didn't know what's coming. Imagine that you were one of the first recipients of this message of James. You get word, "Hey," at the Jewish...we're all first century believers associated with groups of Jewish people who are receiving this letter. There are Gentiles probably among us too but there are a lesser number of those that James is writing to, and so we're going to read what James the apostle has sent to us and we start reading it and we're reading the passage and you hear him say, "You believe that God is one. You do well." You don't know what comes next. He's writing, I said, to mostly Jewish believers. He is basically taking one of the cardinal principles of Jewish orthodoxy that every faithful Jew knew from the time they were old enough to speak, that is the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" The first verse little boys would be taught to remember and that was the orthodox position.

So what he's saying is true faith goes beyond orthodoxy. That is, false faith can be orthodox. You can be orthodox and dot all of your i's and cross your t's theologically precisely, because this is what he's talking about here. For the Jews they were like, "That is the one thing that you've got to get right." And so when they hear him, "You believe that God is one. You do well." At first glance, they're probably in their minds, you know, saying, "Yeah, you do well. That's important."

Then, think if you're thinking like that and you hear this, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." Wow! He's saying the demons have the same orthodox theological position that you have if you believe that God is one. They hold your orthodox position exactly the way you hold it. They know there's only one God. Of what use is their doctrine? What difference does it make in their existence, in their life? What good are they doing for God? They're doing zero. They're doing negative. They're fighting against God.

So James is saying it's not what we say we believe. It is that but it's something far more than just merely what we say we believe. Now, you have to believe that God is one to be saved. You have to believe that Jesus Christ is God to be saved. You have to believe that

he's the only way to heaven. You have to believe that he died on the cross to pay for the sins of everyone who would ever believe, that when he died he bore our sins in his body on the cross. Yes, you have to believe the tenets of the Gospel. You have to believe that he himself paid completely for our sins, even our sins of hypocrisy and hypocritical faith. He paid for all of it. And you have to believe that he was raised from the dead and that he lives forever. But true faith doesn't just believe it with the mind, true faith goes out to him personally with the heart. True faith doesn't just look at Christ from a distance, true faith runs to Jesus and embraces him. True faith loves him. It doesn't seek to keep him away with religious zeal, it surrenders to him, and because it surrenders to him and it loves him, true faith will be evident in life. That's what he's saying.

Now, what does that mean for us? Well, it means that when you're saved by faith alone, your faith cannot remain alone. Good works. So you look at your life and you say, "What is the status of my life?" And you do this prayerfully, "Lord, look at me." And you talk to brothers and sisters too. What's the status of my walk with God? What am I changing?

And if you have concerns and you feel like that there is not an evident heat, the fire is not evident, is there a spark there, only God knows. What do you do? Well, you get in the word. You stay in the word. You do what James says in chapter 1, you seek to prove yourselves doers of the word, not merely hearers. That is, you hear the word but in verse 25 of chapter 1, he said you look intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and you abide by it. You go to God's law and you stay in it. You let it keep searching you. You see how it says I'm supposed to be like this and yet I'm not, and you don't run from God's law, you stay in it and you say, "Lord, look at this distance from here. I'm supposed to be like this and this is what I'm like." And you stay in it and you stay under it and you let it keep examining you and as it examines you, you let it do what its real purpose is, it's to expose your sin and it's to cause you to flee to Christ.

So you're going to keep running to Jesus. "Jesus, I'm not like I'm supposed to be. Look at all the areas of weakness. Look at all the lack of growth in this area and this area. How can I be so foolish?" And you look at Christ and you say, "But you are perfect. You have done everything that the Father could ever ask. You are my righteousness. You have borne my sins. You have died even for this." And you run to him and you surrender to him again and you say, "Lord, now out of the joy of understanding your forgiveness and your righteousness, I want to be like you." And then you seek to walk in that truth.

It's like that in every area of our life. That's what we're supposed to do. Let the word of God expose our sin, run to Christ, and then seek out of gratitude because he has saved us, we're believing he saved us, now walk in that. Then that's what happens. As John was saying, when we do that, you know, there are times where people around us and we're supposed to love them, we don't feel loving. We're not feeling compassionate to this brother or sister in need. We have our own agenda. We're thinking about ourselves. What do you do? First of all you realize the word says, "Where is my love? Look at my miserable selfish heart." But you don't stop there. Run to Christ. "Jesus, you see this person differently than I do. You love them. You see their need. Your heart is compassion and you forgive me because you died for my wicked selfishness. So Lord, I

thank you that you forgive me. I thank you that you have love for them. Would you love them through me?"

And then you think about the word, it says do something. It doesn't say do it in word only, does it? It says do something. "So Lord, help me do something for them. Help me serve them." And so what happens is you who felt at the moment you had that same sin nature, it's clinging to you every day saying, "I don't love them. I don't care." But rather than accept that, you ran to Christ, you sought his face, and now his love is flowing through you and suddenly you are as you take this step toward them, moving toward them even at the moment thinking, "I still don't feel anything. I still don't feel anything but Jesus says do this," and you're trusting in Christ and at some point, his love begins to flow through you and when you love that person and you feel his love flowing through you, John says now you are assured that you walk in truth. That's the Christian life and James says don't be complacent, don't be content. It's salvation, faith that is true faith works and that's the balance. We're saved by faith alone but a saving faith will not remain alone.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for the wondrous gift of the Gospel that you would love sinners like we are and would make known a way of salvation, a perfect way of salvation through your precious Son. Give us the gift of faith, repentance. Give us new life then the Christian life is living day by day dying to self, running to Christ, and in the dying and new life that Jesus brings, we become more and more like him. Forgive us for our complacency. Forgive us for our apathy, our lethargy and sleepiness, spiritual sleepiness, Lord. Make us earnest to pursue our Savior. Father, for those here that are really wondering where they are with you, Lord, give them an earnestness to seek your face. Give them clear understanding of the sufficiency of Christ in an undying, unyielding determination to trust him. And Lord, help us help one another so that there would not be in any among us an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. Let us press on and may you be glorified. May people around us see our light shining and glorify our wondrous Father. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*