

# Dead Faith (Faith Without Activity)

*Spiritual Maturity*

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**Bible Text:** James 2:14-20  
**Preached on:** Sunday, December 10, 2023

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We turn in scripture to James chapter 2. We read the chapter in its entirety. The text this evening is James 2 verses 14 through 20. We will not reread that section because we will read through it basically all over again in the course of the preaching. So pay particular attention to those verses, 14 through 20, and it will be profitable to keep our Bibles open to this portion of God's word as we sit under the preaching. James chapter 2.

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of [or with] evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [or convicted] of the law as transgressors. 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Now the words of the text, 14 through 20,

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace,

be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Then these next verses we'll consider next time,

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect [faith reached its goal, its purpose]? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, by way of introduction, I want to point your attention to three things about this passage, and really three things that characterize this whole second half of chapter 2, from verse 14 to the end of the chapter. I want to point out three things. First, this passage really captures for us the heart of the letter of James as a whole. With this passage, we really have before us the main point of the entire letter. All the rest of the admonitions found in this letter center around the one main idea James brings up in this passage. If a person has faith, he will live a certain way. His faith will become visible by the way he lives. In fact, one commentary that I've been using these last few weeks actually approaches the book of James as if it were a set of tests, a series of tests by which you can evaluate whether your faith is a living faith or whether your faith is a dead faith. For example, how do you respond to the trials of life? Can you, do you, submit to the trials of life with joy, knowing that God's purpose in these trials is a good purpose? How do you respond to falling into sin? Do you acknowledge that you were drawn away of your own lusts and enticed, or do you rather try to blame God for the sin that you've committed? That's in chapter 1 as well. How do you respond to the preaching? Are you a doer of the word or are you a hearer only, deceiving your own self? How do you handle your tongue? Do you bridle your tongue or do you let your tongue run wild? How do you interact with other people? Are you one who loves your neighbor as yourself or are you a respecter of persons? That's really the subject that leads James into the second half of chapter 2, and as we will see, Lord willing, in future chapters, this is how you could go through the whole book. How are you controlling your tongue? Chapter 3. What's your attitude towards friendship with the world? All these things. But here in verses 14 through 26, we really have the sum of all the other tests found in this

letter. Is your faith a faith that is active in bringing forth good works or is your faith merely in words only and thereby showing itself to be a dead faith? All these things that have been mentioned in the letter are really tests regarding this central issue. Is your faith a true faith or is it a dead faith?

So this passage really captures for us the heart of the entire letter. Second, by way of introduction, I want to point out that this passage is also a very sobering passage. It's very sobering to think that a person says he has faith, he says he's a believer, and yet he's still lost in his sin and on his way to hell. What James teaches in this passage is that there is such a faith, there is a faith that believes that God exists, that believes that the Bible is the word of God, that it is a faith that believes that Jesus is God come in the flesh, who lived and died for the sins of his people, who rose again the third day, who ascended into heaven, there is a faith that believes all this, a faith that acknowledges all this to be very true, but it is still a dead faith, so that that person is still lost in sin and does not belong to Jesus. I think that's very sobering to think about. I think it causes us to ask the question, how many people actually are deceiving themselves? They call themselves Christians, maybe they go to church on Sundays, maybe they've grown up in the church their whole lives. They know the Bible, maybe they think they know the Bible even as good as the devils know their Bible. And yet they're still going to hell if something radical doesn't happen in their lives so that the way that they're living actually changes.

It's sobering. It's a sobering passage and this leads us into the third thing I want to point out by way of introduction, this passage, while it's a central passage in this entire letter and while it's also a sobering passage, this passage is also a very pastoral passage because James cares very deeply for these people to whom he's writing, and just as any faithful pastor would want to warn the sheep under his care about this reality of a non-saving faith, so James has that desire as well. Just think, how many churches are filled with people who have a head knowledge of the scriptures? Maybe they even boast in their right doctrine, and they have the delusion that they are going to heaven when they die, and yet that's just it, it's merely a delusion because they haven't been changed in the deepest, in most recesses of their heart, and they're not actually living according to that truth they so proudly defend. How many are there who are living under the deception that a mere head knowledge of the truth equals redemption, as if a mere outward confession of faith or what I personally have come across multiple times is this, simply thinking that I have my membership papers in a doctrinally faithful church means I'm going to go to heaven when I die. I think we've all met these kinds of people. Maybe we've even grown up seeing these people in church or we maybe even had these people as our friends at one point in our lives and then eventually their true colors are shown when they get up and they stop with the charade and they just start living their life without any pretense of Christianity at all. It's a real thing that happens and so James, having a true care for these souls to whom he's writing, writes what he does. It's a passage full of pastoral concern and love. I hope that can also be reflected in the preaching tonight.

This passage is actually very similar to what we looked at last week, the vain religion of selective obedience, picking and choosing which commandments I'd like to keep and then which commandments I'm going to ignore and then still thinking I'm actually a Christian.

We take as our theme, "Dead Faith." Dead faith. We look at three things. First, what characterizes it. Second, what it is unable to do. And third, what we must consider for ourselves. We're going to walk through the passage in this first point of the sermon. If you look carefully at verse 14, and then verses 15 through 17, and then verses 18 and 19, you'll see that James brings up three different things that characterizes a dead faith and that's what we're going to cover in the first point.

So first off from verse 14, we see that dead faith is characterized by an empty confession. Verse 14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" Dead faith is, first of all, defined by this, it is faith without works. It is faith where there's all talk but no action. It's a mere empty confession of words without an accompanying way of living. If we wanted to capture the language in the original, we could kind of paraphrase it this way, "What doth it profit, brethren, though a man continually go on making the claim that he's a believer in Jesus and a believer in God, he continually makes that confession, and yet he doesn't have works, he doesn't have action, he doesn't have holy energy, he doesn't have anything he brings forth? What does it profit him?" And in the context, the meaning there is particularly the works of love, righteous deeds, of loving your neighbor and keeping God's royal law. He says he has faith but he has no lifestyle that matches up with the faith he confesses. That man's faith is vain. That man's faith is dead. The man confesses the truth of God as revealed in scripture, he confesses the Trinity, he confesses the right doctrine concerning justification by faith alone, he confesses the right doctrine concerning scripture as the inspired word of God, he even confesses that he's confident in these doctrinal truths, he embraces the reality that the Christian faith is the truth, maybe even says the Reformed faith is the truth, he's a five-point Calvinist, he believes in total depravity, maybe he's even a superlapsarian, he believes he's a sinner, he believes in God's sovereignty, and yet his life is characterized by sinful, selfish living, selective obedience. Not just that he sometimes falls into sin and he struggles, we all struggle, but this is his chosen lifestyle, so that his struggle really isn't with sin at all, but his struggle is really with constantly trying to present himself outwardly as an upright person of faith.

So the case is perhaps he gets drunk regularly, he lives a self-centered life, he is a mean, bitter person, or he's all about the money, maybe he lives entirely differently in the privacy of his own house than he does out in public. Or maybe he's kindred friends with the ungodly in the world around him. There's no real love towards his needy or poor neighbor. There's no real expression of love to God. There's just no real evidence of repentance in his life. No evidence of a faith that works by love. His life, you might say, is just an empty shell of Christianity and James says that's a dead faith. And why is that a dead faith? Well, it's kind of implied in the text, but it's a dead faith because a living faith is a faith that is active. A true faith is a faith that is zealous of good works. That's a clear teaching of scripture. When God saves a person, he gives that person a new spiritual life and out of that new spiritual life, that person will live and bring forth the fruits of good works. That's exactly God's purpose in saving a person and giving them faith. He gives them faith so that by faith they bring forth fruits to his glory.

Just a few passages here to emphasize this. In Ephesians 2, think of what Paul teaches there. He emphasizes that we as true Christians have been raised to spiritual life. We've been quickened with Jesus. We've been raised to spiritual life, and that's through faith. Ephesians 2 verse 8, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works." You're saved by faith. But then two verses later, Paul goes on and writes, "For we are his workmanship, we are his craftsmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." My point right now is simply this: we were created in Christ Jesus for the purpose of bringing forth good works. God's purpose with saving people is that they bring forth fruit. He's the husbandman, he's the gardener, he's looking for fruit, and so it stands to reason that if there are no good works proceeding from a person, that then God hasn't actually saved that person. That's something Jesus emphasized throughout his earthly ministry. He says, you shall know them by their fruits. You don't know them simply by what they say with their mouth. You know them by how they're actually choosing to live.

John chapter 8, we read of how there were many who believed in Jesus, many people outwardly who were following Jesus and then what does Jesus say to his disciples? He says, "If you continue in my word, that if you continue in my way, if you continue obeying me as Lord and King, if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed." Think of what John the Baptist said to the Pharisees when they came into the wilderness to hear his preaching. He says to them, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And then what does he say to them? He says, "Bring forth therefore fruit, meet," suitable, "for repentance." Bring forth fruit that matches up with a life of repentance. If you say you have faith, show it with a fruitful life. And don't say this, "We have Abraham as our father." Or maybe we might say today, don't say that you're a member of a Bible-believing church.

Think of what Paul writes to Titus in Titus 1:16, speaking there about men who are trying to deceive God's people, Paul writes, "They profess that they know God," they profess they are believers, "but in works, but in works, they deny him being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate."

Just one more verse. Think of what John writes in 1 John 3, verse 3. John writes that those who have the hope of heaven, they are believers looking forward to glory. What do they do? John writes, every man that has this hope in him, the hope of heaven, purifies himself. He purifies himself and the point with all these passages is this, if a person has true faith, if a person is regenerated, it shows itself in a life of good works. There's a radical change that takes place in that person so that that person is now the friend of God and he is the enemy of sin and he actually lives that way by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And James says in verse 14, that one of the characteristics of a dead faith then is this, an empty confession. The words are nice, but the life just isn't there. It's an empty confession. Second of all, as we move into verses 15 through 17, we get a second characteristic of dead faith, and that's this: a false compassion. It's really the same thing as what we said just a moment ago, but it's striking that James emphasizes this idea of

compassion towards the poor and the needy. Verses 15 through 17, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." Think of a brother or sister, a brother or sister in church, right, you're a fellow church member, you go to church together, you read your Bibles together in church, you put your money in the collection plate together, and you see that fellow Christian struggling to make it. Maybe he or she isn't necessarily naked, but the clothes are tattered, or maybe they're not able to keep themselves warm during the winter, or maybe they're out of food and you say to that struggling person, "Depart in peace," right? You say, "God bless you. I hope you can find some good clothes. I hope you can find some food to eat." And yet you don't actually help that person out, you have a dead faith. Maybe you even say to that person, "Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." Maybe that person says, "God is sovereign. Remember, God is sovereign. Keep trusting God. He will supply your need." But then you don't even care to think how you can love that person and do that person good and help that person out. James says, your faith is dead. This is a false compassion. That's not how love behaves. That's not how true faith behaves.

And again, think about it. Faith is active. Faith works by love and love is not just words. Love is activity. If we're not living out of love, we're not living out of faith, our faith is a dead faith. And if we wanted a Bible passage here to emphasize the point, just remember what Jesus says in Matthew 25 when he gives the parable of the sheep and the goats on the final day of judgment, right? The sheep on the one side, the goats on the other side and you remember what Jesus says when he gives that parable. Jesus says, "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I wasn't hungered, and ye gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in, naked and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you, when did we see you hungry and fed you or thirsty and gave you drink? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me." And then you remember what the king will say to the goats. He will say, "You never fed me. You never gave me drink. You never clothed me. You never visited me," on and on and he says, "Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to me." And what's the point there? The point is not we're saved by works. That's not the point at all. But the point is where there is salvation, there are works. Where there is true faith, it will bear forth this kind of behavior, these kinds of good works. And we will be judged according to our works, according to our works, which themselves are the demonstration that we had true faith and that we belong to Jesus Christ.

So the second characteristic of a dead faith is this, a false compassion, and then the third characteristic of a dead faith given in the passage is this: a shallow conviction. That's verses 18 and 19 and really an entire sermon could be given on just verses 18 and 19, but we're going to look at it briefly, and as we read these verses, we should be mindful that

there are two ways to understand verse 18. If you have the King James version, the meaning of verse 18 is difficult because it's left ambiguous and that's because it's ambiguous in the original. But if you have a version like the New King James or the ESV, you'll see that they put quotations in one part of this verse and they do that to give you one possible interpretation but in so doing that, they also leave out another possible interpretation as well. And I struggle with that because I like having quotations in my Bible. I will take a pencil and I will mark quotations so that it helps me understand and read the passage but we need to remember that in the original there were no quotations, quotation marks. In the original there was no punctuation at all in the Greek. So that's why the King James doesn't use quotation marks.

Let's read verse 18, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Now with some versions, the quotation marks are inserted near the beginning of the verse, so that the verse reads like this, "Yea, a man may say," quotation marks, "Thou hast faith, and I have works," and then end of quotation marks and then the idea is that in the rest of the verse, James responds to that saying with these words, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." If that's the correct interpretation, that that's where the quotation marks should be, just at the beginning, then the idea is this, James is anticipating someone who has this attitude, faith and works are two different gifts of the Spirit just like speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit, just like prophesying is a gift of the Spirit. And then the idea is this, well, some people have the gift of faith and other people have the gift of works and we can't all expect to have both gifts because God doesn't distribute gifts that way. That's the idea. I hope this isn't getting too complicated, but the point is this, James is anticipating someone who is saying, "Look, James, you can emphasize your works, loving others, spending your life, helping the poor and the needy but I personally don't have that gift of works. I have the gift of faith. So I don't help the poor and the needy. I don't love others, but I have the gift of faith. I believe. I have the gift of doctrinal insight and theological acumen. That's my gift." And then James goes on in the rest of the verse and says, "That's completely bogus. You have the gift of faith without having the gift of works? I tell you this, that's dead orthodoxy. That's dead faith. You show me your faith without your works? You can't do it. I will show you my faith by my works."

Faith is demonstrated by works. That's the point. That's one possible way of understanding verse 18. The second way is like this, this is what I think is a simpler way. Read verse 18 like this, "Yea, a man may say, a man like myself." So now James isn't anticipating what someone else will say, he's saying his own point of view, "A man may say, like myself, a man may say," quotation marks, "Thou has faith and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works." Then the end of quotation marks. I think that's simpler if you want to put the quotation marks there. Either way, it doesn't really make much difference.

The point is, you can't have faith without works. Faith is shown by its works. If you say you have faith but you don't have works, in a sense, what makes you any different than the devils? And that's exactly where James goes in the next verse, verse 19, "Thou

believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." If you say you have faith without works, what makes your faith any different than the faith of the devils? In fact, the devils have even one up on you because the devils believe and tremble but you only believe and you're acting as if there's nothing to be fearful of when you walk in sin. And this is dead orthodoxy. You have right doctrine. You have a beautiful confession. You confess the Trinity. You confess the hypostatic union, we heard that term last week. You confess the eternal generation of the Son. You confess the incarnation. You confess Jesus' resurrection and his ascension into heaven. But all your right doctrine doesn't profit you anything because it's a dead faith you have. It's not a true faith.

So these are the characteristics of a dead faith, it's characterized by an empty confession, verse 14. It's characterized by a false compassion, verses 15 through 17. And it's characterized by a shallow conviction, verses 18 and 19. And what is dead faith unable to do? As James starts out in verse 14, James says, dead faith is unable to save a person. Can faith save him? Meaning this, can that kind of faith that is unaccompanied by works, can that kind of faith save a person? Can dead faith save a person? And the answer is very clearly, no. And again, we should be brief, but we should explain why this is the case. This is the case not because our works are somehow the ground or the basis of our salvation but the case, this is the case because this faith, this faith that is without works, is a faith that clearly is not uniting us to Jesus Christ, right? Even the Catechism students know this well. What is faith, first of all? That bond that unites us to Christ. Here's the thing, salvation is in Jesus Christ, all of salvation is in Jesus Christ. By his perfect sacrifice on the cross, Jesus earned a full and free salvation for all that the Father has given him and now how do we actually receive that salvation? How is that salvation actually communicated to us, imparted to us? Well, through the instrument of faith. We're going to see that in the Catechism, Lord's Day 7, it's coming up. Faith is the bond that unites us to Christ so that we are made partakers of his salvation and of his eternal life. But here's the thing, that very instrument that unites us to Christ, faith, that very instrument is also the very instrument through which the life of Christ flows to us and by which we have Christ so that Christ lives in us and through us and so that we live out of Christ in all good works.

So if you have true faith, if you have this saving faith, what that means is this, you will have a life that is radically changed so that you do live as a new creation and you walk in the paths of holiness. You've been raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. And as I teach the Catechism students, if you are spiritually alive, then you don't just continue to lie on the ground as if you're dead. If you're spiritually alive, then you're active. Not just breathing and looking and hearing, but you stand up and you walk and you exercise yourself in the life that you've been given, active in bringing forth the fruits of good works, active in living out the salvation and the life that Jesus has worked in you. And the point is simply this, if that life of Christ, if that spirit of Christ does not live in you, then your faith, your Christian status is bogus and your faith, which is a dead faith, cannot save you, and the calling for you is to repent of your dead orthodoxy and humble yourself, confess your need for an inward cleansing, and look to Jesus Christ alone for that cleansing.



For one passage in the Bible that gives us a powerful illustration of this, think of Simon the sorcerer. You children remember who Simon the sorcerer was? Acts chapter 8. What do we read in the Bible? We read in Acts chapter 8 that Simon the sorcerer believed and that he was baptized with adult baptism, and then we read that he continued with the evangelist, Philip, and that he witnessed the miracles that Philip was performing. He believed and was baptized but then, you remember what happened. When Peter came down from Jerusalem to Samaria to lay hands on the people so that they received the Holy Spirit, and Simon the sorcerer witnessed that, he wanted to buy that power of the Holy Spirit for himself, evidently in order to try to make some money off of the Holy Spirit. And what does Peter say? Peter says, "Repent. Repent of this thy wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart might be forgiven you, for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." You see, Simon was still an earthly man, and Simon wanted to use Christianity as a tool for his own earthly advances. And I think the idea of the entire passage is that Simon here is guilty of such an offensive sin that it shows very obviously that he was not in a state of regeneration. Peter, in fact, is very forceful because the first thing that Peter says to Simon is this, "Your money perish with you." What's implied when he says that? What Peter says is this, "You're going to perish and your money perish with you." You see, his faith was a dead faith. He believed outwardly. He made confession of faith. He was baptized. He continued with the preaching for a time. He was amazed at all the things that were happening in church and yet he was in a state of condemnation. It was a sham conversion. It was a dead faith. His faith, whatever he believed as it currently was, his faith could not save him. It profited him nothing. That's a real instance of what James is addressing in this passage and it happened during the same time, right? All these things were happening at this time, Acts 8 is probably right in Samaria. Maybe James is even thinking about Simon the sorcerer as one of those in his mind.

Well, I think that's a good segue into the third point of the sermon. I think this is where we also need to look at ourselves and we need to ask ourselves, is my faith bringing forth fruit? I say I'm a Christian. I go to church. I'm a member in good standing. But is my faith bringing forth fruit? Do I actually care for my fellow Christians in church who are hurting and struggling or do I have a heart of stone towards them? Or maybe my situation is like this, am I living in front of others at church one life and I'm living an entirely different life in the privacy of my own home and how I'm interacting with my spouse or how I'm interacting with my children or how I'm interacting with my parents?

I was thinking about this past week and for me as a parent with children getting up into their teenage years, I think this is a very sobering thing to consider. I've said this before. We all know that children can sense hypocrisy from a mile away and either they are going to be disgusted with it, or they learn to develop it as a skill for themselves, right? For my children, I want to be as genuine in my faith as possible. I want them to know what good works look like, not so that they can keep up with an outward show themselves, but so that they can see how true faith really behaves itself. I confess my sins to them. I confess my need for Jesus. We go to the cross of Jesus Christ together as brothers and sisters in the Lord, and then when there's an opportunity, maybe in church or

with my neighbor or with each other, to do good, let's do it. And it starts in our own family, doesn't it? That's my closest neighbor. Let's learn to do it here. How we can behave one way at work or at church or at school and yet at home it's different in a bad way. No, let's have this faith be what characterizes, be what defines how we live in our own homes and how we talk.

I was thinking about it also this way. I think we've all had this experience. There's nothing more beautiful than seeing the life of Christ shining through people's lives, isn't there? You interact with someone and they don't even have to say a word about the fact that they're a Christian because you can just see it in the aura, in how they live. You ever have that? Hopefully it's not a rare thing. It shouldn't be a rare thing, should it? Sometimes when it is a rare thing, that's discouraging in and of itself. But that's a beautiful thing, isn't it? And I meet people like that, and it's so edifying. And then I think to myself, I certainly hope that my light can shine before others in that same way, to be a spiritual encouragement to them because I see these people, and they're filled with Jesus. They're filled with his love. They're filled with his holiness. And they're filled with the fruits of the Spirit. And that's how I want to live too.

Well, this is true for us personally, this is also true for us as a church. I've heard the story of how a young man from our churches was dating a young woman from outside our churches and that woman came and sat under the preaching, started attending church with him. And the preaching was good. The preaching was even strict, not legalistic, but teaching us how to live according to the law of liberty, just like what James is doing in this entire letter. But what this young person was hearing wasn't matching up with what she was witnessing in the lives of the members of that church. She knew some of the other people in that church and how they behaved, maybe how they behaved on Friday nights or wherever else, and what she was witnessing was not matching up with the doctrine she was hearing off the pulpit and that was disturbing. Maybe even the church members didn't see it, but that Christian young woman from another church could clearly see it. Beloved, hearing that kind of thing should really grieve us, shouldn't it? That hurts. That hurts right where it matters most. Now, we always have to be balanced here, but we gotta ask ourselves, what's my doctrine worth if it's not shaping my life to the glory of God? Really, if my living is corrupt, I need to trace that back to my doctrine, right? As we emphasize, we probably emphasize, it's our doctrine that shapes how we live. Doctrine is important. But if my life is characterized by corruption, that's showing you what my doctrine actually is.

Young people here, I want to address you because you're probably very sensitive to this because you do have a sense of what is right and what is wrong, and you expect the adults in your life to be consistent with it. If you see this kind of hypocrisy, I want you to know that your Jesus is deeply grieved by it. This is not who Jesus is. This is not what true faith looks like. In fact, Jesus says, better that a person be tied with a millstone and cast into the sea, than then teach one of these little ones how to practice a life of hypocrisy in the church. Now, no one's perfect. We know that. That's not what this is about. But if you see this hypocrisy, this faith that has no works accompanying it, call it out. Call it out in love. It's what we have to do with each other. Not with hypocrisy, but with sin. And if

there is that appearance of hypocrisy, we'd better call it out. And if calling it out doesn't help, then distance yourself from it, right? Whether it be that friend group or whatever people it might be, distance yourself from it. That's not what you want. That's not going to be good for you.

And for us as a congregation, as we consider all these things, let's keep praying. Let's keep praying for this mature faith that James is talking about. Let's keep praying for that beautiful life that's characterized by a true love and that's characterized by holy works. That's pleasing to the Lord, that's worshiping God in our daily living, and that's also what's going to be satisfying to the new man. That's what the new man in us is craving. That's what Jesus in us is craving. It will be pleasing and edifying to us as a church, and we will enjoy it to the glory of God. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we thank thee for this instruction. Thy church, thou knowest, needs to hear it, and we are thy church, just as the church in James's day. So we thank thee for it. We pray that we might heed this instruction, sobering as it is, but we pray that we might also hear it as pastoral care from the Great Shepherd to us, that we might be led truly in the green pastures of the word, we might be healthy and strong in our Christian walk and in our lives. Bless us, Lord, that our life might be living and vibrant, because this comes from thee, so we ask thee for it. Forgive our sins from where we have been called out by thy Spirit through the preaching tonight, or where we need to call each other out as brothers and sisters in love, and where we need to be encouraged, and where we see this evidence of a living faith. Lord, lead us in all these ways to act appropriately and respond in a way that honors thee. Bless this preaching to our hearts and our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*