

## INTRODUCTION

- I have been deeply burdened
- It's been so much that it has consumed me everyday
- Everyone that I come in contact with lately is the cause of it
- I've went from anger to sadness to discouragement and to reaffirmation of truth in my own life
- I only know of one remedy to the problem
- And that's what I want to us to think about this morning
- I know you're asking, "What is it?"
- You see on the title screen behind me a question, "Where is the Evidence?"
- In the words of James 2:26, "...faith without works is dead"
- We have just celebrated the first coming of Christ
- In 5 days we will celebrate a new year
- Many will make resolutions
- Many will bring in the new year with parties and celebrations
- Others will sleep it away
- But what should burden all of us?
- What should consume is making sure everyone you know or talk to understands the true Gospel
- That they understand that "faith without works is dead"
- In James chapter 2:14-16, James gives the test of *dead faith* and the test of *living faith*
- The test of *dead faith* occurs in verses 14-20
- Two times in this section, he refers to *dead faith* (vv.17, 20)
- He mentions it again as he closes out this chapter in verse 26
- In this section, James reveals that "a person who professes Christ but who does not live a Christ-honoring, Christ-obeying life is a fraud" (John MacArthur, James, 119)

- Jesus made that truth clear to Nicodemus in John 3:3 after Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’
- No matter how sincere you may be, mere acknowledgment of the truths about Christ does not constitute spiritual birth
- A true disciple of Christ will obey God’s Word
- A continually disobedient life is proof of false conversion and dead faith
- The New Testament is replete with examples of such dead faith
- When John the Baptist “saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Mat.3:7-9)
- You can’t count on your heritage for salvation no matter how great it may be
- If you truly trust in God and belong to Him, you will give evidence of it by repenting of your sins and living righteously everyday
- His calling them vipers made it clear that their lives were anything but righteous and that their professed faith was therefore dead
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mat.5:16)
- The inner light that the Lord gives His people will always shine outwardly in the form of good deeds
- Later in the message, Jesus expanded on that truth, by saying “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Mat.7:21)
- In Hebrews 12:14 the writer of Hebrews says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord”
- A profession of faith that produces no sanctification is dead faith
- True believers not only are themselves God’s workmanship but they are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph.2:10).
- The apostle John wrote of this same truth in 1 John 3:7-10 when he said:

*“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”*

- A true believer will “practice righteousness” because “he has been born of God”

- As James has already stated in chapter 1, verse 22, they will be “doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving [themselves]”
- It cannot be stressed enough to say that no one can be saved by works
- Salvation is entirely “by grace...through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph.2:8-9)
- If works could have any part in salvation, it would no longer be by God’s grace
- But it equally cannot be stressed enough to say, as James declares in this passage, that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas.2:17)
- Genuine, transforming faith not only should, but will, produce genuine good works
- The good works it produces is repentance and obedient submission to Christ’s lordship
- It will not be perfect obedience and repentance, but good works will be present
- We will bear fruit and should bear much fruit
- The seventeenth-century English preacher Thomas Brooks wrote:

*“Christ hath freed you from all your enemies, from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell; but what is the end and design of Christ in doing these great and marvelous things for his people? It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness, but that their hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services. ... Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those that are drawn from the consideration of the great and glorious things that Christ hath done for you” (Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984], 123-24).*

- Now as we come to James 2:14-20, James provides three characteristics of false, dead, and worthless faith.
- In other words, he will show us the faith that *does not* save.
- It will be marked by empty confession (v.14); false compassion (vv.15-17); and shallow conviction (vv.18-20).

Notice verse 14 where we see...

## **I. Empty Confession (v.14)**

- James’s Audience
  - “My brethren”
  - Throughout this epistle, James refers to his readers as “My brethren” or “My beloved Brethren”

- This phrase can also refer to James's fellow Jews whom he refers to as "the twelve tribes" in 1:1
- But it more probable that James is addressing the church at large
- There are always those who aren't saved in the church

*James says to them in 4:7-10, (7) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

## Notice...

- James's Question
  - "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"
  - "If someone says" is the phrase that governs the interpretation of the entire passage
  - James does not say that this person actually has saving faith but that he claims to have it
  - No particular kind of faith is mentioned but the context indicates that it refers to the acknowledgment that one believes the basic truths of the gospel
  - A person making such a claim would believe in such things as the existence of God, Scripture as the Word of God, and, presumably, in the messiahship of Christ and in His atoning death, resurrection, and ascension in any case
  - His theological orthodoxy of such a person's faith is not in question; the issue is that he has no works
  - The verb form in that phrase describes someone who continually lacks evidence to support the claim of faith he routinely makes
  - "Says" Gr.lege (present tense) this indicates that this individual repeatedly advances his claim that he has faith
    - AT Robertson says it could be translated, "if one keeps on saying" (Robertson's Word Pictures)
    - He says the 'third-class condition [is] continued' by the phrase "but does not have works" and is better translated "but keeps on not having works" (pres.act.subj.)
    - "He keeps on saying he has faith but keeps on not having works. This is not faith at all"
  - The kind of "works" that James has already mentioned are:
    - Endurance (1:3)
    - Perseverance under trial (1:12)

- Purity of life (1:21)
  - Obedience to Scripture (1:22-23)
  - Compassion for the needy (1:27)
  - Impartiality (2:1-9)
  - Later he mentions things like: acts of compassion (2:15), control of the tongue (3:2-12), humility (4:6, 10), truthfulness (4:11), and patience (5:8)
- John addresses the “if we sayers” in 1 John 1 (vv.6, 8, 10)
  - The question “Can faith save him?” at the end of verse 14 is not offered to dispute the importance of faith, but to oppose the idea that just any kind of faith can save
  - The grammatical form of the question calls for a negative answer—“No, it cannot save.”

*“A profession of faith that is devoid of righteous works cannot save a person, no matter how strongly it may be proclaimed. As already noted, it is not that some amount of good works added to true faith can save a person, but rather that faith that is genuine and saving will inevitably produce good works” (John MacArthur, James, 124).*

- Some think that James is arguing for a works salvation and is therefore in conflict with Paul on the subject of salvation. That couldn’t be any further from the truth. Paul and James are standing back-to-back fighting two enemies to salvation:
  - Paul is opposing works-righteous legalism; James is opposing easy-believism
  - Both men make clear that we are going to be judged on the basis of what we have done, for that is a sure indicator of genuine salvation

*Jesus said in John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

- If you study Paul’s writings you will see that he says the same thing as James:
  - After he says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast,” he immediately adds in verse 10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
  - In Titus 2:7 he says that in all things believers are to show themselves “to be a pattern of good works.”
  - In 2 Timothy 2:19 he states negatively that “everyone who names the name of Christ [is to] depart from iniquity.”
  - Back in Titus 1:16 he says, “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

*John MacArthur says, “Where there is true salvation, where sovereign grace reaches down to regenerate and transform a person from sinner to saint, God will create in the soul of that person new longings to forsake sin and self and gladly serve the Lord Jesus Christ and obey His divine standards of righteousness” (James, 125).*

James gives a second characteristic of *dead faith* in verses 15-17.

## II. False Compassion (vv.15-17)

James further illustrates his point by comparing faith without works to words of compassion without corresponding acts of compassion

- The Person in Need is a Brother or Sister (v.15)
  - This refers to a Christian member of the church
  - James says they are “naked” (which is referring to being poorly and insufficiently clothed. The word *gumnos* means, “scantily or poorly clothed” [Vines] or “poorly dressed” [BADG])
  - This suggests that they were “cold and miserable due to lack of proper clothes” (MacArthur)
  - Further he says they were “destitute of daily food”
  - This does not indicate starvation but rather insufficient nourishment for normal, healthy living
  - The reference is to those who are deprived of the necessities of life
  - Proclaiming the same truth, John asks rhetorically, “But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)
- The Provision Given is Words without Acts of Compassion (vv.16-17)
  - He says, “and one of your says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled.’”
  - “Depart in peace” is equivalent to “God bless you.”
  - This is a heartless and foolish statement
  - This is an attitude of total disregard for the welfare of others to the point of absurdity” (MacArthur)
  - The further, “Be warmed and filled” is tantamount to saying, “God take care of you” — while having no intention of being a channel for that care
  - It could even be understood as a prayer: “May you be warmed and fed by God.”
  - But the use of “the middle/passive voice of the Greek verbs rendered *be warmed and filled* suggest an even more indifferent, cruel, and sarcastic attitude, which says, in effect, ‘warm and feed yourself,’ as if such a needy person would not already have done so if able” (MacArthur)
  - “You do not give them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?”
  - The answer is implied. The heartless, outrageous comment, “Depart in peace, be warmed, and filled,” is of no use at all, being totally worthless.

*“Just as professed compassion without kindness and care is phony, so is that faith which is nothing but an empty claim” (MacArthur).*

*John Gill says, "What doth it profit them?" either the poor brother, or sister, to whom these good words are given, and nothing else; for these will neither warm them, nor fill them; or the persons themselves, that say these tidings to them: and the apostle, by this instance, shows, that as that charity which lies only in words, and in tongue, and not in deed, and in truth, is unprofitable, and good for nothing, even to them that profess it; so that faith, which a man says he has, and yet is without works, is alike unprofitable unto him” (John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible).*

- James concludes this analogy by saying, “Just as words of compassion without acts of compassion is useless, “thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v.17)
- Jesus spoke to this issue on several occasions, using words and imagery that are impossible to misunderstand
  - In the story of the Good Samaritan, He made clear that those who belong to Him are obligated to help *anyone* in need—friend, stranger, fellow citizen or foreigner, admired or despised. And as far as we are able, we are to see that the person’s need is completely met (Lk.10:30-35)
    - (30) Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. (31) And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. (32) Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (33) But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, (34) and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (35) On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’  
Luke 10:30-35 - NASB
  - In even stronger terms, Jesus taught that His people have a special obligation to help each other—in fact, He said, to help fellow believers is to directly serve Him; and not to serve them is to forsake Him
  - In the day of judgment, that service or lack of it will be the mark that separates the sheep from the goats; those with true, living faith from those with false, dead faith
  - Those who enter the kingdom will not be those who merely profess the name of Jesus Christ but those whose lives of obedience and service to Him proved their profession was true
    - (45) Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’  
Matthew 25:45 - NASB

James now gives the third characteristic of dead faith in verses 18-20:

### **III. Shallow Conviction (vv.18-20)**

This is a recognition of certain facts about God and His Word without submission to either

- The Comparison of Faith with or without Works (v.18)

- “But someone will say” – the *someone* seems most likely to refer to James. He is using the third person here out of humility
- He was not boasting or trying to prove that his own Christian life was more exemplary than another's
- He was not speaking primarily about faithfulness *in* the faith but about faith itself
- He says, “You have faith (the implication is without works), and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”
- In other words, “You claim to have faith and that nothing else is necessary, that your faith can stand by itself before God and bring salvation.” I have faith too but it is evidenced by my works
- You *cannot* show your faith without works, without any practical evidence or outworking of it, because true faith always gives practical evidence
- He is saying, “You cannot demonstrate your kind of faith because you have nothing to demonstrate it with.”
- James has already stated in verse 17, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
- Dead faith does not produce works because it cannot
  - It is for that reason that a remembered experience of giving one’s life to Jesus Christ, even with a specific date and place, is not in itself proof of salvation
  - The only certain proof is the life lived after such a profession was made
  - Jesus repeated warned against a false confidence of salvation

*Luke 6:46-49 - “But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? 47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”*

*On another occasion, He said in John 13:13-17:*

*“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

- Perhaps His sternest warning is found in the Sermon on the Mount:

*(21) “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (23) And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO*



*PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’  
Matthew 7:21-23 - NASB*

*Paul said in Galatians 5:6 that “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”*

*Peter said in 2 Peter 1:3-11 - “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

*John assures us that “He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:4-11).*

- The Demons Go a Step Further (v.19)
- “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”
- “You do well” carries a touch of sarcasm. Orthodox doctrine is no guarantee of salvation, James insists
- Jewish orthodoxy was always centered in the belief in the one true God, stated succinctly in the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 - “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”
- Where most Jews fell short was in not obeying the following verse, which commands, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5)
- James’s point is that belief in the truth of Deuteronomy 6:4 without obedience to 6:5 is a worthless kind of belief like possessed by demons
- Even the demons are orthodox in the sense of knowing and acknowledging truth about God
- As far as factual doctrine is concerned, demons are monotheists
- They are also very much aware that:
  - Scripture is God’s Word

- Jesus Christ is God's Son
- Salvation is by grace through faith
- Jesus died, was buried, and raised to atone for the sins of the world, and that He ascended to heaven and is now seated at His Father's right hand
- They know quite well that there is a literal heaven and a literal hell
- All of that orthodox knowledge, divinely and eternally significant as it is, cannot save them
- They know the truth about God, Christ, and the Spirit, but hate it and them
- Demons, though, have the sense to tremble at God's truth in a state of fear – they know that eternal torment awaits them in hell
- The word "tremble" (phrisso) is translated "shudder" (NASB). It means, "to bristle and tremble and was commonly used of the trembling associated with great fear."

*"Orthodox doctrine is immeasurably better than heresy, of course, for it is true and points toward God and the way of salvation. But mere assent to it as true cannot bring a person to God and to salvation" (John MacArthur, James, 132).*

- Faith without Works is Dead (v.20)
  - This is the second time James makes this statement. He made it earlier in verse 17
  - When he refers to the man without works as "foolish," has the idea of "empty" or "defective" and identifies anyone who opposes the truth that true saving faith produces works of righteousness
  - "Dead" (argos) is translated "useless" (NASB). It "carries the idea of fruitlessness, lack of productivity."
  - Jesus said in Matthew 7:19, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."
  - "A fruitless life is certain proof that it does not belong to God and is unacceptable to God, because it does not have His divine life within" (MacArthur).
  - Luke reported in Acts 8 that a number of people in Samaria, including a magician named Simon, "believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (v.12)

Verses 18-22 says, "But after witnessing various miracles and seeing "that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."

- Simon's belief obviously was not to salvation, but was merely a recognition that what Philip preached was true

- His knowledge about God was correct, but Peter warned him that his “heart [was] not right in the sight of God” and that he therefore had no part in the working of the Spirit he had witnessed and acclaimed. His faith was dead and worthless.

## **CONCLUSION**

- What can be said of your faith this morning?
- Is it dead, characterized by an empty confession, false compassion, and shallow conviction?
- If your faith is not characterized by divine righteousness then it is dead faith and you need to repent and turn to Jesus
- Remember those whom James was addressing said they were Christians.
- You say the same thing but does your life manifest the righteousness of God?
- Faith without works is dead
- But faith that is followed by works is alive as illustrated in verse 21 with Abraham and verse 25 with Rahab
- Examine your life this morning
- There must be more than saying your a Christian
- There must be a transformed life as a result of that confession of Christ
- Please don't put off what I'm saying this morning and leave here dead in your sins
- Repent now and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ
- Let's pray