

Non Saving Faith; Lonely Faith

James 2:14–20

James 2:14–20 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Introduction:

Last Monday, February 6 Turkey was hit by a massive earthquake that is one of the worst they have experience in decades.

The full impact of the earthquakes - which registered 7.8 and 7.5 on the Richter scale - was not yet clear, given the extent of the damage. Already, the quakes rank as the world's deadliest earthquake disaster in more than a decade.

https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/2023-02-09/turkey-earthquake-syria-toll-9094938.html

Some 12,000 buildings in **Turkey** have either collapsed or sustained serious damage, according to Turkey's minister of environment and urban planning, Murat Kurum.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2023/feb/10/earthquake-turkey-syria-2023-live-updates-latest-news-maps-quake-death-toll-international-aid-sanctions>

Hundreds of thousands more people have been left homeless and short of food in bleak winter conditions, desperate for a multi-national relief effort to alleviate their suffering.

Some 24.4 million people in Syria and Turkey have been affected, according to Turkish officials and the United Nations, in an area spanning roughly 450 km (280 miles) from Adana in the west to Diyarbakir in the east. In Syria, people were killed as far south as Hama, 250 km from the epicenter.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/rescues-provide-glimmer-hope-among-turkey-quake-ruins-toll-tops-20000-2023-02-10/>

“Almost all of Turkey is really seismically active,” Sandvol said. “This is not something new to the country.” Turkey was struck by another major

earthquake in January 2020 — a magnitude 6.7 that caused significant damage in the eastern part of the country. In 1999, a 7.4 magnitude quake struck near Istanbul and killed an estimated 18,000 people.

.....the quake hit near heavily populated areas. The epicenter was near Gaziantep, a major city and provincial capital in Turkey.

The affected regions were also home to vulnerable buildings, said Kishor Jaiswal, a USGS structural engineer.

While new buildings in cities like Istanbul were designed with modern earthquake standards in mind, this area of southern Turkey has many older high-rise buildings, Jaiswal said. Rapid construction in Syria — plus years of war — may have also left structures vulnerable, researchers said.

<https://www.ksat.com/news/world/2023/02/08/what-to-know-about-the-big-earthquake-that-hit-turkey-and-syria/>

The on going tragedy in Turkey should remind us of the urgency to make sure we are right with God
....that our religion is the right religion, that our God is true God and that our faith is a real Faith.

Do you remember the words of Jesus
Luke 13:4–5 (NKJV)

4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse

sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem?
⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all
 likewise perish.”

I cannot think of anything that is more important than making sure you are right with the true God. That you are following Jesus Christ and that you have true saving faith.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **Examine** yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. **Test** yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are **disqualified**.

27.46 **πειράζω^a**; **πειρασμός^a**, οὐ *m*; **ἐκπειράζω^a**: to try to learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive testing—‘to test, to examine, to put to the test, examination, testing.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 331). United Bible Societies.

27.45 **δοκιμάζω^a**; **δοκιμή^a**, ἥς *f*; **δοκίμιον^a**, ου *n*; **δοκιμασία**, ας *f*: to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through

actual use—‘to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 331). United Bible Societies.

Both of the words for examine and test are Present Imperatives

disqualified.

65.13 ἀδόκιμος^b, ον: pertaining to having been proven worthless—‘of no value, valueless, worth nothing.’ ἐκφέρουσα δὲ ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους ἀδόκιμος καὶ κατάρας ἐγγύς ‘if it grows thorns and weeds, it is worth nothing and close to being cursed’ He 6:8.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 621). United Bible Societies.

The reason for this needed on going evaluation is the real potential of being Self deceived. As we read last week in Matthew 7, there will be many who will take the broad road to destruction and many who will believe truly saved, who will be lost and told to depart from Christ.

The New Testament often qualifies true faith from a faith that does not save. Listen to these verses.

1 Corinthians 15:1–2 (NKJV)

15 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

Luke 8:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **But the ones on the rock *are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.***

Matthew 24:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

Hebrews 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

Hebrews 10:38–39 (NKJV)

³⁸ *Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.”*

³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

James is addressing the same issue. The potential to have believed in vain. They have a faith that does not save.

James says, in verse 17: “Faith by itself ... is dead.” Verse 20: “Faith without works is useless.” Verse 26: “Faith without works is dead.”

The contrast in this passage is not works vs. faith but rather living faith or dead faith. Real saving faith vs. non saving faith. True faith vs. false faith.

Alistair Begg said,

A sincere claim to have faith is not necessarily synonymous with a sincere faith. We can be sincere in our claim and yet be sincerely wrong.

<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/faith-true-or-false/>

[John Newton], in an earlier generation, referred to it as that “little something that looks like religion.” And he went on to describe the individual who appears “in church at the summons of the bell, to repeat words because other[s] ... do the same, to hear

what is delivered from the pulpit with little attention or affection, unless something occurs that is suited to exalt self, or to soothe conscience, and then to run with eagerness [back out the door and] into the world again. <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/false-faith/>

Too many through the years have been confused by this passage as if James is pitted against Paul, or that James may be teaching a different Gospel altogether.

Any who have studied the Reformation know that the the Roman Catholic Church did not roll over and die when Martin Luther stood and preached “Justification by faith Alone”

No quiet to the contrary. In their formal response to Reformation doctrine of “Sola Fide” at the sixth session of Council of Trent, they used this passage in James 2 to support their doctrine of Justification by works.

James 2:21–26 (NKJV)

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made

perfect?....²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

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

There is even a debate as to which letter appears first. James or Romans. Was Romans written to counter the teaching of James or was James written to counter the teaching of Romans.

Martin Luther, early on referred to the letter as a epistle of straw, meaning that it did not build on the foundation of Christ as First Corinthians 3 teaches we would. In fact, Martin Luther did not like the fact that James made little mention of Christ. (2 times), and questions the canonicity of James. He later repented of his view of James and preached through it.

We will see in our journey through this text, that James does not contradict Romans at all. In fact, it affirms the teaching of Romans. We will see that James is not teaching Salvation by works but rather that truth saving faith produces works.

But before we see what true saving faith really is, we need to see what it is not.

True saving faith does not exist alone, however not saving faith is very lonely.

- I. The Question of Dead Faith.
- II. The Illustration of a Deedless Faith.
- III. The Observation of a Orthodox Faith.

I. The Question of Dead Faith.

14 What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

What *does it* profit—

ὄφελος, ους *n*; ὠφέλιμος, ον: pertaining to a benefit to be derived from some object, event, or state—
‘advantage, benefit, beneficial.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 624). United Bible Societies.

James 2:14 (LSB)

14 What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can **that** faith save him?

δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;

Can **this kind** of faith save him

Biblical Studies Press. (2005). [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#) (Jas 2:14). Biblical Studies Press.

tn Grk “the faith,” referring to the kind of faith just described: faith without works. The article here is anaphoric, referring to the previous mention of the noun πίστις (*pistis*) in the verse. See *ExSyn* 219

Biblical Studies Press. (2005). [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#). Biblical Studies Press.

No particular kind of **faith** is mentioned, but the context indicates that it refers to 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, the 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

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 124). Moody Press.

sn The form of the question in Greek expects a negative answer

Biblical Studies Press. (2005). [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#). Biblical Studies Press.

This is the Theme of this passage. Can a faith that exist by itself save you? Is believing enough? Can the kind of faith that does not act truly save?

Millions believe and millions have believed. All the occupants of Hell are believers. Judas Ischariot believed.

Many who saw the ministry and miracles of Christ believed. But can just any kind of belief in Christ save you?

Some have suggest that because of the seeming abrupt nature of the introduction of the topic that James in introducing an entirely new subject. But I don't believe that to be the case. He has already been talking about how our faith should affect our actions. i.e.

James 2:1 (NKJV)

2 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality.

James 1:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 1:22 (NKJV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

James 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:2 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

James is just continuing his thought and bringing it to the ultimate point that He wants to make, that saving faith is a transforming faith, a faith that moves from the academic to the action, from mere believing facts to fostering a change in behavior.

Its more than instruction and illumination. Its more than academic and assent. It is a change of hearts and minds, yes but it a change that affects the will, the want, the desire, the passion, the drive, the direction, the ambition, It transforms from the inside and affects the outside. Real faith cannot be hidden and will not be hidden. It blossoms forth with a radiant flower of following Christ in obedience.

14 What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can **that** faith save him?

To be clear, James is not saying that faith is useless or meaningless or not required. He is not talking about faith by itself or the quantify of faith you may have or how long you have had faith.

He is talking about the quality of faith. What Kind of faith is it that saves. Can the kind of faith that does not have works save. Can you go to heaven on a faith that is alone. That does not produce works.

The object, “faith,” stands emphatically forward, “if ‘faith’ any one may speak of having,” marking it as the focal concern in the discussion

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 159). BMH Books.

“Claims” (*legē*) is in the present tense, indicating that this individual repeatedly advances his claim that he has faith. The hypothetical form, “may be saying,” does not imply that the claim is hypocritical; an inactive faith may be sincerely held. In assenting to Christian truth, the man regards himself a Christian

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 159–160). BMH Books.

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.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 124). Moody Press.

Another way of saying this is. If faith is what you claim to have, but works are what you never had, then your faith can't save you.

Or if believing Jesus is what you claim to have but works are what you used to do, then your faith is not real. And this is the majority of professing Christians in America,

I believe in Jesus and that he died for my sins but I used to go to church, or used to read my bible, or used to share my faith, or used to be faithful in serving Christ. Used to plus used to plus used to adds up to useless.

14 What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith **save** him?

The aorist infinitive *sōsai* (“to save”) primarily looks to the future culmination of the believer’s salvation. The reference is to acquittal in the coming Judgment Day. “The criterion then will not be profession but performance.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 160). BMH Books.

Zodhiates well remarks, “This verse is a pronouncement of the practicality of the Christian faith. Christianity is not getting a few notions into our

heads, but it is a change of the seat of all our affections and dispositions, a change of the heart. True, we begin with the head, but we travel to the heart, and from the heart we travel to the hand.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 160). BMH Books.

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**.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 124). Moody Press.

None of what James is teaching is in opposition with Paul, even in the book of Romans.

Romans 2:6–11 (NKJV)

⁶ who “*will render to each one according to his deeds*”: ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness— indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and

also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

John 5:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

I. The Question of Dead Faith.

II. The Illustration of a Deedless Faith.

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

The illustration is simple yet profound. James brings up something that was very common in those days. Poverty was very real, as we noted before, you were either rich or poor, and there were more

poor than rich. It would be common to find someone in this condition. Desperately poor, beggarly poor, not having the basic necessities of life.

By comparison with the man who says he has faith. This person says “be warmed and filled and does nothing. So the man who says he has faith and does nothing, his faith is useless, so the man who says be warmed and filled and does nothing to help, his words are useless and accomplish nothing.

Notice the Profound condition of the person.

15 If a brother or sister **is** **naked** and destitute of daily food,

The verb rendered “is” (*huparchōsin*) seems to add a subtle touch to the picture. The common verb *eimi* (“to be”) would simply have stated the present fact; this verb, which basically means “to make a beginning,” has a backward look; it suggests that the need discovered was a past condition extending into the present.

Vincent suggests the paraphrase “If a brother or sister, having been in a destitute condition, be found by you in that condition.” Under this interpretation, the situation is not new, although probably not previously made known to others.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 161). BMH Books.

naked γυμνός^a, ἢ, ὄν: pertaining to wearing no clothing or being very scantily clothed—‘naked.’; ‘when did we ever see you ... naked or sick or in prison and we would not help you?’ Mt 25:44; ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν ‘he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked’ Mk 14:52

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 526). United Bible Societies.

“Without clothes” need not be taken absolutely. The term was used of people wearing only an undergarment (1 Sam. 19:24; John 21:7), or, more generally, it might denote those who were poorly clad (Job 22:6; 31:19; Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:36). The latter seems the intended meaning here. Thus the RSV renders “is ill clad,” and the NEB has “is in rags

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 161). BMH Books.

The Greek construction indicates a need on the part of such believers that is long-standing, not temporary. **Without clothing** does not mean stark naked but rather poorly and insufficiently clothed, suggesting they were cold and miserable due to lack of proper clothes. Similarly, **in need of daily food**

does not necessarily indicate starvation but rather insufficient nourishment for normal, healthy living. The reference is to those who are deprived of the necessities of life

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 126). Moody Press.

So James brings up a situation that is basic to Christian compassion. Helping the needy.

1 John 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 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?

Notice 1. The Profound Condition

\. 2. The Professed Compassion

16 and one of you says to them, “**Depart in peace**, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?

“Go, I wish you well” (*hupagete en eirēnē*, literally “Go in peace”) was a warm and kindly expression of farewell among the Jews (1 Sam. 1:17; 20:42; 2 Sam. 15:9; Mark 5:34; Acts 16:36). It implies a prayer-wish suggesting that the individual is being dismissed with a feeling of personal peace and well-being, assured that God will meet his needs

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 162). BMH Books.

“Go in peace, be warmed and be filled” is a remarkably heartless and foolish statement, by which James indicates an attitude of total disregard for the welfare of others to the point of absurdity. People do not actually say such words, but they often imply that sentiment by a selfish disinterest that does not give those in need **what is necessary for their body**. **Go in peace** is equivalent to a perfunctory, “God bless you”; and **be warmed and be filled** is tantamount to saying, “God take care of you”—while having no intention of being a channel for that care.

The middle/passive voice of the Greek verbs rendered **be warmed and be filled** suggests 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, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 127). Moody Press.

This is the our equivalent of, I will pray for you.

This comfortable and pious “armchair philanthropist” has no intention to supply the need personally

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 162). BMH Books.

16 and one of you

says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, **what**

does it profit

There is not profit, no use. No benefit,
Empty words with no action.

Useless expressions with no meaning.

Cold hearts from meaningless compassion.

Just as professed compassion without kindness and care is phony, so is that faith which is nothing but an empty claim. This is a well-chosen analogy, because

compassion is one of the evidences of true regeneration.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 127). Moody Press.

Acts 2:45 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:32–35 (NKJV)

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

They all understood that everything they had belonged to God, and they possessed it in trust for Him. Since all belonged to God, when someone had

a need, they were obligated to use the divine resources to meet that need. A very practical test of a Christian's love is how much he or she is willing to sacrifice financially

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 148). Moody Press.

Even more so, in the final judgment God will be able to separate the sheep from the goats based on compassion!!

Matthew 25:31–26:1 (NKJV)

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Notice 1. The Profound Condition

- 2. The Professed Compassion
- 3. The Powerful Conclusion

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

A lifeless faith is a lonely faith

A lonely faith is a lying faith.

Be not deceived brothers and sisters, faith without works is dead. Useless. Meaningless. Not saving, self condemning, and very, very deceptive.

Thus also “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” “In the same way” (*houtōs*), “in this manner, likewise

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 163). BMH Books.

Faith without works is like a tree. If it is dead, it will produce no fruit, no leaves, no seeds. But it will be a lifeless structure with form and detail but no life, and as time goes on the tree become brittle in the storms of life and cracks and eventually, limb by limb it falls to the ground to decay.

- I. The Question of Dead Faith.
- II. The Illustration of a Deedless Faith.

III. The Observation of a Orthodox Faith.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

This portion is one of the most shocking in all of the Bible. It clearly teaches that you can be orthodox in you faith, have your theology right. Have all your theological t’s crossed and your theological i’s dotted and miss heaven. You can be a liberal and go to hell but you can be Calvinist and end up in the same place. You can be Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Fundamental, Independent, Reformed, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Evangelical or Imputationist and be told by Jesus, I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.

You can attend church, get baptized, take communion, read your bible, memorize scripture, preach, evangelize, and lead others to salvation while missing heaven yourself.

Nothing should so rattle your cage, and shake you to the core than to know that you can be orthodox and even right in your theological convictions and doctrine and go to Hell.

This is James point.

Right doctrine does not necessarily equal right practice.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Do not get hung up in deterring who said what. Commentators spend an unduly amount of time trying to figure out who said what in this passage. Who is the the “someone” in the text. James or some other person.

This happens primarily because there is no punctuation in the original Greek text, so it is hard to know exactly where the sentence ends and who says what.

But without that, we can still understand what James means.

All of the major translations translate the verse generally the same.

The basic point is:
 Someone has faith
 Someone has works
 The question is posed, Can you show me you faith
 without works..
 Answer....NO

He was saying, in effect, to anyone opposing the truth he was declaring about true salvation, “You claim to have **faith** and that nothing else is necessary, that your **faith** can stand by itself before God and bring salvation. But the truth is, you *cannot show me your faith without the works*, without any practical evidence or outworking of it, because true **faith** *always* gives practical evidence. You cannot demonstrate your kind of **faith** because you have nothing to demonstrate it with.”

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 129). Moody Press.

Luke 6:46–49 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and 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.”

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

The second person singular pronoun (*su*) with the verb makes the addressee emphatic

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 167). BMH Books.

His professed faith is orthodox: “that there is one God,” stressing monotheism

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 167). BMH Books.

....express the opening line of the Jewish confession of faith, the *Shema*, grounded in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. which every pious Jew recited both morning and evening. The Jewish Christians to whom James wrote probably used it regularly in their worship. This fundamental proposition of faith, common to both Judaism and Christianity, is mentioned here as being representative of an orthodox creed. James is not concerned with setting forth the whole of Christian faith; and he makes no mention of Christ in relation to monotheism (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Eph. 4:4–6; 1 Thess. 1:8–10). Both Jews and Christians treasured their monotheistic faith as distinguishing them from polytheistic heathenism.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 167). BMH Books.

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

The only effect that their faith has upon the demons is an inner reaction—they “shudder”

(*phrissousin*). The verb, occurring only here in the New Testament, means “to bristle,” conveying the picture of a horror that causes the hair to stand on end. The present tense pictures this as their characteristic reaction whenever they face the reality of the eternal God. This term is not strictly applicable to spirits, yet it effectively conveys the intensity of the horror that seizes the demons when confronting God. They have an intense, unquestioned belief in God’s existence and power, but their faith brings them no peace or salvation. They are fully aware that doom awaits them at the hands of the infinitely perfect God (Matt. 8:29; 25:41; Luke 8:31).

It is true that this “reference to demons reflects the first-century understanding of the existence of demons, but it would be an unwarranted assumption that James personally rejected the correctness of that understanding. We fully agree with Roberts’s statement,

We are not to attribute the statements of the Bible about demons to superstition or mental diseases. God’s word affirms their existence. It is no more difficult to believe in demons than to believe in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, or the devil.

The modern resurgence of the occult is again bringing the reality of the demonic world into tragic prominence.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 168). BMH Books.

. **Demons** at least have the sense to **shudder** at God's truth in a state of fear, for they know that eternal torment awaits them in hell (Matt. 8:29–31; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41; Acts 19:15). In that regard, they are much more realistic and sensible than those with false faith who think they will escape God's judgment by their shallow and superficial faith.

The Puritan theologian Thomas Manton described non-saving faith in forceful terms:

[It is] a simple and naked assent to such things as are propounded in the Word of God, and maketh men more knowing but not better, not more holy or heavenly. They that have it may believe the promises, the doctrines, the precepts as well as the histories.... but yet, lively saving faith it is not, for he who hath that findeth his heart engaged to Christ and doth so believe the promises of the gospel concerning pardon of sin and life eternal that he seeth after them as his happiness. And doth so believe the mysteries of our redemption by

Christ as that all his hope and peace and confidence is drawn from thence and doth so believe the threatenings, whether of temporal plagues or eternal damnation as that in comparison of them all the frightful things of the world are as nothing. (*The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* [London: James Nisbet, 1874], 17:113–14)

He goes on to speak of a somewhat deeper kind of faith, which, because it is nearer to genuine, complete faith, is all the more deceptive and dangerous.

[This sort of faith] is distinguished from temporary faith, which is an assent to scriptural or gospel truth, accompanied with a slight and insufficient touch upon the heart, called “a taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” Heb. 6:4–6. By this kind of faith, the mind is not only enlightened, but the heart affected with some joy, and the life in some measure reformed, at least, from grosser sins, called, “[escaping] the pollutions of the world,” 2 Peter 2:20; but the impression is not deep enough, nor is the joy and delight rooted enough to encounter all temptations to the contrary. Therefore this sense of religion may be

choked, or worn off, either by the cares of this world, or by voluptuous living, or by great and bitter persecutions and troubles for righteousness' sake. It is a common deceit: many are persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the only Son of God, and so are moved to embrace his person, and in some measure to obey his precepts, and to depend upon his promises, and fear his threatenings, and so by consequence to have their hearts loosened from the world in part, and seem to prefer Christ and their duty to him above worldly things, as long as no temptations do assault their resolutions, or sensual objects stand not up in any considerable strength to entice them; but at length, when they find his laws so strict and spiritual, and contrary either to the bent of their affections or worldly interests, they fall off, and lose all their taste and relish of the hopes of the gospel, and so declare plainly that they were not rooted and grounded in the faith and hope thereof. (Ibid., 114)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 132–133). Moody Press.

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

The rendering of Rotherham retains the literal order of this penetrating appeal: “But art thou willing to learn, O empty man! That faith apart from works is idle?” The

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 168). BMH Books.

Foolish has the idea of “empty” or “defective” and identifies anyone who opposes the truth that true saving faith produces works of righteousness.

James 2:20 (LSB)

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is **useless?**
different than the kjv,

Argos (**useless**) carries the idea of fruitlessness, lack of productivity. “Every tree that does not bear good fruit,” Jesus said, “is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt. 7:19). 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, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 133). Moody Press.