

## JAMES 2:24

[24] You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Uh oh...

- So, Nathan just read Paul in Galatians saying
  - that by works of the law no one will be justified.
- But here's James saying
  - that a person IS justified by works.

Welcome to the crux of James!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

But before we get after it, I have two more bonus announcements for you.

- First, **SLIDE** College Dinner. We've had a bunch of new college students the last 2 months, and the staff and elders want to hang out with y'all to get to know you. So, on Friday, we want you to come to my house for dinner. NO, we won't be serving Top Ramen...but we do need you to sign up at [fathomchurch.org/college](http://fathomchurch.org/college)
- And second, **SLIDE** Baptisms are coming on Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. So, Halloween, if you celebrate that...or Reformation Day if you don't. Either way, it's a great day to publicly declare that you follow Jesus. We've already got a few people getting baptized, but if you want to get in on it, please reach out. All the information is on [fathomchurch.org/baptism](http://fathomchurch.org/baptism)

## WELCOME

**JAMES SLIDE** Alright, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to James chapter 2. James 2. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to James 2. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, James 2 will be on page **1012**.

## INTRODUCTION: JAMES VS. PAUL

Now, right out of the gate, I will tell you this: the passage we're in this morning is one of the more argued-about passages in the Bible.

This is the passage that has given people trouble throughout the ages because it's where some people will say,

- *“See, faith in Jesus is not enough to save you.*
- *You need to earn some of that.*
- *You need to add some works onto your faith...*
- *if you want to be saved.”*

But that cannot be!

That does against like everything I've ever preached to you from the Bible!

Like, we just read Paul, and there are plenty of other places where I could point you to show that salvation is

- by grace alone,
- through faith alone,
- in Christ alone.

So, I want you to know that James and Paul mean different things when they are talking justification in these two passages.

So, when Paul uses the word *justified* he means:

- the moment
- when God declares you righteous
- because of the finished work of Jesus Christ,
- you are justified.
  - Sometimes we call that “*getting saved*”
  - or being “*born again*”
  - or “*converting*”.

But that is not how James is using the word.

## CONTEXT

So, remember,

- James is writing to a bunch of new Christians
- who are in the midst of really difficult circumstances,
- and he’s trying to encourage them towards genuine faith.

I said this in week 1: He is assuming that they are already saved.

- But, as we all know, many people
  - in a fervor of emotion...
  - or a euphoric experience...
- might profess faith in Jesus.

But how do you know if that faith is genuine?

Well, James is trying to show these Christians how to know if their faith is the kind of faith that actually saves.

So, when it comes to Paul vs. James...

- Paul is saying *justification* is when we are declared righteous.
- James is saying that *justification* is to be shown as righteous.
  - In other words,
  - our works demonstrate
  - that we have true righteousness.

So, it's actually more like the term *sanctification*.

## TRANSITION

So, as we step into the text today:

- James is in no way saying
- that you earn your salvation
- with your works.

That cannot be!

No, he's saying that works are how you show that your faith is genuine faith.

So, with that said, let's get to the text. James 2:14

## JAMES 2:14

[14] What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

## EXPLAIN

Ok, this is James' opening statement for this section.

- And the thing to note in this verse is that James writes
  - *"if someone SAYS he has faith"*
- He didn't say
  - *"if someone HAS faith"...*
- It's, they SAY they have faith.

So, they SAY they have a saving faith in Jesus.

- But they do not have the works
  - which always accompany saving faith.
- They are not evidencing
  - that Jesus has done a saving work in their lives.

Well, James offer's a rhetorical question. *"That faith can't save him, can it?"*

With the expected answer of, "NO WAY!"

## ILLUSTRATION: GRUDEN

I mean, we just saw this in the news this week.

- A high profile NFL football coach has an email surface
- where he made a racially insensitive comment
- more than 10 years ago.
  - He comes out and apologizes...
  - says he misspoke...
  - didn't mean to offend.

And I think everyone was kinda like:

*"Yeah, that was dumb...but dude doesn't seem to be a bad guy."*

- Until the next day when it comes out
- that there are dozens of emails spanning 7 years
  - with racist,
  - misogynistic,
  - and homophobic slurs in them.

So, all that talk yesterday...all those apologies...those are worthless now.

- You SAY you're sorry...
- but your WORKS demonstrate otherwise.

## TRANSITION

This is what James is talking about.

He illustrates in verses 15-16:

### JAMES 2:15-17

[15] If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, [16] and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? [17] So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

### POINT 1

Here's James' first point about faith without works.

### **SLIDE** FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS USELESS

It's useless.

James illustrates with this scenario.

- You've got a brother or sister.
  - So, this is someone inside the church community.
- And they are in need.
- And you SAY something nice to them,
- but you DO nothing!

He says, that's useless!

## APPLICATION

Now this is allegory at one level, ok? It is an illustration.

But it's also really, really practical for us.

- We cannot SAY that we have faith in Jesus
- if we neglect God's people.

This is a brother or a sister!

- And you have been blessed by God...
- to live an open-handed life...
- that SHOWS you have saving faith.

So, this can be done with your stuff...money, possessions, etc. Right?

But this can also be done with your time!

As a suburban church

- we won't have AS FREQUENTLY
- people who need daily food,
  - though we will at times
  - and woe to us if we don't love and serve
  - those people with more than words.

But more frequently in our context

- we will find people in our church community
- who are dying to have someone just sit and listen.
  - Someone to just pray with them...
  - to empathize with them.

Do you know how much I hear about

- loneliness...
- depression...
- anxiety...
- stress...
  - There are people in our church.
  - There are people in your neighborhood.
  - There are people at your jobs.
  - There are people in your classes.
- With real needs!
- Physical AND emotional!

And what James is telling us is that if you want to know

- if you've got genuine faith...
- you should look at your response...
- to others in the church...

Are you just SAYING stuff...

- or have you done anything
- for your brothers and sisters?

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS USELESS.



## EXAMPLE: JESUS SAW

Now, there's this famous story about Jesus in Mark chapter 2:

- Jesus is in Capernaum...
- Teaching in a home...
- And there are so many there to hear him...
- That there is no more room.

And four men bring a paralyzed friend...

- To be healed by Jesus...
- But they can't get in.
- So, they rip a hole in the roof of the house...
- Strap some ropes to their paralyzed buddy...
- And lower him to Jesus.

And here's what Mark 2:5 says:

### SLIDE MARK 2:5

[5] And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus SAW their faith.

- He SAW their faith.
- How?
- What was it he saw?
- Was this some sort of Super-Jesus X-Ray Faith vision?

I mean, maybe...

But maybe genuine faith is something we should be able to see!

There's a great difference

- between SAYING you have faith...
- and having a faith that can be SEEN!

They SAY they have faith...but Jesus SAW their faith!

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## TRANSITION

Now, look at verses 18 & 19:

## JAMES 2:18-19

[18] But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. [19] You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

## POINT 2

So, James ups the ante here. And it's where I'd like to make our second point: **SLIDE FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS INEFFECTIVE**

It's useless AND it's ineffective.

So, he again uses a rhetorical device. He's rhetorically asking:

- *"How can you EVER have faith without works?"*

But, here's what so many people will do. They'll say,

- *"Well, I intellectually, mentally believe*
- *what is doctrinally true*
- *about the person and work of Christ.*
- *So...I have faith. There!*
- *Faith without works!"*

But James is saying

- that intellectual assent
- to correct doctrine
- is not salvation.

## EXPLAIN: PISTEUO

So, in the New Testament, the word that is translated *believe* is the Greek word *pisteuo*.

- Now, it's a little unfortunate that *pisteuo* gets translated *believe*,
- because it can mean a lot more than that.
  - it can also mean to commit your whole life into.

And so, if I asked a lot of people the question: do you believe in Jesus?

- Man, a lot of people are going to say, *"of course I do."*

But my guess is that many people

- *"believe that"* Jesus did this or that – an intellectual ascent.
- But this word means to *"believe in"*.
  - To commit your whole life into!

Believing THAT and believing IN are two significantly different things.

## ILLUSTRATION: DEODORANT

So, I did youth ministry for like 10 years, and let me make a statement I learned about as a middle school pastor:

- belief doesn't change you...
- application does.

For example, let's take deodorant.

Talk to a middle schooler.

- *"Do you believe in deodorant?"*
  - *"Yes I do."*
- *"Do you have access to deodorant?"*
  - *"Yes, mom bought me three different kinds."*
- *"Have you used it before and experienced all the goodness therein?"*
  - *"Yes, I believe in deodorant!"*
- *"Alright...then why aren't you using any?"*
- *Cause bro, you ripe!"*

It's not the belief THAT deodorant is a good thing...

It's the belief IN...or the APPLICATION OF the stick that changes you.

## ILLUSTRATION: CHAIR

Another way to describe this is from a very common illustration.

So, when we moved into our house we brought my grandmothers antique dining room set.

But the thing about the set

- was that its age...
- plus moving it so many times...
- and the dry climate here...
- had made many of the wooden chairs so brittle...
- that their integrity was questionable.

Well, we had some friends over for dinner.

- And one of our friends is a big guy.
- 6' 5". 200+ pounds.
  - I won't tell you his name,
  - but it rhymes with Bark Beister.
- I mean, a good-sized dude.

Well, he sat down in one of these already questionable chairs,

- and it just splintered.
  - He felt terrible,
  - even though it wasn't his fault.

Well, we bought a new set.

- Nice new wood.
- Reinforced.
- I mean good chairs.

So, imagine I have "Bark" back over, and I show him the new chair.

- And I'm like, *"You can trust these new chairs, bro!"*
  - And he says, *"I absolutely believe the chair will hold me."*
- *"Well, have a seat."*
  - *"Well, you know, I'm not sure."*

- *“You’re not sure of what?”*
  - *“I’m not sure I want to sit down.”*
- *“But you’re sure the chair will hold you?”*
  - *“Absolutely confident that that chair will hold me.”*
- *“Well, have a seat, bro.”*
  - *“Um...maybe we just stand and talk though?”*
  - *It’s just...last time with that old jenky chair...*
    - *And I have some stuff from my past*
    - *where I’ve had some issues with chairs.*
  - *Do you think we could just stand and talk for a bit?”*
- *“I mean, we can, but say you trust this...so why not just sit?”*
  - *“Yeah, I don’t know, man.”*

And James is saying,

- *“Hey, you’re saying you believe that the chair will hold you.*
- *Well then, have a seat.*
- *I’ll show you I believe the chair will hold me by having a seat.”*
  
- *“You say you believe in deodorant...so use it.”*

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS INEFFECTIVE.

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## EXPLAIN: DEMONS

And then James goes,

- *“You believe God is one.*
- *Congrats.*
- *But even the demons believe that,*
- *and they’re not children of God.”*

The demons have better theology than us!

- They KNOW more theology than we do!
- They KNOW the Bible better than we do!

So, they have correct doctrine...but it’s not saving doctrine.

- They believe THAT...
- but they don’t believe IN...

But what do they do?

- They at least have the good sense to shudder!
  - They aren’t just *“meh...”*
  - passive to God.
  - As so many even in churches are!
- They shudder.

## TRANSITION

And then James gives two biblical illustrations that are wonderful here. Verse 20:

## **JAMES 2:20-24**

[20] Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? [22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. [24] You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

### **EXPLAIN: ABRAHAM**

So, the first illustration is Abraham. And, if you know your Old Testament, the story of Abraham can be found starting in Genesis 12.

- So, by faith, Abraham leaves his father’s home and land.
- And by faith he goes to the promised land.
- And by faith he believes he will have decedents
  - as numerous as the stars in the sky.

But do you remember the problem?

- They couldn’t have kids!
- His wife, Sarah, was barren.

And do you remember how long he waited for God to fulfill his promise?

- 25 years!
- From Genesis 12 to Genesis 21...
- And then his son was born...
- Isaac was the promised son...



And James is now referencing Genesis 22.

- Isaac is maybe 20 years old at this point.
- So, we're like 45 years after the initial promise.
  - And Abraham is tested.
- And Abraham takes his son all the way up the mountain,
- binds him to the altar made of wood,
- and raises the knife to sacrifice the promised son.

Now, that's some serious actions following a very serious faith.

And back to James, in verse 22, notice,

- that Abraham's faith was active along with his works,
- and faith was completed by his works.

This completed idea, is that his faith is made mature in his deeds.

- His faith wasn't incomplete, per se...
- it was brought to completion...to maturity.
- To borrow more language from Jesus...it bore fruit.

So, verse 23,

- Abraham believed God.

- When?
- Decades earlier.

He had faith.

- And it was counted to him as righteousness.
- And his genuine faith bears fruit in his life.

The faith of Genesis 12 bears fruit of works in Genesis 22...45 years later.

So, the first illustration is Abraham...

But that's not super surprising because Abraham was known for his faith.

I mean, that's Father Abraham...

- who had many sons...
- and many sons had Father Abraham...

But then James gives a more surprising Old Testament example. Verse 25:

### **JAMES 2:25**

[25] And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

### **EXPLAIN: RAHAB**

So, in the book of Joshua,

- Joshua has taken over for Moses as the leader of the Israelites.
- And they're ready to go into the promised land,
- but the Canaanites are inhabiting the promised land,
- and so, God is going to lead them on a conquest of the land.

So, Joshua sent out spies to scope out the first city of conquest: Jericho.

- And there's a woman who lives in Jericho
- named Rahab the prostitute.

So, it's safe to say, she's not living out her life's dreams.

- No little girl dreams of being a prostitute when they grow up.
- You become a prostitute because
  - very wicked, evil, demonic things happen to you.

- You are used and abused,
- treated like a commodity,
- treated like a soulless body for consumption.

So, Rahab is a dejected, pagan, woman.

- But she meets Joshua's spies.
- And she hides them from the king of Jericho.
- And she puts her faith...
  - whatever small faith she has...
- in this foreign God.
  - Hoping he would change things.
  - That this God would usher in a new life for her.

She believed in their God,

- and it bore fruit in her works of hiding the spies,
- ultimately helping God's people to conquer Jericho.

And this is why these are such great illustrations:

- You've got Father Abraham...
  - He's a man...
  - he's the original Jew...
  - and he is well respected by all.

And Abraham,

- by faith demonstrated in works,
- was counted as righteous.

- And now you have Rahab.
  - A woman.
  - A godless pagan.
  - And a prostitute.

And Rahab believed God, and acted in faith, just like Abe.

- A pagan prostitute's faith at work...
- and the prototype patriarch's faith at work...
- are put next to each other!

Both demonstrate that genuine faith bears fruit.

## ILLUSTRATION: TREES

So, my next-door neighbor, Phil, has, in his front yard, two non-fruit-bearing pear trees.

And they're great!

- They are beautiful.
- They flower in the Spring.
- They give his home great shade.

But listen to me...they will never give him fruit.

- They cannot bear fruit.
- Why?
- Because they have been cultivated NOT to bear fruit.

Now, when I moved into my house, in my front yard was an apple tree.

- And this thing produced fruit like I've never seen before.
- For serious, there were hundreds of apples in the lawn,
- they would roll out into the street,
- and down the block.
- There were smashed apple guts everywhere!

I seriously cut that thing down, because I didn't want to deal with all the fruit it produced!

Now, imagine if Phil wanted his trees to start producing pears.

- Well, no matter what fertilizer,
- no matter how much water,
- no matter how much sun they get...
  - those trees will not bear fruit.
- They are incapable of bearing fruit.

But my apple tree...I couldn't stop it!

**A tree that is cultivated to bear fruit will bear fruit.**

It's why I cut mine down.

**But a tree that is cultivated NOT to bear fruit, will never bear fruit.**

And, oh, by the way...

- you can't make a tree a fruit bearing tree,
- by adding some fruit to it!

Back to the beginning of this sermon, can works without faith save you?

Well, imagine I go out front...

- to see my neighbor Phil...
- with a bag of pears from King Soopers...
- and a staple gun...
- and he's on a ladder just stapling all that fruit
- onto the branches of that tree.

And then he just waves to me and goes,

- "Hey Chris!
- Check out my pear tree!
- It's killing it!"

I'd be like,

- "Um...honey...
- get the sign in the yard...
- we're moving!"

You don't add fruit to make a tree a fruit tree. No!

## APPLICATION

If you have genuine faith...you will bear the fruit of works.

If you aren't bearing fruit.

- You might not have genuine faith.
- Or...danger alert!
  - You might have been cultivated to NOT bear fruit.
    - I think that's a word to a lot of
    - western American evangelical consumers.

- Or, God help us, you be stapling fruit up...
  - just hoping that it will change you.

So, let's end this chapter. James 2 verse 26

## **JAMES 2:26**

[26] For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

## **MAIN POINT**

You see, this whole passage is about: **SLIDE FAITH THAT WORKS**

Faith without works is useless. It's ineffective. It's dead.

But faith **WITH** works...is faith **THAT** works.

## **CONCLUSION**

Maybe you believe a lot of things ABOUT God...

- but have you ever believed IN God?
- Have you ever applied that to your life?
- Have you sat down, as it were, in the chair of faith?

Are you bearing any fruit?

- And I'm not talking fake,
  - outside-in,
  - stapled to a tree,
  - rotten fruit!

I'm asking, is there any objective evidence in your life that you have an actual love for Jesus Christ?

- Or do you SAY a bunch of stuff...
- but your WORKS show something else?

If not...if you aren't bearing fruit...

that could be evidence that you've never really trusted in Christ as Lord.

## ENDING

In every life there is

- a defining moment...
- a turning point...
- a fork in the road.

Mine was my junior year of high school.

- I'd been going to church for a few years...
- and I had begun to know ABOUT God.

But at 16,

- I moved from just knowing ABOUT God,
- to KNOWING him.
- I put my faith IN him.

And maybe this is hitting you today...

- maybe you've been SAYING a lot about faith...
- but it's time to have FAITH THAT WORKS.

Today, I want you to put your faith in Jesus.

It doesn't matter what your past looks like...

- Abraham...a picture of religion.
- Rahab...an outcast in every way.
- Both demonstrate FAITH THAT WORKS.



This can start for you today.

This should be the desire of every Christian's hearts.

- Not intellectual assent...
- internal transformation.

FAITH THAT WORKS!

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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