

# James 2:14-26, “Living Faith”

## Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Do you have to do good works to go to heaven?



Important question: where we spend eternity matters. Get this wrong, you get false assurance or feel guilty and lose assurance.

It's an important question historically: The Reformation was about whether we are saved by grace *alone*, by faith *alone*.



Js 2 can feel awkward. Is he saying we need faith and works? (v. 22)

### Faith Saves You

Ephesians 2:8-9. “No-one can boast” because we don’t contribute

Luke 18:17. “like a little child” = with empty hands

James 1:18. The gospel according to James – new birth is a gift.

### Faith Changes You

Look closely. Don’t need faith *plus* works, but real faith changes you

V. 14 – “claims”. Can it save you? Not if the claimed faith is false

V. 17 – The faith is dead (not you)



V. 18 – Deeds are how faith is seen (they’re not an extra on top)

V. 26 – Faith without deeds is a lifeless corpse. They can’t rescue.

Lk 23:42-43, if criminal needed works (as well as / empowered by faith) he’d be lost. Welcomed into glory, would still be transformed.

### Roman Catholic Teaching Today?

Still teach “faith plus works”. Not united to Christ unless you have love as well as faith. Really serious sin can lose your salvation, because you’re not good enough.

Does *not* mean every person / church / experience in the Roman church is bad. *Does* mean the official position is dangerously wrong

### Hungry Christian (v. 15-17)

Illustrates James’ point. Applies it: A church that lives out its faith won’t contain hungry Christians.



### Hell-bound Demons (v. 19)

They’re orthodox. They believe & understand everything. But don’t “believe *and* trust”. ⇒ You can know lots of truth and stay in hell

### Abraham (v. 21-23)

God promised him people, land, blessings. Genesis 15:6 is a key verse, quoted often by Paul: “believed God and counted righteous.”

The story goes on in Genesis 22, as his trust led him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (not that God would ever have let this happen).

His faith is “made complete” (v. 22).

The Scripture is fulfilled (v. 23).



### Rahab (v. 25)

Everyone knew God would win the battle of Jericho. Rahab changes sides and so was saved.



### Conclusion

Do you need to do good works to go to heaven? No, it's the gift of Jesus. Trust him. You can't contribute. It will change you!

Stop climbing the ladder, trying to be good enough

Some people need to be unsettled: “I can live how I like because I trust Jesus” may show you don’t actually trust Jesus.

Some need to be reassured: “I’m not sure I’m good enough”. Don’t compare to perfection, but to what God’s already done in you.



Do you have to do good works to go to heaven?

⇒ Important Q?

Where spend eternity matters

Prepare for exam/driving test. How I be assessed ~ pass?

Dangerous to get wrong

If answer is YES, wrong → Complacency, false assurance

If answer is NO, wrong → unnec. guilt, loss of assurance

⇒ Historical Q?

16: Reformation.

All was in W: RCC

Protestant church born as people rediscovered G's grace

Leaders giants Calvin, Luther, Zwingli. UK: Cranmer.

RCC + Reformers agreed: saved by grace thru faith.

Q2: Faith alone? Grace alone

[Teaching of reformers summarised 5 slogans, "alone"]

Ppl find Js 2 awkward. Seems side one. Rone, against Ref

— Need faith + works. Work together (v.22)

①

J gives 4 examples illustrate

- 2 ~ faith useless if → change

- 2 ~ powerful when trust in G's word → live accordingly.

## 1. Hungry Christian

15-17.

Illustrates.

Also pushes home. Faith → Deeds. What kind?

1st ½ §2, care for needy.

Church lives out faith. Won't contain hungry ppl

## 2. Hell-bound Demons

19.

Orthodox Creed, "if this is what you believe" They do + understand

Baptisms + Dedication, "Do you believe + trust?"

Trust that's missing. Believe it all + stay in hell

You can articulate true faith, notebooks full of good truth

If I act on it, does no good at all

⑤

## 2. Faith Changes You

Look closely @ what J is saying

I saying need 2 things - F + W.

Saying need F. Real F. And F → W.

Need real, living faith, kind changes your life

v.14. claver have faith (claim anything - I can run 4 min mile!)

... I deeds. (That kind claim). Save him? No!

v.17. What's dead if I deeds? Not you (you need F + D)

The faith.

v.18. I deeds extra to faith. How faith is seen

v.26. Your faith is a lifeless corpse

(Need rescuing for pool. Lifeguard heart attack. I save you)

So: • I — need F + W.

• I — saved by W, need F help change → good enough

• F alone. + F transforms my life

Shop. Pay fake notes. Rejected. Offer fakes + marshmallows

Still no good. Problem not fake money, lacked money

Need real money. With that — pay shoppers,

③ + buy marshmallows

## 4. Rahab

Recall story: Israel gather E of Jordan

Everyone is Jer quaking, "melting with fear".

Knew who'd win battle. Like demons, stayed + shook

Not Rahab. Changed sides → saved

## Conclusion

Do need do good works → heaven?

No. Gift of Jesus. Trust him. Can't contribute. <sup>But will</sup> change you

## Tiers

Forgiveness, place in G's family, — heaven ~ all grace

Every other religion — climbing ladder. Trying be good enough

J climbed down to lifelines. All of him.

Stop climbing the ladder. Receive.

## Tiers

Designed to unsettle + reassure

"I'm tier. It's all free. I can live how I like".

Be unsettled. It is all grace. Free & trust in J.

⑦ No back if that's you

Illustrate all this: Criminal on T, next J.

Lk 23:42-43

If needed F+W → Stuffed

If F equip for W, → Pass mark → Stuffed

All needs F → straight glory. Can add:

If he'd lived, be changed man

Even in remaining minutes, G know h+m.

⇒ difference wd be clear.

## RCC today?

Pick up on something. Said issue big @ ref?

May wonder: What of RCC today?

Still teach some form of F+W. Comes out 2 ways.

(i) Quote J2. F alone not enough unite to t.

Need to add love

(ii) One become tin, not secure.

Really big sins → lose salvation. ⇒ Need good enough

NOT saying - If you've exp<sup>d</sup> of RCC, that's invalid

- Can't be tin if in RCC

- Every RC teacher teaches error on this

AM saying - Official teaching (4) of RCC, good Cath gets this wrong  
This @ heart of gospel - how ppl get saved ⇒ serious

Poster: If arrested during trial, enough evidence convict?

Also designed to reassure

"I'm tin, but I fail. I'm not sure I'm good enough".

Be reassured - You trust J.

G loves you.

Don't need perfect, even reach pass mark

# grade boundaries

You may not be what you one day will be.

— Wish you were

But by grace of G you're not what once were.

That's : when trust G, his salv<sup>n</sup> is free  
+ unconditional. And one of his kindnesses  
is that he gets to work + stuff changes

(8)

Set P + J alongside, in 1984 NIV (pre-ecumen ch. 3)

R3:28. We maintain that man is j'd by F, ap. from obs the law.

J2:24 You see that person is j'd by what does, + ' by F alone

Which is it?

Faith alone.

Faith+works. || It matters!

## 1. Faith Saves You

(Not focus of this psg, so wait focus here

Let's make sure all know this true - remind ourselves)

Eph 2:8-9. ' boast, ∴ ' contribute

(I paint → I boast.

Someone else paints, I ' contribute → I ' boast)

Lk 18:17. Unless enter k of G like child → empty hands

James 1:18. Ask J gospel, how get saved: he gave vs

J'd by grace v.3 of Rock of Ages

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling

Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace

Faith, I to the fountain fly. Wash me, saviour, or I die.

faith alone, v.2 of hymn. Not the labour of my hands

Can fulfil thy laws demands. Could my zeal no respite know

Could my tears forever flow (2) All for sin could not atone

Thou must save, and thou alone

## 3. Abraham

Recall story. G promised many desc., land, blessing.

Gen 15:6 - A believed G, credit → r'n'ed

Quoted by P several times.

J reminds story went on. G ask A sac. I burnt off.

[G never wanted happen. Provided ram. Nations sec<sup>d</sup> children  
G hated it]

A ' understood how fit v. G's promise. Set out anyway.

J says 2 things happened @ pt.

- Faith made complete v.22

Love CS Lewis Narnia stories. Each great story.

(Lion Witch → Silver Chair). Then get Gory Last Battle

Set now Complete. Other great. But heading towards  
finde. Other stories are now made Complete

- Scripture fulfilled v.23

Text says: A trust G, + it's genuine. Anticipates fulfil

Action chance to see that looking in practice.

Like empty glass. Still glass. But meant hold water. Now

Marriage promise. "Sickness + health". Sure next it.

(6) But after 4-yr sickness,  
See it