

## How to Tell the Difference Between a Living Faith and a Dead Faith

James 2:14-26

An  
Autopsy  
of Dead Faith

<sup>1</sup>14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has **faith** but he has no **works**?<sup>1</sup>  
Can that faith save him? <sup>2</sup>15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need  
of daily food, <sup>2</sup>16and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be  
filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body,  
what use is that? <sup>3</sup>17Even so **faith**, if it has no **works**, is dead, being by itself.  
<sup>4</sup>18But someone may well say, “You have **faith** and I have **works**; show me your  
<sup>5</sup>**faith** without the <sup>5</sup>**works**, and I will show you my **faith** by my **works**.” <sup>6</sup>19You  
believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, & shudder.

A  
Portrait  
of Living Faith

<sup>6</sup>20But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that **faith** without **works**  
is useless? <sup>7</sup>21Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up  
Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>8</sup>22You see that **faith** was working with his **works**, and  
as a result of the **works**, **faith** was perfected; <sup>9</sup>23and the Scripture was fulfilled  
which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED  
TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. <sup>9</sup>24You  
see that a man is justified by **works** and not by **faith** alone. <sup>10</sup>25In the same way,  
was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the  
messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>10</sup>26For just as the body without  
the spirit is dead, so also **faith** without **works** is dead.

### Main Point:

In the church, there are two kinds of faith:

- (1) a real living faith that saves
- (2) a deceiving dead faith that damns

But the danger is that the two kinds of faith have much in common.

- Both claim to be Christians
- Both are convinced that they are Christians
- Both embrace the same biblical doctrine
- Both were present among James’ readers

With so much in common, how can we tell the difference between a living faith & a dead faith?

## AN AUTOPSY OF A DEAD FAITH (vv. 14-19)

### CONDITION ①—An empty \_\_\_\_\_ of faith (vv. 14-17)

v. 14a - *What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works?*

GREEK - “What use is it, my brethren, if someone \_\_\_\_\_ on saying he has faith, but \_\_\_\_\_ on having no works?” Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Q: What are these works that are lacking in a useless, non-saving faith?

A: A pattern of obedience to Scripture

v. 14b - *Can that faith save him?* Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

a profession of faith without a pattern of obedience

vv. 15-16 - <sup>15</sup>*If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace. Be warmed, and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?* Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

- **The point:** Words are \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_

v. 17 - *Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself*

### CONDITION ②—A consistent pattern of \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 18)

v. 18 - *But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”*

- **The point of the objector:** Faith and works can exist \_\_\_\_\_
- **The point of James:** Faith and works are \_\_\_\_\_
  - Martin Luther:
    - “It is impossible to separate works from faith, just as it is impossible to separate heat and light from fire.”
    - “We are saved by grace alone through faith alone, but faith is never alone.” (it is always followed by good works)
    - “It is not just possible to do good once you become a Christian, it is impossible not to do good.”
- **The application of v. 18:** An argument to separate obedience from faith is nothing more than an \_\_\_\_\_.

**CONDITION ③**—A biblically accurate \_\_\_\_\_ without fear (v. 19)

v. 19 - *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder.*

**Question ①:** What is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the kind of faith that does not save?

- Obviously, if someone does not believe in \_\_\_\_\_, or in the God of the \_\_\_\_\_, they do not have a saving faith.
  - 1 Chronicles 16:26 - *For all the gods of the peoples are idols...*
  - 1 Corinthians 10:20 - *...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.*
- Obviously, if someone does not believe in \_\_\_\_\_, or in the Jesus of the \_\_\_\_\_, they do not have a saving faith.
  - Acts 4:12 - *There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*
- Obviously, if someone does not believe the one true \_\_\_\_\_, they do not have a saving faith.
  - Galatians 1:6-8 - *<sup>6</sup>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7</sup>which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*

**The big picture point:**

We can have faith

- in the one true God
- in the biblical Jesus
- in the Scriptural way of salvation

and yet, still have a \_\_\_\_\_, non-\_\_\_\_\_ faith.

v. 19a	<b><i>You believe</i></b>	GREEK: You _____ believing  What are you believing?
v. 19b	<b><i>that God is one</i></b>	_____ : _____ - Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one.  <u>Mark 12:28-29</u> - One of the scribes...asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD'"
v. 19c	<b><i>You do well</i></b>	You do beautifully, excellently, commendably  But simply having an intellectual knowledge of God is _____ saving faith  How do we know that?
v. 19d	<b><i>the demons also believe</i></b>	believe ( <i>pisteuō</i> ) = faith  1—They have an _____ faith  2—They have a biblically accurate faith  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They believe in the _____ of Christ <u>Mark 3:11</u> - Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "<u>You are the Son of God!</u>"</li> <li>• They recognize the _____ of Jesus <u>Mark 5:6-13</u> - Seeing Jesus from a distance, he (the demoniac) ran up and he bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." Jesus gave them <u>permission</u>. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine.</li> <li>• They believe in a place of eternal _____ <u>Luke 8:30-31</u> - And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the <u>abyss</u>.</li> </ul> 3—They have a _____ faith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In all of these verses, we are not told what they believe, they said what they believed.</li> </ul> 4—They have an _____ faith
v. 19e	<b><i>and shudder</i></b>	shudder ( <i>phrissō</i> ) = tremble

**Question ②: If true saving faith and dead non-saving faith both agree in their content, how do they differ?**

- True saving faith is made up of three essential elements:
  - *Notitia* (\_\_\_\_\_) = knowing the facts about Jesus and the way of salvation (the gospel)
    - We cannot have true saving faith without knowing these facts, but having only an understanding of the content is not enough to have true saving faith.
    - See Matthew 13:53-58
  - *Assensus* (\_\_\_\_\_) = agreeing that the facts about Jesus and the gospel are true.
    - But the demons also know the facts and agree that the facts are true.
    - See Luke 8:26-33

-----**THE DIVIDING LINE**-----  
(between dead faith and living faith)

- *Fiducia* (\_\_\_\_\_) = entrusting yourself fully to the person of Jesus Christ in obedience and worship
  - Matthew 16:24 - *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."*
  - Luke 14:26-33 - <sup>26</sup>*"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup>Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.*
  - The volitional/trust part of faith shows itself by its obedience.

v. 19 - *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder.*

INTELLECTUAL

(they know  
the facts  
about God)

EMOTIONAL

(they agree  
with the facts  
about God)

Douglas Moo:

- *“James might be suggesting an ironical contrast between the demons and the people who have faith without works: at least the demons display some kind of reaction to their ‘faith’!”*
- *“James might be implying, as demons, knowing something of the true God yet lacking true faith, shudder in fear of judgment, so also ought people whose verbal profession is not followed up with actions.”*

C.L. Mitton - *“It is a good thing to possess an accurate theology, but it is unsatisfactory unless that good theology also possesses us.”*

### **An Autopsy of Dead Faith:**

Dead faith is characterized by:

- an empty profession of faith (vv. 14-17)
- a consistent pattern of excuses (v. 18)
- a biblically accurate theology without fear (v. 19)

### **Transition:**

v. 20 - *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*

In other words, “Do you want to be shown (do you want evidence) that faith without works is useless? Well, let me show you from Scripture that works validate faith.”

### **Portraits of living faith:**

- The life of Abraham (vv. 21-24)
- The life of Rahab (v. 25)