

THIS WEEKEND

at The Crossing



Nope: Nope to Inaction
Shane Philip
April 28, 2024

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our ten-week series in the book of James called Nope. It is a deep dive into following the crowd counter-culturally. This word is one we use to vehemently say “no” to the evil values of our culture most strongly! It means “no way in heck!” Here, James, Jesus’ half brother, teaches us how to say no to inaction and take time to ask God for wisdom. Action in this context means the living out of our faith through the work we do for the benefit of others. This is the foundation for this week’s Scripture about faith: Living what we believe about Jesus.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 7:17-20 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

James 2:14-25 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s

¹ All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Romans 3:22-24 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:6b The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

OBSERVATION

James is writing this letter to the Christians who have fled Jerusalem. He had served as leader of Christ's church for three years after Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, but persecution of believers was becoming so overwhelming that they left Israel for other countries around the Mediterranean and beyond. This meant that the Gospel was spread all over the known world by people like Paul, Silas, Barnabas, James, and many more who actually knew Jesus including the remaining eleven Apostles. It is thought that there were about 50,000 to 100,000. Those believers were admonished to live by faith as they ventured into the unknown. James urged them to trust God, but added something else: Action. Matthew added context with a metaphor for the agrarian culture: Trees that produced fruit. Believers were to produce acts of evangelism that would result in "crops" of new believers. They were not to live like people of cities like Laodicea that was in a state of apathy toward the Gospel. Jesus said their inactivity in that regard was so obnoxious to Him that He would "spit them out of His mouth!"²

QUESTION: What fruit are you producing for the Gospel of Jesus today?

APPLICATION

James is talking about what it means to have true and authentic faith, so how do we put our faith to work? He is **not** saying we must add good works to our faith to be saved. Absolutely not! When we do, the Cross becomes meaningless and Jesus died for nothing. We are saved by authentic faith alone, not by works. We are saved by grace through faith - grace is God's part and faith is ours. We can't earn our salvation because it is a gift of God and part of His conditional covenant with us – the other part is that we place our faith in His Son.

QUESTION: How authentic is your faith? By what are you measuring it?

We are saved **by** faith alone, not **for** faith alone. Salvation doesn't end our responsibility – it is the beginning of a journey. We were created to do good works when we became believers. Genuine faith **trusts** God and **obeys** Him. Faith is a belief that leads to behavior – it leads to obedience. Ricky Jenkins gives us three things we need to understand about obedience: **1) Partial obedience is still disobedience.** King Saul in 1 Samuel, Chapter 15, had been empowered by the Holy Spirit to destroy his enemies, but that Spirit was removed from him when Saul sinned in disobedience; **2) Delayed obedience is still disobedience.** This happens when we have priorities over obedience, i.e. when we want to sort some things out in our lives before following Jesus, or when we will go on missionary trips when we are financially secure. When Jesus calls us to do something and we respond with "First let me go ..." there is a problem. That's when we miss a blessing when He finds someone else to obey; **3) Half-hearted obedience is still**

² Revelation 3:14-16

disobedience. An example is the Pharisees of the Old Testament. They did the right things for the wrong reasons. Their hearts were far from God and so they were disobedient.

QUESTION: When have you recently said to Jesus “I will be obedient as soon as...”?

QUESTION: What right things are you doing today for the wrong reasons?

QUESTION: In what area(s) of your life are you compromising?

Today is the day to decide whether we are all in or apathetic fence-sitters as were the Laodiceans. God gives us His all through love. Can we do any less and be authentic followers of His Son?

QUESTION: What part of your heart are you withholding from Jesus?

QUESTION: What is keeping you from passionately following Jesus?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive us for our inaction. We are distracted by so many useless things in our culture that we become apathetic instead of following You passionately. We are weak, but You are our strength when we are obedient. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: What fruit are you producing for the Gospel of Jesus today?

QUESTION: How authentic is your faith? By what are you measuring it?

QUESTION: When have you recently said to Jesus “I will be obedient as soon as...”?

QUESTION: What right things are you doing today for the wrong reasons?

QUESTION: In what area(s) of your life are you compromising?

QUESTION: What part of your heart are you withholding from Jesus?

QUESTION: What is keeping you from passionately following Jesus?