

James 2:14–26 (ESV) *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 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. 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! 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. 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? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

Together we activate our faith

Does the Bible contradict itself?

JAMES

James 2:24 *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

PAUL

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV) *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

1. We harmonize Scriptures when they seem to not match up.
2. Acts 15 council - agreement between James and Paul
3. James would be contradicting Himself if he meant our works save us.

James 2:5 (ESV) *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*

Wages come to you because of what you do. Inheritance comes to you because of what you are. Wages come through your efforts. Inheritance comes because of a relationship you have.

4. Paul and James spoke to two different audiences.

Paul to the Gentiles: When Paul says we're justified by faith, he means we cannot be made right with God except through the merits of Jesus Christ and the works of Jesus Christ. We can't make ourselves right. It has to be done through him.

James to the Diaspora: When James says we're justified by works, he means it's our works that prove we're right with God. he's saying, "A mere profession of faith isn't enough to prove you really are right with God. You have to show some concrete changes in your life."

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

"We're saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that remains alone," Philipp Melanchthon.

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

The form of the question indicates that a negative answer is expected. (i.e., "no good")

Vs 15-16 *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?*

Notice it says "brother or sister." This means a fellow Christian - Just coming to Sunday gatherings doesn't place you in gospel community where life on life relationships are made. It's hard to see the needs of brothers and sisters within 2 hours on a couple Sundays a month.

If someone in your group is in need - if you have true faith, you meet the need.

If you say, "well, there's no one in our group that has needs." Then, you need to look for people to bring into your group that has needs.

Be on the lookout. Is there a place your frequent where children need clothes, single moms need food, kids need food?

1. Dead faith - it is not saving faith.

Vs 17 *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

What are good works? Serving others. Our works should look a lot like Jesus' works. His work was to serve us, sacrifice himself for us, in order to give us something we could not otherwise have. We serve others as we gather on Sundays and we serve others as we scatter throughout the week. Our serving is sacrificial and the greatest way we serve is how the Father served us by showing us Jesus - we do likewise.

If you identify as a Christian, can I have your attention? If when asked if you are a Christian and you say, “yes,” then I would ask you further - do your good works within the church (selfless serving) and outside the church (a gospel generosity of love, care, and evangelizing, etc) prove you have true, authentic faith? Or are you masquerading? Are you holding up a mask with mere words while living a fruitless life consumed with only yourself. No serving, so self-sacrificing except for what you sacrifice for personal gain. You are bi-lingual, able to speak and understand Christianese - the jargon of church goers - including words like ‘amen, hallelujah’ or ‘blessed’ instead of lucky. You speak the language and identify as Christian but bear zero fruit. You’re a dead tree. You’re rooted in morality, you’re rooted in religion, you’re rooted in vague spirituality, you’re rooted in tradition, but you’re not rooted in Christ,

Vs 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.*

Vs 19 *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

This affirmation of monotheism stems from the core Jewish creed called the Shema’

2. Demonic faith - it is not saving faith.

Mark 1:34, “He,” Jesus, “would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him.” Luke 4:33–34, “There was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘I know who you are—the Holy One of God.’” Luke 4:41, “Demons also came out of many, saying, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ.”

“So, they know who Jesus is, and they go to hell. You can know who Jesus is and go to hell because you need more than just information. You need that information to result in your transformation.” Mark Driscoll.

“True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils,” sermon by Jonathan Edwards.

In this sermon Edwards says demons have two things

1. Sound doctrine

Having sound theology doesn’t necessarily qualify you to be anything more than a demon. You can be a demon and have that too.”

2. A right fear of God

He says it's possible to have an incredible amount of morality and religion that's nothing but shuddering. He says all it does is qualify you to be a demon

Some of you have dead faith, and some of you have demonic faith. You know who Jesus is, but you don't love him. You're not responding to him. His life has not overtaken your life.

Edwards says the one thing they do not have is a sense of the beauty of God.

You can spend all of your time, effort, and money on the poor and be driven by demonic faith of shuddering - fear of God and fear of hell. It's works MINUS faith - not faith proved by your works.

Vs 20 *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?*

3. Authentic faith (definitive) its is saving faith that leads to observable works.

A. Authentic faith toward God.

Vs 21-23 *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.*

Paul uses Gen 15 while James is using Gen 22. The faith that lead to righteousness by believing God in Gen 15 was completed through action in Gen 22. Faith always leads to action - if not its dead.

Incomplete works

Competing works

Completed works

Vs 24 *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

B. Authentic faith toward others.

Vs 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?*

Joshua 2:8-11 (ESV) *Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you*

did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. 11 And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

Rahab not only believed in a monotheistic God (God is one), she also trusted that he is a redeeming God. Her works proved her faith was real.

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

Internal devotion to God, which is faith, produces external devotion to God, which is works, because a good tree bears good fruit.

How do we activate our faith together?

1. Pray for the Lord to help you live with authentic faith
2. Stop thinking of our faith as individualistic only.
We need one another's gifts to best serve our neighbors.
3. Start discussing with friends or people in your group what ways you can be on mission.
Rhythms
4. Think of 'going to work with your dad' day every day.