



That may have seemed like a weird question that I presented to us. However, what I am referring to is to where are we today concerning our walk with our God. We have all heard the scripture that tells us, "*Faith without works is dead, being alone.*" This is found in James 2:17. Well, what does that really mean?

I have previously written an essay which also deals with this topic, "So, Faith without Works is Dead." This essay goes in a little different direction than that one. If you would like, you can read that essay on our website. Just copy the link below and place it into your browser: <https://simplysimpleworship.com/So%20Faith%20Without%20Works%20is%20Dead.pdf>

To start this essay off, we must truly grasp what James is telling us. First of all, this letter was written to the Jewish believer. Yes, it is now available and its use goes to every child of God – Jew or Gentile. However, when James wrote his letter there were primarily people who were in Judaism who received Jesus as their Savior, accepted Him as their Savior, and then made Him the Lord of their life.

In the Jewish tradition after Jesus died and rose again, it was believed that if you were a Jewish person and you now believed in Jesus as the One who came and died and then rose again, you were now changed into a new creature and you became a child of God. All of what I just said is absolutely true. Shortly, later on, the door was then opened to the Gentiles and then to the entire world to be saved and to become children of God.

For the Jewish believer, and unfortunately for many of us today, they thought that the only thing was to accept Jesus as their Savior. However, many of them failed to fully understand that He was also to be their Lord, **the absolute, supreme and final authority within their life**. As a believer in Jesus back then, as well as all believers today, once a person accepts Jesus as their Savior, they are to also make Him and give Him first place in their heart by allowing Him to be the Lord of their life.

The true believer is to now allow the Holy Spirit to come and change their “manner of behavior.” That new “manner of behavior” is the same manner of behavior and lifestyle that Jesus exhibited while He was on this earth. That manner of behavior that Jesus showed and spoke about was to love the Lord thy God with all your heart **AND** to love others.

As a believer in Jesus, they were to help others in not only believing in Jesus but also to help others in whatever they may be in need of. That was where the “works” aspect of what James was writing to the believers in His letter comes into play. It was all part of these two but yet very much connected commandments of God.

You see, the Jewish people that had accepted Jesus, believed that they were now saved through Jesus Christ. It was not about anything they did or did not do. That is absolutely correct. However, what James was writing to them was that now because they were this new creature in Christ, they were now to put their faith in Jesus into action by becoming just like Jesus – by loving God **AND** by loving and helping others.

You see that goes along with the understanding of the two fundamental commandments that Jesus went back to and re-taught us which were, loving God with all your heart and then loving others. In Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31 and Luke 10:27, Jesus put these two commandments back to the top.

Actually, if we read it correctly, Jesus tell us that the second commandment, loving others, is **just like the first**. What that means is that they both have equal value. We are now to live out and do both of these commandments.

We must remember that the scriptures in James 2:14–26 are, sometimes, taken out of context. In this I mean that it is sometimes misused, by well meaning but yet incorrect believers, to knowingly or unknowingly use these scriptures to create a “works-based” system of righteousness. This is contrary to the basics of scripture.

These scriptures in James are not saying that our works make us righteous before God. What James is telling us is that, for the true believer, **real saving faith** is truly demonstrated by the believer when they actually do “good works.” Those “works” include loving God but they also include truly loving others. This is how Jesus lived out His life. This is how we are to now live.

We must always keep in mind and understand that doing “good works” is not the basis of true salvation. This is where some, if not many people get confused. We must never forget that the only way and means of anyone’s salvation is simply believing in, and accepting Jesus and all that He did. Salvation is only received by believing and accepting all that Jesus did for us.

Jesus came to this earth as the Son of God. He showed us what it means to live as a child of God. He died on the cross for all our sins. He rose again from the grave and went to sit at the right hand of the Father until it is time for Him to return to this earth to rule and reign.

Unfortunately, even the true believer can get caught up after a while in the thinking that their “good works” are the basis of their salvation. No, “good works” are the evidence of salvation. They are the outcome or outgrowth of a person’s salvation.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is always to result in doing “good works” to help others who are in need, as well as to help others to realize and grasp the goodness of our God. In doing so, the true believer may be of assistance to the Lord in possibly causing a non-believer to turn to, believe in and accept Jesus as their Savior and their Lord.

In Matthew 7:16-23, Jesus tells us this as He states, *“By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?’ Then I will declare to them solemnly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.’”*

The “fruits” that Jesus is referring to represent or are the same as the “works” that James declares in his letter. However, notice what Jesus tell us. It is not the works that will save us because Jesus declares very clearly that He will say to those who just do those “good works” that **He never knew them.**

Good fruit, the fruit that is truly of God and God ordained, only comes from a “good tree.” That “good tree” refers to a person who is only “good” because of the grace, mercy and peace that was able to change a person who was a “rotten tree” into a totally new species of being – a “good tree.”

Notice that the message of James is the same as the message of Jesus. It is true that “obedience” to God is the mark of true saving faith. However, there is nothing that anyone can do to get them to be saved other than believing in and accepting Jesus as their own personal Savior and Lord.

We can see in James 2, an empty profession of faith—one that does not result in a life of obedience to Christ—is in reality a “dead faith” that cannot save. James 2:19 tell us, *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe— and tremble!”* Just because you may believe that there is one God does not make you saved.

The demons “believe” in the sense that they acknowledge that God and Jesus exist. But this kind of “faith” does nothing for the demons, because it isn’t real faith. They are all doomed for that Lake of Fire. They believe that there is a God and that there is a Savior but they do not accept Him – even though they may know that they both are who they say they are. They are deceived!!! This is the deception of the evil one. It doesn’t even seem to make sense.

But...when you are in darkness it is so very difficult to see the “light.” However... the “light” is still there for all of us, today, if we choose to believe and accept it. You can see that played out in the account of the man from the Gadarenes that Jesus freed from the forces of darkness as found in Mark 5:1 and Luke 8:27.

We also see this in the Gospel accounts. The Pharisees and religious leaders knew that Jesus was the Messiah. They expressed it many times among themselves throughout the Gospels. Their problem was simply the fact that they chose to reject Jesus because they wanted and actually thought that they were better off and didn’t want to give up their “power” over the people. They wanted those “material things” more than to accept and receive the Messiah that God gave the world. It wasn’t that they did not believe in who Jesus was but they literally refused Him!!! Hmmm.... Were they deceived ... or did they deceive themselves?

James proves that the demons do not have “true faith” and belief in Jesus. This is seen by the fact that they do not have the “good works” that would go along with “saving faith.” This may seem like a silly way to put it but James was giving an exact example of what saving faith is. It is not just words spoken in faith concerning who Jesus is but it is also expressed by the actions and lifestyle that a child of God now exhibits.

The same held true for the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. They did not have the “good works” that they should have had. Jesus declares this in all of Matthew 23. Jesus says over and over, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*” He calls them, “*Ye blind guides.*” He tells them, “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” All I can say to that is, WOW!!!

We must understand that works has no part in anyone being “justified” or being brought back into relationship with God. It is simply by faith that we saved. Faith in all that Jesus did for us. However, because of all that Jesus did for us, our heart should now be changed. We should be so very thankful to our God. We should desire to do all that we can for our God and onto our God by and through helping others. That is why James declares that faith without the works is not true faith at all.

Now, this doesn’t mean that we all need to run out and get involved in all things within the Body of Christ or within our community. We must be careful that we don’t get caught up in the “doing” of the “works.” In all that we do, we must always keep the love of, and for our God, first and primary. The works that we are doing are to be done because we truly love the Lord our God which is then expressed through loving others. When we love others with the correct attitude of heart towards God, then we are truly loving God.

Those “works” are not just actions that come out of the believer but rather it is the lifestyle, the character and personality, which is called the “fruit of the Holy Spirit.” That “fruit” is to be expressed and should be, and actually are, in the hearts and lives of every true believer in Jesus. Galatians 5:22,23 tells us what some of the aspects are of that one “fruit” that we have within us - “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...*”

That “fruit” has all of these seeds. As we plant those different seeds in different ways and to different people, they will then be watered by the Holy Spirit. Hopefully, they will grow into more “plants,” that will produce more seeds so that more plants, new believers, will come forth...and it will continue!!!

2 Corinthians 5:17 tell us, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* Yes, we are a totally new creature. We once were who we were, but now, we are a **new creation**, a totally new species of being that has been created by God through the power of the blood of Jesus and in who the Holy Spirit is now allowed to come and dwell within and is now available to help lead our lives.

James actually starts his thought and his message concerning the fact that *“faith without works is dead”* back in James 1:22-25. He writes that being a *“doer of the Word of God”* means being a doer of every aspect of God. We are to follow and keep His Word. His Word tells us about who He is and then ultimately, who we are. His Word then encourages His people to act and be His children.

Who was and is the Son of God? Jesus. Therefore, James is telling us that we, as children of God just like Jesus, are to live out our lives, as Jesus lived His life...by giving to others. Even to the point of giving His life. Wow!!! That may seem like a lot...and it is.

If we are children of God then we are to be and act as His offspring, His children. We have been given the best role-model to follow – JESUS. God gave us everything. Now as His children we are to now have total faith in our God and if we have total faith in Him, then we are to live out and do all the works of the kingdom that He desires for us to do in our sphere of influence no matter how big or how small we may think that sphere may be.

There are different aspects of this for every believer. It doesn't matter. We are simply to do what He wants us to do and what He tells us to do through His Word. Why? Simply because we love our God and we have total faith and trust in who He is and what He says.

James 1:25 tells us, *“But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”* To

“look into” means to look at with head bowed forward, to bow before and to look carefully into and become acquainted with. We are to become familiar with and acquainted with the *“perfect law of liberty.”*

The term, “perfect law of liberty” is actually an oxymoron. An “oxymoron” is a figure of speech in which the terms are contradictory to each other. In other words it means the combining of two totally opposite words and meaning and joining them together. “Law” and “liberty” are actually opposites of each other, yet James places them together. There is a “law” found in our faith in Jesus. It is the fundamental aspect of our faith that we must keep – liberty.

These terms placed together, “law” and “liberty,” made the point, especially to the Jews, that this was an entirely new way of thinking about both of these items. *“Faith without works is dead.”* The Jewish faith is based on the works that they do which they believe cause their relationship to grow in God. This is only half correct.

The “Law” and “Liberty” together was and is a totally new way of thinking for the Jewish believers in Jesus... and it may be new for many of us, today. Our faith must be based on our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior and Lord. It is through Jesus being our Savior and Lord that encourages us to then go forth and help others just as Jesus did.

Do we get this new way or are we stuck in quite possibly an old way or even a wrong way of thinking. It is difficult but yet the writers of the New Testament are encouraging the believers to change the way we think and to look at things the way God wants us to look at and live out our lives as His children. We are to do all these things and more. However, we must do them with and in the love of our God, showing others the great love that He has for them.

We must truly get a hold onto the truth of what James is telling us when He tells us that *“faith without works is dead.”* Our faith in Jesus should impel us to go forth and tell others the Good News of Jesus, to go forth and pray for those who need healing or to help and assist those who are in need. If we say we love God, then we are to love others. Faith should not and does not stand by itself.

*“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, **being alone.**”*