

Your Faith: Dead or Alive (Part 3)
November 20, 2005
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well, we turn again to James 2 for those of you who are visiting with us. We find ourselves in the flow of this great letter of James, the half-brother of our Lord, to those Jews who'd been scattered abroad, probably formerly members of his congregation there in Jerusalem, scattered because of persecution. And he writes this amazing letter to them. We've been looking at James 2:14-26.

I want you to know that the elders of this church agree together that the church today, not necessarily this church, but the church at large, has ignored the teaching of James 2 to its great harm. In fact, it's so important to us that the elders agreed together to make this one of our distinctives. Let me read it to you. You can find this, along with the other distinctives of this church, on our website. It's called a changed life.

We believe that all those whom God has genuinely saved by grace through faith alone are new creatures in Christ and will demonstrate that new life by submission to Christ and obedience to God's Word. All Christians still sin sometimes horribly and sometimes for extended periods without repentance, but a decreasing pattern of sin and an increasing pattern of holiness will characterize every Christian's life.

Now that seems so obvious at first glance as we've seen again and again. James makes the point in this short letter that obedience always accompanies genuine saving faith. We've just gotten started really in looking at his letter, and yet over and over again we've seen him make this point.

Let me just remind you. Turn back to James 1:12. He writes, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial[s] ... [that is, who remains faithful to the Lord who endures even through difficulty and trouble] for once he has been approved, he will receive the Crown, which is life. The Crown, which is eternal life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Here we learn that there is a faithfulness to God, an endurance that comes even in the midst of trouble and difficulty. James says, believers, those who will receive eternal life, persevere under trial. They endure under trial and remain faithful to God. Down in verse 22 he punctuates this same point again. This is in the middle of a section about a believer's response to the Word of

God. Notice what he says in verse 22. ... prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers... Why? Because if you are a mere hearer, you are deceiving, (you're deluding yourself) into thinking that you're the genuine Christian when in reality you're not.

Verse 26 of chapter 1, if anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. He says, listen, if you have an external expression of religion, if you do certain things certain religious activities, but you lack the internal self-control, the internal change which the spirit brings, allowing you to control even your tongue to some degree.

We'll learn in chapter 3 that is a very difficult thing. But there is an evidence of a changed heart demonstrated through the tongue. And if that isn't there, he says, "You deceive your own heart, and your religion is worthless."

In chapter 2, we encounter this same point at the end of the section there at the beginning of chapter 2 is about the sin of partiality at the end of that section. In verse 13 he says, for judgment *will be* merciless to the one who has shown no mercy.

He's just explained that we must love others, and part of that love is to show them mercy and kindness. And he says if you don't show that, then you're going to receive no mercy at the judgment. Why? Because that shows your lack of mercy. It shows that, in fact, you have not been shown mercy by God. That's why Christ said in the beatitudes, blessed are the merciful for they shall what? receive mercy.

It's natural, having received the mercy of God, to show mercy to others. And the absence of that, James says is a sign that you're in for a difficult day at the judgment. Down in verse 14, he begins the section we're looking at. What use is it my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but ... has no works? Can that [kind of] faith save him. Verse 17.

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. So over and over again, James makes the point that true saving faith is accompanied by, is followed by obedience to God.

But even in the face of that evidence and the rest of the flow of Scripture, (we've looked at a number of passages outside of James). Even in the face of that evidence, there has always been a

few, there have always been some who have denied the necessary connection between true faith and the reality of a changed life.

There have even been some that we respect in other ways for their ministry, for example, take Dr. Charles Ryrie, Some of you have the *Ryrie Study Bible*, but in his book, *So Great Salvation*, he argues that true Christians can remain in a state of permanent spiritual barrenness, a lifelong pattern of carnality.

He believes there is a category of true Christians who continually live like unbelievers and stay connected to the church. In fact, he goes on to say that disobedience and prolonged patterns of sin, they're not reasons to doubt the reality of your faith. He even says, a believer can utterly forsake Christ and come to the place where he no longer believes at all and still be a genuine Christian.

Zain Hodges, a former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, is even more radical in his views. In his book *Absolutely Free*, he says that nothing guarantees that a true Christian will love God. Let me say that again, nothing guarantees that a true Christian will love God.

He says, if you're sure you believe if you're confident, you believe, then your faith is genuine. That's the only test you need. If you're sure, it's genuine. He teaches that a person can experience some moment of faith, just one moment in a lifetime of faith, and that guarantees their eternal salvation, even if they then turn away permanently from Christ and live a life that has no sign of spiritual life whatsoever.

In fact, genuine believers, he says, can even permanently renounce all of Christianity and just walk away, and say it's not true and still be genuine believers. Now you don't have to be you know, a brilliant theologian to see the practical implications and ramifications of this kind of teaching. They're absolutely disastrous. There are thousands of people who, at some point in their lives, made a profession of faith in Christ, but who lack any pattern of obedience, and they're absolutely convinced that they're the genuine article.

In spite of a handful of people, like the ones I've mentioned, Dr. Ryrie and Zane Hodges, from the beginning of church history the Christian faith has spoken with one voice on this issue. This morning I want to do something very unusual. I apologize to those of you who are visiting.

This is going to be unlike any message I have ever preached at Countryside because I'm going to take you on a stroll through church history. Now, I think this is important. I think it's crucial because I want you to know that what I'm teaching you from James 2 isn't some new approach. It isn't some new understanding that's come in the last fifty years or in my lifetime.

In addition, I think it's important for you to have this historical awareness because much of the attack against what I'm teaching you has found its epicenter in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. It's important to understand that these are the words of church history. This isn't something a handful of radicals like John MacArthur invented. This is what church history teaches. You know I came across, I'm reading a book, just almost finished a book, by Ian Murray called *The Old Evangelicalism*. I love a quote he includes in his book From A. W. Tozer. Many of you have benefited from A. W. Tozer's ministry. You've read *The Knowledge of the Holy* and other works like that. A. W. Tozer said this, and I think this should be the motto of our church. I" I believed in putting banners across the church, we might put this on a banner." We're not going to do that, but I might put it on a banner.

A. W. Tozer says, "Nothing is new that matters." Think about that for a moment, nothing is new that matters and nothing that matters can be modernized. The old way is the true way, and there is no new way. This is why it's important that we compare what we believe, what we embrace against church history. What we believe the Scriptures to teach is this. What godly men through the history of the church have embraced because there's no new way. The old way is the only way.

So, let me just take you this morning, stay with me, keep your minds tuned. I know I'm going to do more reading than I would ordinarily do, than I've ever done, but it's important for you to stay with me because I want you to see from the beginning of the church to today.

There is a steady stream of people who have embraced exactly what you and I are learning from James 2, contrary to even some people that we have respected. Let's start right after the end of the canon. The last book written in the New Testament was probably the book of Revelation, written by the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, probably in the mid nineties, A.D. Here's a quote from 100 A.D., written in an a book outside, a letter outside the content of Scripture, called the Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. Listen to what he writes, "Let us not merely call Him Lord for that will not save us, for He says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord,

will be saved, but he who does what is right. Thus, brother let us acknowledge Him by our actions. This world, and the world to come, are two enemies. We cannot then be friends of both. To get the one, we must give the other up.

Here is five years after the death of the apostle John, and the church begins to speak. Ambrose writes faith is the begetter of goodwill and of good actions. Let's go back though, to right around the period of time of the death of the apostle John. There's an extra biblical writing called *The Dead*. "The teaching" is simply what it means. It was written near the end of the first century or the early second century.

It writes, this very prophet who teaches the truth, but fails to practice what he preaches is a false prophet. In other words, even if you embrace the truth, even if you teach the truth, if you say, it's true, if you believe it's true, but you aren't practicing it in your life, then you are, in fact, a false prophet.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in the early second century, (now we're into the one hundreds) he writes, faith cannot act like unbelief or unbelief like faith, the tree will be known by its fruit. Similarly, those who profess to be Christ's will be recognized by their actions, for what matters is not a momentary act of professing, but being permanently and persistently motivated by faith. Here in the early part of the second century, just a few years after the death of the Apostles, you have them affirming the same truth that we're learning from James 2. Ignatius is saying, listen, it's not a momentary act of confessing Christ. That's not what matters, but faith continues to demonstrate itself by continually professing and confessing Christ and seeing that confession lived out in action.

We move forward to the time of Augustine. Augustine, of course, the greatest of the early Church fathers. He writes this, "There are some indeed who believe that those who do not abandon the name of Christ and who are baptized in His church who are not cut off from it by schism or heresy. So, in other words, here you have people who they haven't abandoned Christ. They haven't said I'm leaving Christ. They've been baptized, connected themselves to the Church.

They're not cut off by teaching some heresy, but who may then live in sins, however great, not washing them away by repentance, and who obstinately persevere in those sins to life's last day.

There are those who believe that even these will be saved. But those who believe thus are deceived if faith works evil and not good, then without doubt, according to the Apostle James, it is dead in itself.

Here, Augustine says, listen, even in my day, he said there are a few people who believe that you can embrace the Christian faith, ostensibly, live a life of obstinate sin to the day of your death, and still get into heaven. He said, but that's absolutely not true. He says as James says their faith is dead. It's not the real thing, so when you look at the early church, you see this united testimony, and these are just a few select quotes. There are others, by the way. I'm not just sort of cherry picking the best of quotes to sort of convince you of my case. This is the tenor of their writings.

This is, in fact, if you were to check other places in these people's writings, you would find the same basic points being made. Now, with the death of Augustine, we enter essentially the period of the darkest days of the church in church history. At the time of the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages and the truth, there were a few bright lights, but for essentially a thousand years the truth was obscured in the church at large. And it wasn't until the Reformation (the light of the Reformation), the light of Scripture was brought back into the issue that we begin to pick up the story again.

By the way there are those who say that the Reformation was the triumph of Augustine's doctrine of salvation over his doctrine of the Church because for a thousand years essentially, his doctrine of the church was played out in the Roman Catholic system.

But he was right on the doctrine of salvation, and when that came back to the forefront and the Reformation, you had the truth brought to bear again. Let's move forward to the Reformation. Then let's talk about the reformers. What did they teach?

Well of course, Martin Luther, everyone agrees, no one stood for justification by faith alone like Martin Luther, What did Luther say about this? He said,

If good works and love do not blossom forth, it is not genuine faith. The Gospel has not yet gained a foothold, and Christ is not yet rightly known. [He goes on to say], It is impossible to separate works from faith, just as it is impossible to separate heat and light from fire.

[He said, listen], You may as well try to get fire and separate the heat and light from it. As to separate good works from faith, the two go together, even though we are justified by faith alone. [Luther says], The faith that justifies is never alone. It is always followed by good works.

[Luther goes on to say], Faith is something very powerful, active, restless effective, which at once renews a person and leads him altogether into a new manner and character of life so that [listen to this], It is impossible not to do good without ceasing.

[Luther says], It's not just possible to do good once you become a Christian, it is impossible not to do good. [And then he clarifies] He says, I'm not saying that man should become good by works, but that man should thereby prove and see the difference between false and true faith for wherever faith is right, it does good. If it does no good, it is then certainly a dream and a false idea of faith. [He says, This is what James mean when he says faith without works is dead.] That is, as the works do not follow, it is a sure sign that there is no faith there, but only an empty thought and dream, and which they falsely call faith.

Luther is very clear on the issue. [You jump to his disciple and friend Philip Melanchthon, one of the lesser voices of the Reformation, but a great voice, nonetheless. He says], It must be obvious that if conversion to God doesn't happen, [conversion simply means turning], there's no turning to God, and the heart continues in sin that there is no true faith.

What about John Calvin? The other great pillar of the Reformation, along with Martin Luther. What does he say? He says,

We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them. Would you then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ, but you cannot possess Him without becoming a partaker of His holiness for Christ cannot be divided. Thus it appears how true it is that we are justified. [Listen to this.] This is really good. We are justified not without works and yet not by works. [We are justified not without works and yet

not by works. Works are not the means by which we're justified, they are the evidence of it.]

We'll skip ahead about fifty years to the life and ministry of someone that many of you admire. In fact, you have his commentary, probably on your shelf, a man by the name of Matthew Henry. The early seventeenth century, listen to Matthew Henry.

We are too apt to rest in a bare profession of faith and to think that this will save us. It is a cheap and easy religion to say we believe the articles of the Christian faith, but it is a great delusion to imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven. You may as soon take pleasure in a dead body, void of soul or sense or action as God take pleasure in a dead faith, where there are no works now listen to him carefully. The most plausible profession of faith without works is dead. We must not think that either without the other, will justify and save us.

The favorite for many of us in the eighteenth century is the voice of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, great Baptist preacher of London. In his book *The Soul Winner*, which I highly recommend to you, it's a great book on how to share the gospel and how to communicate the truth of Christ.

He writes this. He's talking about how do you know if somebody you've shared the Gospel with has truly come to faith in Christ? You ever had that question? You ever talked to someone, and you wonder, you know, is this thing genuine or not? Listen to Spurgeon.

Another proof of the conquest of the soul for Christ will be found in a real change of life. If the man does not live differently from what he did before both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction. There must be a harmony between the life and the profession. A Christian professes to renounce sin, and if he does not do so, his name as a Christian is an imposture. [He says you're an impostor. You're an impostor. You're not the real thing if there isn't a change of life.] That's how you can tell, and he couldn't put it more plainly. Spurgeon couldn't. Then this quote, "Verily. I say to you, you cannot have Christ for your Savior unless you also have Him as Lord."

Moving forward to the nineteenth century, sorry to the twentieth century, R. A. Torrey, former president of Moody Bible Institute, told students in a textbook on evangelism, "Lead that person

as directly as you can to accept Jesus Christ, his personal Savior, and to surrender to Him as his Lord and Master.”

Griffith Thomas was one of the founders of the local Dallas Theological Seminary. He was one of the men responsible for starting the seminary. He writes this of James 2. Paul uses Genesis 15 to prove the necessity of faith.

James uses Genesis 22 to prove the necessity of works. Paul teaches that works must spring from faith. James teaches that faith must be proved by works. [In other words, he says they’re saying the same thing.] Thomas goes even further commenting on Romans 4, listen to him.

We have to acknowledge Christ as our Lord. Sin is rebellion, and it is only as we surrender to Him as Lord that we receive our pardon from Him as our Savior. We have to admit Him to reign on the throne of the heart, and it is only when He is glorified in our hearts as king that the Holy Spirit enters and abides. He says it’s only when Christ is accepted in all of His parts as prophet, priest and king that the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart, or is evidence, I should say, that the Holy Spirit has regenerated the heart again.

Thomas writes, [Before I give you this quote], let me tell you that there is a teaching that says Okay, yeah. Holiness may eventually come for a believer, but there can be this long gap from their profession of faith to the beginning of changes in their lives.

There can be a period in which they look like unbelievers, and yet are truly believers. Listen to Thomas again, one of the founders of DTS. On this issue, he says, “There should be no hiatus, no gap or interval between the acceptance of Christ as Savior and the surrender to Him as Lord.”

His full title is Jesus Christ Our Lord, and the full extent of its meaning, though of course, not its full depth is intended to be realized from our very first experience of His saving presence and power, [he says, listen at the moment of salvation there is not only a willingness to take Christ as Savior, but there is a willingness to acknowledge Him as Lord.

This initial act of surrender, however, is but the beginning of a life of surrender. The act must develop into an attitude. [And then he says these very interesting words.] This has been recognized by God’s true children in all ages as their duty and service.

Martin Lloyd Jones, who, as you know, is one of my great heroes. He writes, “You cannot receive Christ as your justification only, and then later decide to refuse or to accept Him as your sanctification. He is one and indivisible. You cannot receive Him as your Savior only, and later decide to accept or refuse Him as your Lord.

A. W. Tozer in his great little book, *I Call It Heresy*, writes, Years ago, no one would ever dare to rise in a meeting and say I’m a Christian if he had not surrendered his whole being to God and had taken Jesus Christ as his Lord as well as his Savior and had brought himself under obedience to the will of the Lord. [He said], Listen nobody would have stood up and said, I’m a Christian without those things having taken place.

It was only then that he could say I am saved today. We let them say they are saved with the proviso that the deeper Christian life can be tacked on at some point in the future. Can it be that we really think that we do not owe Jesus Christ our obedience? We have owed Him our obedience ever since the second we cried out to Him for salvation. And if we do not give Him that obedience, I have reason to wonder if we are really converted.

Brethren. I believe it is the result of faulty teaching to begin with. They thought of the Lord as a hospital and Jesus as chief of staff to fix up poor sinners that have gotten into trouble. fix me up Lord. They have insisted so that I can go my own way.

He, by the way, he goes on to say, “That is bad teaching brethren, Christ must be Lord, or He will not be Savior.”

Now it’s clear when you look at the flow of church history, and as I said, these are selected quotes of myriads that I could have shared with you. The modern discussion of this issue began in the early nineteen hundreds with the writings of Lewis Barry Chafer, co-founder of DTS.

Lewis Barry Chafer, in his seven-volume work on *Systematic Theology*, which most of you have probably not read exhaustively or you would be exhausted, wrote that, “We have the obligation of preaching the lordship of Christ to Christians exclusively and the saviorhood of Christ to those who are unsaved.” So, here’s Chafer now saying, “No, we don’t present Christ as Lord and Savior to those who want to be saved.” We preach lordship of Christ to Christians, and we preach saviorhood of Christ to the unsaved, and his works essentially resonate with that same basic message.

So, this began the discussion, and then just before the 1950s, a number of men like A. W. Pink and A. W. Tozer began to express concern with the weak gospel that was being presented in many churches. It was in 1955 that James Stewart, not of Shenandoah fame, wrote a booklet called *The Lordship of Christ*. He wrote, “During the past thirty years we have noticed a gradual subtle shift in the emphasis of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” He said, “There’s this change going on which amounts to a complete perversion of the blessed evangel.”

The emphasis in our modern-day evangelism has shifted from that of the Lordship of Christ to an easy believism. This shifting of the emphasis has led to an adulterated gospel and changed the message and ministry of the church.

It was several years later, again that was in 1955. It was several years later in 1959 that *Eternity* magazine in the September edition included an article in which Everett Harrison and John Stott debated this issue. Shortly thereafter, the first reference to with the term lordship salvation occurred now understand that this term lordship salvation was originally a pejorative term used by those antagonistic to the position that we’ve just traced through all of church history.

I don’t like the term. I don’t use it because I think it’s often misunderstood. I think it’s caricatured in such a way that it means something to people that it doesn’t really mean. It doesn’t teach perfection of life. It teaches direction of life. Essentially, lordship’s salvation has two emphases, and I embrace them both.

One is that a crucial part of faith, a crucial part of faith, is the willingness to follow Jesus Christ.

And secondly, that where there is true faith, there will be a change of life. Let me say those again. This is what we’re talking about that.

A crucial part of faith is the willingness to follow Christ, and secondly, that where there is true faith, there is a change of life.

Now probably the first written attack on the scriptural teaching concerning salvation that used this label, Lordship’s Salvation came from a man by the name of Ray Stanford. Ray Stanford served as one time president of the Florida Bible College. He possibly coined this phrase as I said as a negative term, a pejorative term. In the sixties he wrote a handbook of personal evangelism one chapter he entitled “Lordship Salvation”, and he decried it as false teaching.

He wrote, listen to this, The message of lordship salvation, contradicts Scripture. It cannot save. It is accursed of God, and the person who preaches such a message is also accursed. Well, you may disagree with Ray Stanford, but you at least have to say you know what he thinks.

In 1969, Charles Ryrie wrote a book called *Balancing the Christian Life*, published by Moody with a chapter entitled “Must Jesus Be Lord to be Savior”. In that chapter, he equated Lordship salvation with heresy, He wrote, “Must Christ be lord to be savior?”

The importance of this question cannot be overestimated in relationship to both sanctification and salvation. The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel. Therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel.

Now Dr. Ryrie, with all due respect caricatures the position that I hold, and that others hold here. He says that it is faith, plus commitment of life. Now, as I just told you, we believe that the essence of faith, part of the nature of saving faith is a willingness to follow Jesus Christ.

That’s why when Christ wanted to present the Gospel, how did He present it? He presented it in a number of different ways, but one way He presented it was, “If any man will come after Me, what let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow Me.

That was in 1969 that Dr. Ryrie wrote that book. In 1981. About ten years later, Zane Hodges wrote *The Gospel Under Siege*, and he arrived at what could properly be called a radical no lordship position.

Now it was because of these disturbing trends that in 1988 John MacArthur published a book called *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

Immediately following that, two books were written in response in the year following in 1989, one by Dr. Ryrie called *So Great Salvation*, and the other by Zane Hodge is called *Absolutely Free*, and that ensued a flurry of books from both sides as the debate sort of intensified, you probably read some of them.

In 1993, John MacArthur wrote *Faith Works the Gospel, According to the Apostles*, Now since the early nineties, this controversy has dramatically faded, at least in large circles. There are still some websites and others that carry on this fight, but it’s faded, possibly because of several

factors. It could be because of Dr. Ryrie's retirement from Dallas Theological Seminary. Could be that some of those who were into this battle had been redirected into the battle over eschatology.

Also, I think frankly there was a failure on the part of those who hold the opposite position to defend their view against the books that were written, and so for whatever reasons the issues have sort of, at least the tone and intensity have, subsided.

As you look at this, it is clear from all of church history; from the leaders of the Reformation; from the Puritans; from most modern biblical theologians, that they all agree with the facts that:

- 1) part of faith is the willingness to follow Jesus Christ and
- 2) true change will always accompany salvation or what has been called by its enemies, lordship salvation.

But in the end, as much as I thought it was important to take you down that road and show you church history in the end, all of that doesn't matter in and of itself. What matters is, and the question we have to ask is, what does the Bible say? And that brings us all the way back to James 2. That is the longest introduction you will ever hear me make I promise you.

Now, James speaks very clearly and very directly to the issue. In James 2:14-26, Let me read it to you briefly, and you follow along.

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works?
Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you don't give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?
Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. 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." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was

perfected; and 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. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the Harlot, also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Now, the theme of that paragraph as I have reminded you now the last couple of weeks is simply this: there are two kinds of faith. There is a real living faith that saves, and there is a deceiving dead faith that damns the soul, and the problem is, they look a lot alike, so how do you tell the difference?

That's the question that James is answering here. In this paragraph, James gives us two detailed descriptions of those two kinds of faith in verses 14 - 19. He gives us an autopsy of dead faith, and in verses 20 - 26 he gives us a portrait of living faith.

Now last Sunday, we finished our autopsy of dead faith. James, we found out, says that if you could do an autopsy of dead faith, you would invariably find three conditions.

First, you would find an empty profession of faith that is, a profession without works or without obedience. That's in verses 14 - 17 an empty profession of faith.

Secondly, we discovered that you would find a consistent pattern of excuses. Verse 18, notice James anticipates that he's going to be argued with that they're going to have some argument against what he's just taught them. He just imagines and assumes that that's what's going to happen. He expects them to try to show that true faith can be present without any obedience, essentially to say that faith and works can be separated from each other.

James' responds to that idea by saying, Okay just try to show me your faith without works. It can't be done. It's like any internal spiritual reality. It can't be demonstrated to be true unless it's shown in your actions. He says, try to show me that you can't, so he continues in verse 18. I will exhibit or display my faith by my works. You see we are not saved by our works. Ours is not a works-based salvation. But works show they put our faith on display. They show that it's the genuine thing. He tells us here that dead faith is always accompanied by a consistent pattern of

excuses. Just as they argued with him. People who have dead faith will always argue with you, but I and they'll have something to say.

There's a third condition in dead faith, and that is a biblical orthodoxy without fear, verse 19. You believe. Good, so do the demons. You see James wants us to know that you can have faith in the true God and in the biblical Jesus and in the scriptural way of salvation, and yet still have a dead, non-saving kind of faith.

The content of your faith can be absolutely orthodox and right, and yet it be a dead faith that will not save you. Because even the demons believe that our God is the true God., Even the demons believe that Jesus is His Son and that He came to the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. Even the demons believe those things. Now that's where we left off last time since I thought it was so important to give you some insight into why this text is so crucial for us, we have just a few minutes to move forward in the text of James.

In just a few minutes I want to introduce you to the second detailed description. We've seen the autopsy of dead faith. In verses 20 - 26. James gives us a portrait of living faith. Now, verse 20 marks a transition in James' approach. So far in the previous verses, he's presented his argument logically.

But now he says, in verse 20, Are you willing to recognize literally? Are you willing to know? Do you need convincing? Do you want proof oh foolish man? Now those are strong words in the Bible?

When the word "fool" is used, it describes a person not merely who has an absence of intelligence or the absence of good. It usually describes those who are morally evil.

The implication here is that the one who disagrees with James refuses to honestly acknowledge the error of his position. You foolish fellow, you want proof that faith without works is useless. The word useless here was used of money that didn't return any interest on the investment. It was also used of a field that remained fallow and was unproductive, so the word unproductive is a good translation. The kind of faith that is without a works without obedience is utterly unproductive in providing salvation.

Now, James sets out to prove his point from Scripture, He says, Listen, I'm not making this up. There is evidence in the Old Testament of the importance of works in validating faith, and he chooses two Old Testament characters, Abraham and Rahab.

Now we're not going to get far into this this morning. But I want you to see that right away it seems to be in conflict with Paul Look at verse 24. Here's his conclusion of what he's had to say about Abraham.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone, now keep your finger there and turn back to Romans 3:28, Paul says, "... we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." You read those two verses and there is an apparent contradiction. They seem to be at odds with each other, and that apparent contradiction has created a problem for many people in the history of the church. It demands some kind of resolution, and so people have essentially solved the problem in one of three ways.

First, the first solution (first approach) is by those who say that Paul and James really do disagree with each other. They really are at odds with each other, now that's a bad solution.

The explanations for why they disagree vary from a scribe sort of miscopying something, so we didn't really get what Paul or James wrote, That's why it appears or is a contradiction all the way to an outright attack on the inspiration of Scripture. Some will say, see there, they contradict each other, that shows you.

The Scripture isn't inspired and everything in between, but if you embrace Scripture as inspired, you can't buy this explanation because you believe that every word as Paul says in Timothy 3 was exhaled, was breathed out by God. That means it's without error, but it also implies that it came from one author, and if the Holy Spirit was the author, then there can't be an inherent contradiction from one place to the other.

A second approach. Is to use an entirely different definition for the word justify. Some people argue that the word justify can mean one of two things it can either mean to declare someone righteous. That's how we normally encountered in the writings of Paul, or secondly to vindicate, or to show someone to be righteous, and that is true.

The word can't have both of those senses, so they say James isn't talking here about being declared righteous or justification. Instead, he's talking about being vindicated or being shown to be righteous by his works. Well, that's a valid interpretation, but I don't think it's the right one, and the reason is if you notice verse 23 right. In the middle of this passage verse 23, James quotes Genesis 15:6.

Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Now what does Paul say about that verse? In Romans 4, Paul says that verse is the Mount Everest of justification. It is the most profound Old Testament illustration of forensic justification of God's declaring somebody to be righteous. It would be pretty odd for James to shift the meaning of the word in a context where he cites that verse.

The third approach is that scholars take both Paul and James to use the word "justify" in the same sense. They're both talking about God declaring sinners to be righteous, but they still aren't contradicting each other. In the words of one commentator, they are not antagonist facing each other with crossed swords.

They stand back-to-back, confronting different foes of the gospel. They're not fighting each other. They're friends with their backs to each other, fighting different enemies. They're both defending the Gospel, but from completely different attacks.

Paul is fighting against a works-based system, first century Judaism salvation by works. And so Paul uses Abraham's example to show that before the law before circumcision, Abraham believed. He had faith and God credited righteousness to him.

James, on the other hand, is battling an Antinomian crowd. The word Antinomian comes from two Greek words "anti" against and "nomos", which is law those who are against the law that is, they're lawless. They say I can do whatever I want I can live. However, I want I can have faith and still live any way I want so James is battling that group.

Those who believe that true faith doesn't necessarily produce any pattern of obedience in the life, and so James uses Abraham's example to show that true faith always produces good works or a pattern of obedience.

James is saying if faith is alone in the sense that it is not followed by good works, then it is a dead damning faith. Paul and James agree, and if you doubt that, turn as we close to Romans 6.

Romans 6, again, we'll pick up our study of James 2 and go through the rest of that passage and look more in detail at Abraham's example two weeks from today.

Romans 6:1, notice what Paul says. Now remember, Paul has just finished expounding the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. No one would accuse Paul of not embracing that truth, but watch what he says, 6:1. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! God forbid!

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? And then he describes the reality that spiritually we died with Christ, and we were raised with Christ, and what does that mean? Look at the end of verse 4. We were raised so that we too might walk in newness of life.

What are the implications of that? Look at verse 6. Our old self was crucified with Christ in order that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. Paul says, listen justification and sanctification are brothers. They come in the same package. They're different, but they always come together. You were justified he says so that you would no longer be slaves to sin.

Verse 14, For sin shall not be master over you, Verse 15, ... shall we sin because we're not under law but under grace? because we don't have to keep the law as a way to earn righteousness with God. Shall we just sin all we want? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey and either death will result from sin, or righteousness will result from obedience?

Verse 17, But thanks be to God that though you were slaves in the past of sin, you became [at salvation] obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. Verse 22, but now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification and the outcome eternal life. Listen, Paul and James aren't at odds with each other.

This is exactly what James is saying. He's saying that when justification occurs, the life will result in genuine change.

So, what are the implications here for us well? First of all, this is a call to self-examination? Paul says, examine yourselves, test yourselves to see if you're in the faith. We are prone to self-deception, and there are two kinds of faith out there. There's and they both look very similar on the surface, but one is a living faith that brings eternal life.

And the other is a dead faith that will damn you to eternal Hell. That'll have Christ saying to you on the day of judgment, depart from Me, I never knew you, Why do you call me Lord, Lord and don't do what I say?

We have to examine our hearts. Maybe you made a profession years ago. You walked an aisle. You prayed a prayer. You signed a card. You were baptized, but you know in your heart and all the people around you know you have lived like a pagan like an unbeliever ever since. James says that's a dead faith. It's a dead faith, and it won't save you. It'll be unproductive when you stand before God; it won't produce what you think it's going to produce, which is eternal life. It's also a call for us to make sure we get the gospel right.

You know, I think in our day we need to take our invitation to the gospel in the words of Christ. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and let him follow Me. Because the whole concept of faith has been so muddy, people now think it just means to give mental assent to the truth. If I agree that's right, then I'm in. James says no, you're not. We have to be careful of how we present the truth.

Let's pray together.

Father this has been different than what we normally do together, but I pray that Your spirit would make it productive in the hearts and lives of those who are here this morning Lord. I pray for us who are believers. I pray that You would give us commitment to the Gospel. Help us to stand for the truth no matter what it costs us. Help us to be willing to speak the truth in love; even if it means people disagree; even if it means people are upset with us; even if it means we lose friends; we lose respect.

Father, I also pray that You'd help all of us to examine ourselves, everyone here who professes to be a Christian. Lord, help us all to examine our hearts and our lives against the standard that James has put for us here.

Lord, I pray as well for the person here this morning who claims to be a Christian; who keeps on saying they know Christ, but they keep on having no works.

Father, I pray that You would strip away their confidence; that You would pull them to Yourself; that You would bring them to their knees; and that they would come to experience true saving faith that expresses itself in a changed life to the glory of your Son and the gospel.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.