

JAMES 2

EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE

How does your belief in God compare to that of a demon? There's an important difference between believing that God exists, and accepting the free gift of salvation, provided by Jesus' payment for sin on the cross. Believing that God exists is cerebral. Accepting Jesus and following Him are choices made in our hearts. James 2 reminds us that this heart-transformation should bear fruit in our lives for all to see. Our works should reflect our faith. Is your faith clear to everyone through your actions?

- Josh Timonen

1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. **2** Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. **3** If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? **7** Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. **9** But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. **11** For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, **13** because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? **15** Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** 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? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 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. **19** You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? **21** Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? **22** You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. **23** 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. **24** You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

25 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? **26** As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

EnduringWord.com Commentary

Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? James reminded his readers that the rich often sin against them (oppress you... drag you). This is often because the love of money is the root of every kind of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). For this reason alone, the rich are not worthy of the partiality often shown to them.

Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all: James here guards us against a selective obedience, the sort that will pick and choose which commands of God should be obeyed and which can be safely disregarded.

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy: As those who will be judged by the law of liberty, we should always show mercy to others by refraining from partiality. The mercy we show will be extended to us again on the day of judgment, and that mercy triumphs over judgment.

James is relating another principle of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount: *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you* (Matthew 7:2).

Someone says he has faith but does not have works: James wrote to Christians from a Jewish background that discovered the glory of salvation by faith. They knew the exhilaration of freedom from works-righteousness. But they then went to the other extreme of thinking that works didn't matter at all.

Paul also understood the necessity of works in proving the character of our faith. He wrote: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10). He also wrote: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.* (Titus 3:8)

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Real faith, and the works that accompany it, are not made up of only spiritual things, but also of a concern for the most basic needs — such as the need for comfort, covering, and food. When needs arise, we should sometimes *pray* less, and simply *do more* to help the person in need. We can sometimes *pray* as a substitute for *action*.

You have faith, and I have works: Some might try to say that some have the “gift” of **works** and others have the “gift” of **faith**. “It’s fine for you to have your gift of **works** and that you care for the needy. But that isn’t my gift.” James will not allow this kind of thinking. Real faith will be demonstrated by works.

Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works: The appeal of James is clear and logical. We can’t “see” someone’s faith, but we *can* see their works. You can’t see faith **without** works, but you can demonstrate the reality of faith **by** works.

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble! The fallacy of faith without works is demonstrated by the **demons**, which have a “dead” faith in God. The demons **believe** in the sense that they acknowledge that God exists. But this kind of faith does nothing for the **demons**, because it isn’t real faith, and that is proved by the fact that it doesn’t have works along with it.

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SHOW ME YOUR FAITH WITHOUT DEEDS, AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY MY DEEDS.

JAMES 2:18

You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only: The faith only that will not justify a man is a faith that is without works, a dead faith. But true faith, living faith, shown to be true by good works, will alone justify. Works *must* accompany a genuine faith, because genuine faith is always connected with regeneration — being born again, becoming a *new creation* in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). If there is no evidence of a new life, then there was no genuine, saving faith. As Charles Spurgeon is reported to have said: “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.”

Rahab the harlot: Significantly, James used two examples of a living faith — Abraham (the father of the Jews) and Rahab (a Gentile). James perhaps is subtly rebuking the partiality that may have developed on the part of Jewish Christians against the Gentile believers starting to come into the church. Rahab demonstrated her trust in the God of Israel by hiding the spies and seeking salvation from their God (Joshua 2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be living faith because it *did* something. Her belief in the God of Israel would not have saved her if she had not *done* something with that faith.

The lesson from Abraham is clear: if we believe in God, we will do what He tells us to do. The lesson from Rahab is also clear: if we believe in God, we will help His people, even when it costs us something.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also: As much as you can have a body with no life (a corpse), so you can have a faith with no life — and faith without works is a **dead** faith, unable to save.

We can think of an apple tree; where is the life of the tree? It is in the root, and underneath the bark of the tree in the trunk. The life is not in the apples, the fruit that is displayed in season; but if the tree is alive *it will produce apples in season*.

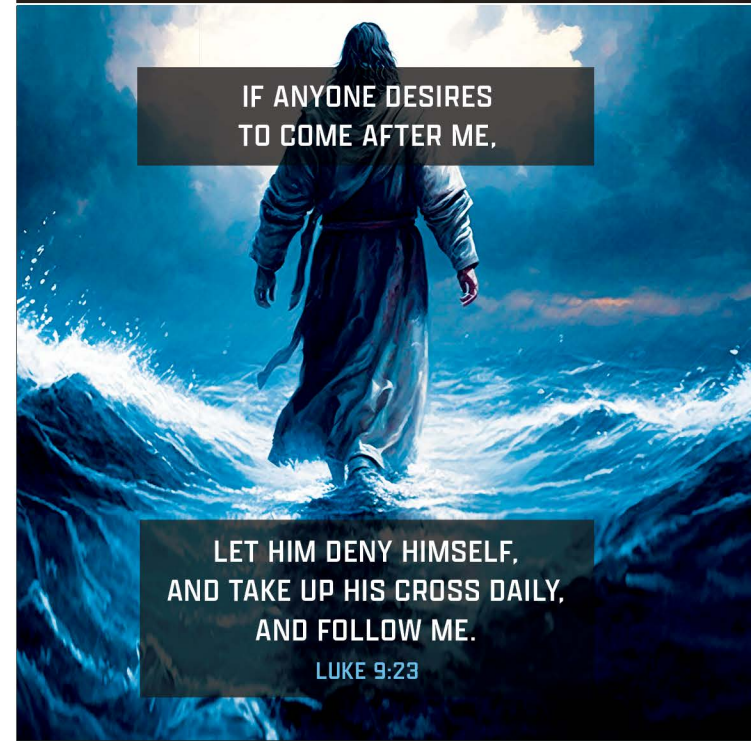


EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE

AND SHUDDER.

JAMES 2

#55



IF ANYONE DESIRES TO COME AFTER ME,

LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY, AND FOLLOW ME.

LUKE 9:23