

What Kind of Faith Do You Have?

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Date: 04 January 2009

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[0:00] James 2.14 to the end of the chapter. What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?! Can such faith save him?

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself is not faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by actions, 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 what I do. You believe that there is one God, good. Even the demons believe that and shudder.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

[1:00] 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 justified by what he does, 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. Do you claim to have faith?

If so, James wants you to be very sure that you have the right kind of faith. Some of you might say, I didn't realize there were kinds of faith. There were different kinds of ice cream, and different kinds of all sorts of things.

I didn't realize there were different kinds of faith. Yes, there are. And James wants you to be sure that you have the right kind, the kind of faith that saves. Because not all faith is saving faith.

[2:15] And he tells us in this passage that some faith is dead faith. Some faith is useless faith. Some faith is good-for-nothing faith.

Some faith is even demonic faith. So you'll want to be very sure you have the kind that saves. Now notice how he introduces this whole discussion on faith.

It starts in verse 14 of James chapter 2 and runs to the end of the chapter. He begins with a very practical question. Verse 14.

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can that kind of faith save him?

Don't you just love James for his practicality? Here he is. And he's talking about a faith that has no deeds. And what he wants to know is, what good is it?

[3:15] What good is it? What advantage? What benefit is there to this kind of faith? And he cuts right to the quick and asks again, tell me this.

Can such faith save him? Is it able to do that for a man? Again, this is the critical question about a man's faith. Can it save him?

And he concludes, as we'll see at the end of our text this morning, that faith is not worth having if it can't save you. After all, what good is a snowblower if it doesn't blow snow?

What good is a watch if it doesn't keep time? And what good is faith if it doesn't save you? Now, this question, then, is as important as it is practical.

Can such faith save you? Now, he's talking about being saved from what, we say. Can it save you from what? Well, it's from eternal damnation in hell.

[4:24] You see, faith is the only alternative to perishing. Isn't that what Jesus taught us in John 3, 16? That God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son. He gave his one and only son.

That whoever believes in him, whoever has faith in him, shall not what? Shall not perish, but have everlasting life. So when James says, can that faith save him?

He's talking about saving us from perishing. From the second death, the lake of fire. It's a very important question. Does that kind of faith have the ability to save him from hell?

Well, he asks the question in a way that expects a negative answer. We don't see that in our English translations, at least not this translation. But in the Greek, it's evident that he's expecting a no for an answer.

And we could, in a more literal way, ask this question as he is asking it. Such faith can't save him, can it? You see, it expects, no, of course not.

[5:37] It can't. There's no question, really, in James' mind as he asks the question. It's obvious to him. And at the end of the day, after giving us his word, it should be obvious to us.

Such faith without deeds may get a man baptized, may get him into the membership of many churches, but it won't get you past the pearly gates. It won't get you into heaven.

It's not able to save you. Now, this is why James is so in earnest about the kind of faith we have, because the stakes are high.

We're talking about eternal life, eternal damnation. Faith without deeds is damning. It's unable to save.

And that's why James says it must be exposed for the cheat that it is, the counterfeit that it is. If faith has no deeds, it's like a tree without fruit.

[6:38] And the problem with this faith is just that, that it has no deeds. You see that? It has no deeds. Now, before we get into the passage, we got to ask, what are these deeds that faith is without?

What are the deeds that are missing? And James has just been telling us in the preceding verses. It's obeying the law of God. It's obeying that perfect law that gives freedom.

It's keeping the Ten Commandments, two of which he quotes. It's keeping the royal law, the law of loving your neighbor as yourself. It's being merciful to others.

That's what he's just talked about. Instead of showing favorites, being merciful to the needy. So these are some of the deeds that faith does. It's being a doer of the word.

He's talked about that, hasn't he? Not just to hear, but doing what it says. It's keeping a tight rein on your tongue. It's looking after orphans and widows in their affliction.

[7:39] It's keeping yourself unspotted from the world. It's getting rid of all moral filth. It's being slow to anger. It's persevering under trials. It's praying for wisdom.

It's rejoicing in trials. These are deeds of faith. These are the things that faith does wherever it's found.

So where such deeds are missing, you may have a claim of faith. Indeed, you may say over and over, as the tense of the verb is, I have faith. I have faith.

I have faith in Jesus. But it's not a faith that can save you. It's a good-for-nothing faith. I find it interesting to learn that nearly 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that the Christian church was already plagued with people claiming to have faith, while they did not have a life of deeds that backed up their claim.

I mean, this is just 20 years after Jesus has taught on this earth. And for 20 years, they've had the presence of living apostles. And yet already, they have people saying, I have faith.

[8:51] I'm a believer in Jesus. But they have no deeds that support their claim. Maybe it was a backlash from the legalism of Judaism, where they were being taught by the scribes and Pharisees, you know, by obeying the law of God, we earn our salvation in heaven.

If we just keep the commandments well enough, we'll get in. And so perhaps people were reacting to that with a pendulum effect.

And they came to see, no, that's not true. We're not saved by our deeds. We're saved by the deeds of Jesus. And perhaps they swung to the other side of an antinomian position, an anti-law position, in which they said, don't talk to me about obeying God's commands.

Jesus kept them all for me. Whatever the cause, the problem was real in early Christendom.

And James meets it head on with plain, pointed, searching words. Now, we desperately need this section of our Bibles.

[10:03] James chapter 2, 14 to 26. In fact, the whole book of James. We need all of our Bible. But we especially need this text in our day. We need it in a day when 83% of American adults make the

claim to have faith in Jesus.

But who, many of which, do not have the deeds to back up that claim. We meet them, don't we? We know them. We rub shoulders with them. They have no interest in personal holiness.

No interest in changing their life to bring it into line with God's commandments. They are not interested in confessing their sins, in forsaking them.

They are not interested in keeping themselves unpolluted from the world. And yet, though such deeds of faith are absent, they nevertheless continue to make the claim to having faith in Jesus.

And they expect us to accept their claim unchallenged. Who are you to question my faith in Jesus?

Now, something is drastically wrong with this picture.

[11:17] And yet, the evangelical church today is not healthy enough, it's not biblical enough, to have the answer to point the way out of this mess that Christianity is in, in the United States, as well as the world, much of the world at large.

How many evangelical churches teach that if someone just asks Jesus into his heart, that that's all that matters, he's ready to die and go to heaven no matter how he lives?

Did he pray the prayer? The carnal Christian theory flourishes. The idea that you can continue to live like the world and still be a Christian, still be on your way to heaven.

There's little preaching of repentance today. There's no calls for forsaking sin. Rather, Christ is just added to the sinful life. He doesn't replace anything.

He's just added on to what's already there. Lordship's salvation is spurned. The fact that Christ demands that all who come to him must bow to him as their new master and Lord and obey him in whatever he says.

[12:27] Oh, that's optional. Many churches would say, you don't need to go there just yet. Just ask Jesus into your heart. Careful concern to obey God's law.

law is derided as legalism. Oh, don't be so careful about the details. That's legalistic. And if a man preaches the law and preaches duty to Christians, this is your Christian duty.

They're called lawmen, law preachers. And to call into question a man's profession of faith because he lacks the deeds to back it up is viewed as being judgmental.

Don't you judge me. And in many churches, what we had in Sunday school this morning, a call to self-examination would be completely out of place. We don't need to examine ourselves.

That's just morbid introspection. And so preaching like James is rare in which professions of faith are tested by deeds of life.

[13:32] Now I say that's the condition, the milieu in which we live. And all these conditions within today's church comprise a perfect setup for dead faith going undetected.

If ever there was a condition in which dead faith could go undetected, it's our United States of America religion. Dead faith can thrive in American religion today.

And it leaves men and women, boys and girls, on their way to judgment, holding on to a faith that is not able to save them. And James loves us too much to remain silent about this.

The stakes are too high. It's your eternal soul. So he tells us over and over, not all that is called faith is the real thing. Any faith that does not produce a holy life is not the faith that saves.

And so for the sake of our eternal souls, he would have us ask this morning, do I have the kind of faith that saves? Now his thesis throughout this section is a simple one.

[14:40] It's just this, that all saving faith produces deeds of holiness. All saving faith produces good deeds of holiness.

And then he gives us four examples. And he teaches this to us. Not once, not twice, not three times. Four times. He gives us four examples to support his thesis. Two examples of dead faith and two examples of living faith.

Two examples of the kind of faith that doesn't save. Two examples of the kind of faith that do save, that does save. We only have time this morning for the two examples of dead faith.

And through these examples, James keeps driving home his point. All saving faith, all saving faith, without exception, produces deeds of holiness in the life.

So, we've got two examples he gives us of dead faith this morning. First of all, there's the armchair philanthropist. This is the armchair lover of men.

[15:44] He's all words and he's no deeds. He doesn't get out of that armchair and do anything for people in need. Notice the need set before us in verse 15.

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. Now, right away, we see that this is not just having a little bit of need.

No, this is severe need. So much so that this man is not only laid off, but when he goes to the cupboards, there's nothing there. When he goes to the fridge, there's nothing. He doesn't have food to keep himself alive today.

And as for his clothes, they're threadbare as well. And there's not enough there to keep himself warm today. It's severe need.

Here's a man teetering on the brink of starvation. And he's a brother in the church. And then James envisions a certain response. And it's the response of all words and no deeds.

[16:45] Verse 16. If one of you says to him, go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

No, the words themselves are good. Go, I wish you well. It's the go in peace. It's the common Jewish farewell. It was a kind thing to say to someone as you left them.

Go, I wish you well. Keep warm and well fed. Well, that's expressing a desire for their good. It's expressing a wish to see their needs met and to see them prospering.

These are love and kind words, loving and kind words. And there's nothing at all wrong with what you said, if that's what you said. But it's what you failed to do. There are no calories in your words to satisfy his growling stomach.

And yes, your words may be producing a certain amount of hot air, but not enough to keep him warm. He needs clothes to keep him warm. And you give him words.

[17:56] The point is, you did nothing. You did nothing. You did nothing when you could have to relieve his hunger and his need for clothing.

And without such words, all your fine sound, or without such deeds, all your fine sounding words, are a sham. You know, John said the same thing in his epistle, 1 John 3 and verse 17 and 18.

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but in action and in truth.

And so the one who says but does nothing, James asked this very practical question once again. What good is it? What advantage comes to the poor man who's dying of starvation and cold?

And the obvious answer is it's good for nothing. So much for armchair well-wishers. Words by themselves are worthless. And so James takes this illustration and pounds his message home in verse 17.

[19:14] In the same way, faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead. Love without actions is dead.

And in the same way, faith without action is dead. Love without deeds is merely pretended love. Faith without deeds is merely pretended faith.

Faith by itself. That's the dead giveaway for James. Ever see faith by itself without deeds accompanied? That's the dead giveaway of a dead faith.

Because wherever saving faith is, it's always accompanied by deeds, by actions. follow saving faith around and you'll find it is not alone.

There are deeds along with it. And why is that? It's not by coincidence. It's because faith produces deeds.

[20:22] You see, it's a womb that is producing offspring. It's a tree that is producing fruit. And so wherever you find faith, it will not be alone saving faith.

It will have the offspring of deeds. The underlying reality for James is that true faith is not something that's dead. It's not something that's dead, but rather it's living and active.

It's such a powerful and dynamic thing that it never fails to produce good deeds. and that's why you won't find it alone. It's a powerful active principle that produces deeds.

So if you ever find faith by itself, follow it around some more. Follow it around and if it's always alone and there are not these deeds with it, you can know something about it.

It's not the kind of faith it saves. It's dead faith and it's unable to save. You buy a couple or you buy a tropical fish and you bring it home and you put it into your tank and you name it faith and you feed faith and you go to bed at night and you wake up the next day and faith is belly up and not active at all.

[21 : 42] Not swimming, no breathing through the gills, not sucking off the bottom or whatever, no, just inactive. And you watch it. You watch it.

Day after day it's not active. It's not doing anything. You can finally conclude that faith is dead. Faith has gone up and died.

There's no life in him. And that's what James is saying. Just as your fish without action is dead, so faith without action is dead.

It's a lifeless thing. That's not saving faith. Saving faith is a powerful living and active principle that always produces fruits of holy deeds.

Now notice that when James speaks about deeds of faith, he speaks about love. Did you see that in our illustration? What is the illustration? The illustration is showing loving deeds toward people in need.

[22 : 44] faith. John the apostle tells us that professed love without actions proves that there's no love of God in us. James tells us that professed faith, I have faith, without actions, shows that there's no saving faith in us.

And the apostle Paul says in Galatians 5 and verse 6, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Paul's talking about the test of Christianity. What proves that you're a Christian?

And those in Galatia were saying, well, we've been circumcised. That's what makes us Christians.

And James says that's no mark of true Christianity. Whether you're circumcised or not, the thing that counts is do you have faith?

And he doesn't put a period there. He says do you have faith that expresses itself through love?

Faith that works by love. That's the thing that counts.

[23 : 54] And that's what James is doing when he's teaching us what active faith is. He points to active love, doesn't he? Faith gets up out of the armchair and loves people in action.

But if all you have is words for the hungry brother and sister, regardless of however pious they may be, where's the love of God in all of this?

Where's the royal law? Is that how you like to be loved? Is that how you treat yourself when you're hungry? You just talk to yourself? Or do you go to the cupboard and get something to eat? The royal law is love your neighbor as yourself.

He's hungry. Feed him. He's cold. Give him some of your clothes. That's why in Matthew 25, when Jesus brings all of creation before him and he divides them into half, I shouldn't say half, but into two groups.

There's someone is right and someone is left. What is it in Matthew 25 that determines whether someone's on the right hand or the left hand of Jesus? It's whether their love had action toward the poor and needy.

[25 : 03] This is the final judgment. And the thing that will divide people into those who will enter into everlasting life and those who will enter into everlasting destruction is what they did for the brother who was in need.

Did they feed him? Did they clothe him? Did they visit him? Did they care for him? You might wonder, how can judgment be done upon that basis? I thought it was all about faith in Jesus.

Well, that's the point James is making. Whether or not you showed love to your brother in need will show whether you had faith in your heart that is saving faith. Yes, faith alone saves, but it is always the kind of faith that does more than speak words.

faith. And so, if you only have words of love and no deeds of love, that kind of faith will leave a man on the left hand crowd in the day of judgment. Now, I find this all very timely for us.

We're living in depressed economic times, aren't we? People are in need this year in a way that they weren't generally last year. Have you realized that God is testing your faith by these economic hard times?

[26 : 20] God is coming to test our faith. What kind of faith do you have? Is it dead or is it alive? Is it useless or is it saving faith?

You're being put to the test. And it's not just testing the have-nots, it's testing the haves as well. It's testing us all. Yes, it's testing the have-nots. You used to have a job, you don't anymore.

You used to have this and that, you don't anymore. And the test is this, will you trust me in your time of need? Will you pray to me in your need and not worry?

Will you, yes, be active in seeking out work, but will you not be sinfully anxious, but believe that I love you and will care for you? Will you not complain, but rejoice and count it all joy, because this trial is meant to produce perseverance in you?

Will you, the brother in humble circumstances, chapter 1 and verse 9, take pride in your high position? Will you glory that your best riches are in heaven and that no one has touched those that are reserved for you there?

[27:34] Will you rejoice that you're doing well in the things that count and praise God for his goodness to you? These are the deeds that are produced by a living faith.

You see, your faith is on trial. What kind do you have? You who are suffering because of the economy. But it's not just the have nots, it's also the haves who are being put to the test. God is testing you, dear brother and sister. Will you mortify self-centeredness that only considers the economy in terms of how it affects me?

Sure glad I survived the last round of layoffs. Sure glad my job is secure. Will you stomp on that self-centeredness and begin to think of the economy in terms of your brothers and sisters and your neighbors and how it's affecting them?

Will you then share what you have with those in need? Will you be rich in good deeds to those who are without? Will you not give in to your hoarding instinct as things get tighter?

[28:42] Will you not merely rest in an armchair and wish people well and say I'll pray for you brother, pray for you brother. Will you get up out of your armchair well wishing and do something and give something to meet their needs?

These are the deeds that are produced by a living faith. What kind of faith do you have? Do we understand the times brethren? these are tough times and God is testing our faith and he's giving plenty of opportunities in this depressed economy for faith to step up to the plate and to express itself through love.

Love in action. So is your faith sitting on the bench in these desperate days or is it hitting home runs? Haves and have nots. This is a test.

This is a test. What kind do you have? Well, all living faith takes action. And your very response to this preaching of the word will show whether you have living faith or not.

Oh, I don't need that. Or will it motivate you all the more? Oh, the faith, the Lord Jesus, as you see him and put faith in him and how he made himself poor to make you rich.

[30:01] Will something of that be seen in your life toward others. So that's the first example of a dead faith. It's the armchair philanthropist. He's all talk and no deeds. The second is more shocking.

It's the believing demons. The believing demons. Now, before we actually get to the demons, James anticipates an opposition to his message.

James knows his message is not a popular one and so he anticipates what people will be thinking and saying to him in response to his teaching. And he says in verse 18, oh, but someone will say, you have faith and I have deeds.

He's got this pegged. People will respond in that way. As if faith and deeds are two different things, James, and it's alright that they're separated. It's kind of like the gifts.

Some have the gift of good deeds and others have the gift of faith. So, one has one, the other has the other. Don't make a federal offense out of it.

[31:04] Come on, live and let live. These two don't need to be found in every condition. You have faith and I have deeds. So, it's a denial of what he's just said, isn't it?

He's just said that true saving faith is never alone. It's always accompanied by deeds. And these say, oh, no, they can be separate. So, James throws down a gauntlet then.

You think that the two can exist without the other. One without the other. Okay? Then show me your faith without deeds and I'll show you my faith by what I do.

Let's have some good old show and tell. And it's time now to quit talking and do some showing. Show time. Okay? And you go first.

Show me your faith without deeds. Okay. Go ahead. Come on. Show me. Show me your faith without deeds. It's an impossibility, isn't it?

[32:06] What is faith? Faith is a grace, an invisible grace in the heart. You can't somehow open your being up and say, see it in there?

That's faith. No. There's no response to that. It's an impossibility. And yet, James is forcing them to see the folly of their position. You say you've got faith, do you?

Well, show me your faith without deeds. You can't do it because faith is invisible. It's like the wind. You have never seen the wind, kids. You've never seen the wind.

You know why? Because you know what wind is? It's air that's moving and you can't see air. Oh, but you can see where the wind is, can't you? It shows itself.

How? By what it does. And your hair is flying all over. And the trees are bending and the flag is straight out. And dust and snowflakes or raindrops are horizontally falling from the sky.

[33:12] You know wind's there. You don't see the wind, but you see its effects. So it is with faith. You can't show me your faith, but you can show me what your faith will cause you to do.

You can show me the deeds of faith. And that's why James follows up. Okay, you've had your turn. Now, I'll show you my faith by what I do. I'll show you the wind by showing you what it does, and I'll show you my faith by showing you what it moves me to do.

The only proof of faith, the only display, the only way to show faith that you have it is deeds. So you're wrong, objector, James would say.

You can't have one without the other. You can't keep these two apart. Faith always shows itself by doing something. Faith and deeds cannot be separated.

They're always found together. Now, he's still talking to these objectors when he comes to verse 19. And he says, you believe that there is one God. Good.

[34:19] Even the demons believe that and shudder. Now, he's claiming, he's talking to those who claim to have faith but have no deeds to show it. And what he tells us here is that this dead faith can sound very orthodox.

It can sign on to all the right doctrines. It can hold a very orthodox statement of faith. This dead faith can. You believe that there is one God.

Probably referring to the common Old Testament profession of faith. The Shema found in Deuteronomy 4, hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. So your faith is monotheistic.

You're proud of your knowledge of the truth. You believe in the oneness of God. Good for you.

Congratulations. That puts you in the same category as demons.

There's sarcasm. It is good. Good for you. Even the demons believe that, he says. And right away we see that saving faith is more than mental agreement with the truths of the Bible.

[35:31] Saving faith, living faith, is more than mental agreement with the truths of the Bible.

Because even the devils, the demons, have that kind of faith.

Did you know that? That the demons believe that there is one God. They believe that Jesus Christ is his eternal son. They said so when he was on the earth. They believe he was born of a virgin. They believe he died on a cross and was raised from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven and is coming again in judgment. They're even trembling about that. They believe all this and more.

Do you realize most demons are better theologians than we are? They know it all. But this kind of faith does not lead them to repent and to find peace with God through the Savior.

No, for all that they believe about God, it is not saving faith, is it? Their knowledge of the Bible makes them smarter, but not better.

[36:32] They're more knowledgeable, but not more holy, more Christ-like. No, they remain devils still. Saving faith is more than mental assent to the doctrines of the Bible, to the truth.

So he says, you with a faith without deeds, you can believe all the right doctrines, you can agree with the Apostles Creed, you can sign on to the 1689 Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, you can no tulip forwards and backwards, the doctrines of grace, all the facts of the gospel that Jesus Christ is God, that he died on the cross to save sinners, that he rose again, that he's the only Savior.

You can believe it all, but it just does not lead you to clinging to Christ by faith. It does not lead you to a living relationship with him.

It doesn't lead you to a lifestyle of confessing and forsaking your sin, of pursuing holiness, of law-keeping deeds. So James' question is, for all of us who make a claim of orthodoxy in our beliefs, what difference do those, your beliefs, make in your life?

You believe there's one God. Does that make any difference in the way you live? Does it make any difference in the way you love? If your belief does not make you willing to lose your life, the life as you want it, and to find it as he wants it, if it doesn't lead you to walking in obedience to a new master, to die to self and to live unto God, then your faith is no better than the faith of demons.

[38:20] What good is it? In fact, the demons are one up on you because they not only believe, they also shudder. They also shudder. Their faith moves them at least to do that much.

But you can claim to have faith and sail on in your apathetic unconcern, even though the faith does not change the way you live. So any Bible knowledge that does not bring you to God, bring you to holiness, is demonic.

It's like that faith that the devils have. Hard words. Shocking example. The believing demons.

So what has James taught us about faith this morning? Without deeds, faith is dead, faith is demonic, and lastly he tells us it's useless. Verse 20.

This verse really belongs with the following text and we'll look at it more next week, Lord willing, but it concludes this section beautifully. You foolish man. Do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

[39:32] Faith without deeds is useless. He's going to give us more evidence next week. But he started out in verse 14 by asking us, what good is this faith without deeds?

What good is it? And now he concludes, it's useless, it's good for nothing. It's the snowblower that doesn't blow snow, it's the watch that doesn't keep time. His message is so simple that faith is either living and producing deeds of holiness or else it's dead and is unable to save you.

It's useless then. And you can see then why his message is so important. Why he emphasizes it, why he doesn't just say it once, but some four times illustrate it, apply to us.

He's talking about eternal salvation. Can such kind of faith save him? No way, never, not in a million years. The only faith that saves you is a living faith that moves you to live God's way.

That's the only faith that has ever saved anyone and that ever will save anyone. So what kind of faith do you have? That's his question for us. Is it living, saving faith, or is it dead faith, demonic faith, useless faith?

[40:54] Here we are in a world and we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and the wages of our sin is death, eternal death, the second death of hell.

And yet there's a way to get to heaven. The only way to get to heaven is to get on board the gospel train. And it's leaving once.

And if you can get on board that train, you'll make it to heaven. But you've got to have a valid ticket to get on the train. And it just so happens that there are all sorts of counterfeit tickets being made and sold today.

And upon boarding the train, every ticket will be examined to see whether it's counterfeit or real.

Now, you've got a ticket. destination, heaven.

And you're holding on to it. And you're hoping that it will get you on board at last. But God has sent his ticket agents into the world to tell you, you know, there's a way to detect whether your ticket is a genuine ticket or not, whether it will be received.

[42:06] If you look carefully at the ticket, there's a certain mark on it that none of the counterfeits have, and all the genuine ones have.

If it's not there, you can be sure it's a fake. Say, would you wait around until the train's blowing the horn, ready to leave the station, before you took a look at your ticket?

Or would you be very sure, as of right now, this moment, to be sure that the ticket you have is the real thing, and it will really get you on that train with the destination of heaven?

Well, the ticket is faith. It's faith in Jesus Christ. That's the only thing that will get you to heaven. And you think you've got it.

It says so. You say so. Other people say so. But you must know that there's a whole lot of counterfeit faith in our world today.

[43:09] 83% of American adults have got the ticket, you see. You're one of them. And God sends us this message from his ticket agent James, telling us, examine yourself.

Be sure you have the genuine faith, the kind of faith that actually saves. Check for the mark of holy deeds. Is it there? Children, children, you claim to be a Christian.

Do you obey your parents? Do you honor father and mother? It's the fifth commandment. No, you don't. You do whatever you want and then you lie to cover up and get you out of trouble.

Then listen to the ticket agent. Listen to what he says. You don't have the genuine faith in Jesus.

The kind of faith that can save you. Young people, do you keep yourself from being spotted by the world?

Or do you do everything you can to fit in with the world, even if you've got a stamp on God's commandments? Adults, do you obey God's ten commandments? Do you obey the royal law of loving your neighbor as yourself?

[44 : 16] Not merely in words, but indeed in truth. Are you a doer of the word? Does your faith express itself through love? You see, what James is telling us is that all claims to faith must be subjected to the test of deeds.

All claims to faith must be subjected to the test of deeds. Do your deeds line up with your claim of faith? And in doing this, teaching this, James is teaching nothing that his savior did not teach, his older brother did not teach.

Matthew 7, by their fruit you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does deeds, only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

Matthew 7, 21. Paul said the same thing, didn't he? In Titus chapter 1 and verse 16, they claim to know God, there's what they say, but by their actions they deny him.

It was a problem in the day of our Lord Jesus, in the day of Paul, in the day of James, it's a problem in our own day. James has been sent from heaven with a message, and it's been safe for us, that we might detect whether we have the kind of faith that saves.

[45 : 35] Does that mean, if you do not perfectly obey your parents all the time, that you don't have saving faith, children? No. No. None of us obeyed our parents every time perfectly.

But what do you do when you disobey your parents? Do you just cover it up and lie or ignore it, or do you bring your sins to Jesus and say, Lord Jesus, forgive me for disobeying my parents.

And then you go to your mom and dad and you say, mom and dad, forgive me. I've sinned against you. I've not obeyed you. I've not honored you. You see, those are the deeds that faith does.

That's as much the deeds that faith does as obeying your parents. That when you disobey them, you make it right. And how God and trusting in Christ to wash our sins away.

No, James isn't applying this test and saying if you're not perfect, you don't have the real thing. He didn't have perfection himself. But he's saying, as we saw in Sunday school, that there is a real change about you.

[46 : 46] There's a real holiness about you, and it's seen by others, by your holy deeds. And so James asks, what kind of faith that saves, the kind that has deeds.

If you pass the test this morning, there's no room for pride. There's no room just to say, well, I didn't need that sermon, you see, I've got deeds.

There's rather fresh reason this morning, brothers and sisters, for casting ourselves upon the mercy of God in Christ and thanking him that he had mercy upon us, upon our souls, sinners that we were and are.

Where did you get that saving faith? Where did you get the kind of faith that's actively producing fruits in your life? You didn't manufacture it. You didn't pull it out of your pocket.

That wasn't with you. You were born manufacturing sin. No, if you have this kind of faith, it's one of those good and perfect gifts coming down from the Father of lights.

[47 : 53] He's given you that faith. Faith is the gift of God, Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. So thank him for it. If you see that your faith is not alone, but it's accompanied by deeds of faith, glory in Christ for his grace to you.

What do you have that you've not received? Now, if you've received saving faith, then don't boast as though you'd not receive it, but rather return thanks to God.

And if you failed the test this morning, see that your faith is alone. It's not marked by the deeds of holiness. That's not where you're going in life. You've got the claim, but you don't have the walk.

Listen carefully. You might think that the answer is to try to do more deeds. I've got the claim to faith, but it's without deeds, so I need to go out of here and try to do more deeds so that I'll have faith and deeds.

Exactly wrong, my friend. That will take you further from saving faith if you go out of here with that attitude. Only Jesus can save you.

[49 : 02] Only his deeds can save you. What he's done, perfectly obeying every one of God's law, and then dying for sinners who break his law. Those are the only deeds that can save you.

His, not yours. And so what you need is not to add your own deeds to your own claim to having faith. You need just to get saving faith.

You need to savingly trust in Christ. And that faith that's real will show itself in deeds. Deeds produced by faith, not produced by the flesh.

You see, as long as you think that you have any deeds that you can do to make yourself presentable to God, in so far as you're resting any of your weight on what you're doing, you are not resting on Christ alone.

And folks, that's what saving faith is. It's resting on Christ alone, putting all your weight on him. If Jesus can't save me, I'm damned, because all my weight is on him.

[50:09] I don't put any weight on anything I do. I fall into his arms of mercy. I cry, God be merciful to me, a sinner, for Jesus' sake. Accept what he's done for me.

You see, until you come to repudiate your own good deeds, you'll not be resting entirely on Christ. That's your need this morning. If you see you don't have a faith that has deeds, it's not go out and produce some more flesh-oriented works.

It's come to God and confess, I've professed to know you, but I realize I don't. Oh, save me for Jesus' sake.

Throw yourself on Christ and you know how we'll know whether or not you have saving faith, whether or not you're resting on Christ alone to save. We'll see deeds in your life and you will show us that you have faith by your actions and we'll together rejoice that salvation has come to you. who has come to rest in Jesus and have found that that faith in Jesus is strong enough, living enough, powerful enough to make you live a whole different way.

[51:26] Well, may God be praised. How does faith come? The Holy Spirit gives faith. It's born in the heart, in the presence of the object of faith and Jesus is the object of faith.

life. So I set before you Christ and him crucified. Look and live. There is the righteousness you need. There are the deeds you need to get into heaven. Trust in him.

Our God and Father, thank you for such love that sent your son to save us from our sins by his works. Thank you that you loved us enough to offer us that gift freely, to be received by faith alone. And thank you for loving us enough for sending us the message of Jesus and James and Paul and Peter and all your apostles to show us how we can know whether we have that kind of faith that really rests on Christ.

Don't let any true believer of yours go out of here fearing for their soul. Don't let any false professor go out of here thinking they're ready.

[52:37] for heaven. But take your word and bring all that is needed to each heart and send us all running to Christ and resting in his great work of salvation we ask in his name.

Amen.