

***“Dead Faith”***

June 17, 2012

Text: James 2:14-17

**I’m going to make 3 statements, & I’d like you to circle “T”**

**(true) in your notes for those that are true, “F” for any that are false, & “M/M” if they may/may-not be true.**

#1—Everyone who is saved has believed in Jesus Christ.

#2—If a person believes in Jesus, he will become saved.

#3—Any/all faith in Jesus will save a person’s soul.

The correct answers are T, M/M, F.

The 1<sup>st</sup> statement is absolutely true, because no one can become saved apart from faith in Jesus X.

Acts 4:12=> *“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”*

Corollary: People who know nothing about Jesus cannot become saved, until/unless they learn about Him.

This is why missionaries are so important.

Jump down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> statement, which is false, because (as we’ll see in today’s text) not all faith is saving faith—there is such a thing as “dead faith,” & that kind of faith saves no one.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> statement may/may-not be true, depending on whether the person believes on Jesus w/ saving faith, or dead faith.

**Someone: How could anyone believe in God, or believe on X, & not be saved?**

Jms 2:19=> *“You **believe** that God is one. You do well; the*

*demons also believe, and shudder.”*

All demons are monotheists, because they know the truth.

All demons hold to an absolutely orthodox theology, and know the truth about X.

Demons believe both in God, & in Jesus as the Son of God.

In Mt 8:29 demons spoke to Jesus saying=> *“What do we have to do with You, **Son of God?**”*

Demons believe, but w/ a deficient/defective kind of faith that keeps all of them from ever becoming saved.

Like demons, people too can have faith that is defective and does not save.

In 8:30=> *“As He [X] spoke these things, many came to **believe** in Him. / Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had **believed** Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are **truly disciples** of Mine; / and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you **free**. / They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, “You shall become **free**”?’” (30-33).*

These same people who had “believed in Him,” were not yet His disciples, weren't spiritually free, & they resented Jesus for suggesting it.

Verse 34=> *“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.’”*

He was referring to them & their enslavement to sin.

They picked up on that, & took offense.

So here you have “*believers*” who are slaves of sin.

They can’t be saved, because no true Xn is a slave of sin.

Rom 6:18 says of Xns=> “*Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*”

This concept of “dead/non-saving faith” is one that today’s

Church desperately needs to learn/understand/take-heart.

Having ignored that concept, it has ushered a lot of

would-be “believers” onto the wide road to

destruction assuring them they’re fine with God, &

He is fine w/ them.

**Important question=> What are the elements of living/saving faith, that distinguish it, from dead faith?**

Notitia—this is the name theologians give to Bible knowledge about the basic facts of the gospel.

It is absolutely essential for salvation, because until a

person has heard/learned the truth about Jesus, he

cannot become saved.

Rom 10:17=> “*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*”

There is a body of factual information that must be

understood before salvation is even possible.

However, by itself, notitia-faith isn’t sufficient for

salvation, & many “Xns” faith goes only this far.

Assensus—another theological term, which refers to a person’s

assenting to the facts about Jesus that he has learned.

Again, this is essential, but it’s not enough.

I believe this is where most “Xns” today have landed. They think that if they simply agree with those facts, or even if they don’t disagree w/ them, they automatically believe them, & therefore they are born again (especially if they associate w/ other “believers”).

If you were to ask them, “Do you believe Jesus X is the Son of God, the virgin-born Savior/Messiah of the world, that He died for sin & rose again the third day?” their reaction would prob. amount this=>

“Yeah, I go along with all that.”

The might even argue the case that all this is true, against an atheist who actively denies it all.

On an intellectual level, you’d have to say they agreed, and in that limited sense, they believe.

They may be as sure of it all, as the demons are.

They are definitely not among those who would flatly/actively deny it.

Their faith is what some would call “easy-believism,” because it takes no effort.

It’s like easy-listening music—you just mindlessly go along with the flow of it.

\*\* Fiducia—personal appropriation of the truth about Jesus X, into one’s heart/life, whole-heartedly embracing it.

True faith like this causes one to reorder his whole life and all of one's priorities around that truth, bringing it into conformity with it.

It changes his identity.

He is no longer an artist, athlete or actor who happens to be a Xn.

He is now a Xn, who happens to be an artist, athlete, or actor.

This is what Jesus was talking about when He said=>

*“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day”*  
(Jn 6:54).

X did not say, “He who tastes My flesh and sips My blood....”

He must be swallowed and taken in, and allowed to change us from the inside out.

This is what the Jews in Jn 1:11 refused to do=>

*“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not **receive** Him.”*

This is giving oneself/one's-life over to X lock/stock/barrel, making an irrevocable commitment to Him, and

saying w/ Paul=> *“I know **whom** I have **believed** and I am **convinced** that He is able to guard what I have **entrusted** [deposited-w/, or committed] to Him until that day”* (II Tim 1:12).

Jesus compared this kind of commitment to Him, w/ a pearl merchant selling everything he owns (including all

his other pearls) in order to buy a precious pearl of great price.

Faith that truly saves is an all-or-nothing faith.

No other kind of faith will save.

**Some have argued that this sounds like salvation by good works—because James will say that the mark of the kind of faith-that-saves, is good works.**

But it is good works that result from an inward transformation, produced through faith.

It is works that occur after a person believes in X, w/ true/saving faith.

It's not works done before we're saved, to earn salvation.

They're done afterward, & they prove we have been saved.

Lutheran commentator Richard Lenski put it like this=>

“This faith, which saves *before* it ever does a single work, saves by embracing Christ, and *reveals* itself by *producing* love and works of love, which... show that real, saving faith is present.”

Much has been written about Martin Luther's dislike for James' epistle, because it emphasizes good works as evidence of salvation.

Luther had come to abhor all religious-works and all religious legalism, & he feared James' words could encourage such legalistic religion.

But Luther basically agreed w/ James, that true regeneration, based on saving faith in Jesus, will inevitably produce good works=>

“It is a living, active, energetic, mighty thing, this faith, so that it is impossible that it should not work what is good without intermission. It does not even ask whether good works are to be done, but before one asks, it has done them, and is ever doing [them]. But he who does not do such works is a man without faith.”

**In today’s text, James will teach us about dead faith by offering us a question, an illustration, & an answer...**

**\* The Question**

It appears as 2 questions, but its single thrust is this=>

Faith w/o works cannot save a person, can it?

**[James 2:14]**=> “*What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can **that** faith save him?*”

James doesn’t ask, “Can faith save him?”

He asks, “Can *that* (the kind of) faith save him?”

In the original language, the word “not” appears at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> question, so it might be translated, “That kind of faith cannot save him, can it?” (expected answer=> No!).

With his pastor’s heart, James is tenderly concerned for his reader’s souls, so once again he addresses them as “*my brethren*” (a term of endearment).

He loves them, but he wants to make them think, about this critical issue, very carefully.

**James does not say the hypothetical man he's talking about actually has faith—but just that he “says” he has faith.**

The man's claim implies that he truly believes himself to be a Xn, & bases that belief on the fact that he has faith.

The tense indicates he continually professes to have faith, so he clearly/sincerely regards himself as a believer.

The problem is that he has faith that can't save him, as proven by the fact that he has no good works to show for that faith.

Good works wouldn't save him or make him “more saved.”

Eph 2:8-9=> *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; / not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*

But if he has truly been born again, the evidence of his new birth should be a life of good works.

James says there is no such evidence, despite the fact he believes he is, & claims he is.

**Jesus said=> “Every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit” (Mt 7:17).**

Then He related this principle to people's lives, saying=>

*“You will know them by their fruits. / Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”*  
(7:20).

It's not what we say (even confessing Jesus as our Lord)

that proves the reality of our faith, but what we do=>  
our “fruit.”



In Matthew 13, Jesus told a parable about 4 kinds of soil into which seed (representing the truth of God's Word) is sown. The first 3 types of soil pictured hearts that were hardened, shallow, & preoccupied w/ worry or w/ wealth. But the 4<sup>th</sup> type of soil was good soil, that produced fruit—in some cases 100 fold, some 60-fold, some 30—but in every case, fruit.

When faith in God's Word creates spiritual life in a man's heart, that life principle will yield spiritual fruit.

If there's no fruit, there's no inward life.

**In the next 2 verses (15-16), James will describe the kind of spiritual fruit a regenerated heart should produce=>**

Compassion/care for the needy that extends a helping hand to them.

So how do we know whether/not a "Xn" has true/saving faith?

His own claim to believe is not conclusive evidence.

So we watch how he responds to the poor/needy.

But if we take into consideration the immediate context right before today's text, we also might include as spiritual "fruit"=>

Loving of one's neighbor, which results in merciful acts in general, & an absence of favoritism in particular, that shows respect for the poor a/w/a the rich.

Going back even further in James, we find other attitudes/actions that James might also include as spiritual fruit of salvation.

- \* Keeping oneself unstained by the world (1:27).
- \* Caring for the helpless (e.g. widows/orphans, 1:27).
- \* Bridling one's tongue (1:26).
- \* Setting aside filthiness/wickedness, and humbly receiving the Word of God.
- \* Becoming an active doer of the Word, not merely a passive hearer (1:22).

We might also consider Scripture as a whole, adding all righteous acts. based on holy longings, hatred of sin, & desire to serve X.

In this broad sense, “fruit” would include the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.), and sharing the gospel w/ others that produces the fruit of conversions.

It would certainly include faithfully devoting 1 day a week to gather w/ God's people to worship/honor Him in obedience to His command.

However, the main point of verse 14 is that, if there's no fruit in a person's life, there's no spiritual life w/i his soul.

So a “Xn” whose life produces no spiritual fruit, has useless faith, & is devoid of real spiritual life w/i.

**In teaching this principle of “faith that works,” James is not trying to be mean to these readers he loves.**

His goal is not to make them feel bad/discouraged/insecure by shaking their confidence in their salvation.

And that's not my intention either, here today.

James is doing the most loving thing possible, enabling/inviting his readers to examine their own hearts/lives, & to ask themselves if it's possible they are self-deluded about the nature of their faith, and the reality of their own salvation.

Far better to discover that now if it's true, than at the

Judgment, when we've lived our lives and it's too late to do anything about it.

As we saw last time, in the verses just before this, James was discussing the Judgment Seat of X (for believers), and the Great White Throne Judgment (for nonbelievers).

He said to speak/act as those who will be judged by the "law of liberty" at the Judgment Seat of X (i.e., speak/act like Xns).

He warned that judgment will be merciless for non-Xns.

Implication=> Make sure you're truly a believer.

Both Xns/non-Xns' judgments will be based on deeds (not just their words), & what their deeds prove about their character.

If they are doers, not just hearers of the Word, their doing good to other people will reveal the spiritual life w/i their hearts.

At the beginning of verse 14, James asked=> "*What use*" is faith that doesn't produce good works?

He means=> What advantage/profit is there in such faith?

Not only does it fail to benefit anyone else, it also fails to testify to one's own salvation—it has no use/profit to anyone.

\* **The Illustration**

[Verse 15]=> “*If a brother or sister [a fellow believer, either man/woman] is without clothing and in need of daily food,*”

**The specific word James uses for “is” suggests that this situation has existed for some time, but is just now being discovered by other Xns.**

These poor believers have-been/are “*without clothing*” in the sense that they are poorly clothed or under-clothed.

The word itself can mean they only had undergarments to wear, and were therefore lit. shivering in the cold.

Secondly, they were “*in need of daily food.*”

The original word for “*daily*” is the root from which we get our word “ephemeral,” meaning “short-lived.”

They may have had enough to eat yesterday, but that's was short-lived, it's all gone now, and they're hungry once again, & they have nothing to eat.

These are the kind of people who pray, “*Give us **this day** our daily bread*” and mean every word of it (Mt 6:11).

What we have here is a picture of extreme destitution.

But even more impacting than the picture itself, is the reaction of supposed “Xns” to it, in the next verse=>

[Verse 16]=> “...and one of you says to them, ‘**Go** [go away] in peace, be **warmed** and be **filled**,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what **use** is that?”

Verse 14 asked, “What use is it to have faith w/o works?”

It was of no use in demonstrating the person’s own salvation.

Now in verse 16, the question is, “What use is it to the poor/needy person, to piously wish him well and do nothing to give him any practical help?”

It would certainly be of no use/help to the poor person.

But it won’t even be of any use to the hypocritical well-wisher either, at the Judgment, when it is brought before the Judge as evidence of the person’s sinful/heartless selfishness.

This will be the same Judge who gave His own life for the salvation of those who were spiritually impoverished.

**\* Here we have a person w/o mercy, who can look at someone shivering in the cold, and blithely say, “Be warmed,” w/o lifting a finger to relieve his/her misery.**

\* He can recognize the poor brother/sister’s obvious hunger and casually dismiss it w/ the glib words, “*Be filled.*”

Filled with what?

The answer would be, “Either with food you can mooch off someone else, or food you can scrounge up yourself.”

I.e., let someone else help you, or help yourself, but all I’ll give you is meaningless platitudes/good-wishes.

The poor person in this case doesn't even have "*what is necessary for their body*" (the basic necessities of life).

And what he hears, in essence is, "Good luck, brother."

He might well get better treatment from the world.

It's possible that the speaker actually means, "I'll pray for you."

But if such a prayer weren't accompanied by willingness for God to answer it thru that person's own generosity, it's the prayer of a merciless heart, God won't listen to.

The Apostle John says that, in order to react like that, a person must "close his heart against" those who need his help.

I like the way the King James translates that, because it's more literal/accurate/colorful=> "[He]shutteth up his *bowels of compassion from him*" (I Jn 3:17).

I.e., "I have denied you access to my softer feelings."

**Faith that witnesses suffering and isn't stirred to help, is all-around useless/worthless faith.**

\* It doesn't help bear others' burdens, or benefit them in any way.

\* It doesn't help us, but gives evidence that we don't have saving faith.

In fact, it actually helps prove that we are capable of the same hard indifference to the needs of others that is typical of the unsaved in the world.

In Acts 2, saints in the early Church sold real estate properties in order to help feed/clothe other impoverished believers.

In Acts 4 we actually read=> *“There was **not a needy** person among them, for **all** who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales”* (Acts 2:45; 4:34).

These folks set the standard toward which all those who have living/saving faith should aspire.

Those who enter the Kingdom, are people who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in strangers, clothe the naked, & visit the sick/imprisoned, as if they were X (Mt 25:31ff).

\* **The Answer** (to the original question “Faith w/o works cannot save anyone, can it?”)

[Verse 17]=> *“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”*

**Simply/briefly, the answer is, “No, faith that isn’t backed up with good works is dead/lifeless/useless faith, that can save no one.”**

No matter how a person protests, that he truly believes, and no matter how convinced of it he is himself, the only valid evidence that whatever kind of faith he has is actually genuine/life-producing faith, would be good works.

If he has no works, his faith in his faith is merely wishful thinking.

We are *“created in Christ Jesus for good works”*  
(Eph 2:10).

A “believer” like that might be called a “Simon Magus Xn.”

Acts 8 says=> *“Even Simon himself **believed**; and after being **baptized**, he continued on with Philip.”*

Here we have a baptized “believer” who appears to continue/abide in the faith.

From our p.o.v., he looks really good.

But when he tried to buy the power to bestow the H.S. on other people, Peter answered=> *“You have **no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God**”* (Acts 8:13, 21).

Here was another “believer” who wasn’t a true believer, and who didn’t believe w/ saving faith.

**Faith that doesn’t save is dead-faith that looks/feels like real faith, but isn’t.**

It’s the norm, because death is man’s normal spiritual condition.

He is born spiritually dead in his sins, so his faith is dead.

Only the divine miracle of regeneration can give life to man & his faith.

**Q: How would I know if my own faith were dead faith?**

1<sup>st</sup>, ask yourself, “Has my faith produced the fruit of repentance?”

John the Baptist=> *“Bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance”* (M 3:8).

No one can believe w/ living faith, & remain impenitent.

The moment the H.S. gives a person faith, He also grants him a humble/repentant spirit, that will keep on repenting, from then on.



Living faith is repentant faith, that directs a person's life away from sinfulness, toward X, & X-likeness.

If you have never hated your sins, repented of them, and tried to rid them from your life, it's time for you to take a long/critical look at your own faith.

2<sup>nd</sup>, ask yourself, "Do I enjoy times of communion with God through prayer and through His Word?"

Dead faith never does.

But saving faith can no more become comfortable w/o prayer than the body can w/o breathing.

Living faith instinctively seeks such fellowship w/ God, lifting up its heart to the Most High, sensing w/ awe/fear His majesty & presence, but drawing near to Him, nonetheless, as a child draws near to his/her father's warmth.

3<sup>rd</sup>, ask yourself, "Do I obey Jesus as my Lord & Master?"

Dead faith doesn't, because it doesn't acknowledge Jesus as its Master.

If He is your Savior, you surrender to Him as your Master, adopting servant-like attitudes of obedience and readiness to serve.

You will say to Him what Isaiah said, when he stood before Him=> "*Here am I. Send me*" (Isa 6:8).

You will do your duty to X as your Lord, obeying Him in what you know from His Word He wants you to do.

Psa 123—“*As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress; So our eyes look to the LORD our God*” (123:2)

We are servants of the Lord, and it’s as if we watch  
His hand for the slightest indication of what He  
would have us to do.

Although we may neglect our duty at times, doing  
something else we prefer, that negligence doesn’t  
become persistent/willful, because X is our beloved  
Master.

As Jesus asked His disciples=> “*Why do you call Me,  
'Lord, Lord,' & do not do what I say?*” (Lk 6:46).

If He is our Lord, we obey and serve Him.

If we don’t, He’s not our Master—we are.

4<sup>th</sup>, ask yourself, “Do I love the world & the things of the world?”

Dead faith definitely does.

I Jn 2=> “*If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father  
is not in him*” (I Jn 2:15).

Jesus said of His disciples=> “*They are not of the world,  
even as I am not of the world*” (Jn 17:16).

But if a “Xn” looks like the world, sounds like the world, &  
acts like those of the world, because he loves the  
world and the things of the world, he is self-deceived  
about his faith.

5<sup>th</sup>, ask yourself, “Does my faith compel me to act out of love for  
God/man?”

Living faith does that, dead faith does not.

\* If I love the Lord Jesus X, I will tell of Him to others.

\* If I love my neighbor as myself, I'll not be able to watch him suffer, give lip service to his plight, and walk away in indifference.

I will reach out to him/her, extending the love in my heart, which X extended to me, when He saved me.

## **“Dead Faith”**

June 17, 2012

Text: James 2:14-17

### **Circle “T,” “F,” or “M/M.”**

#1—Everyone who is saved has believed in Jesus Christ— T F M/M

#2—If a person believes in Jesus, he will become saved— T F M/M

#3—Any and all faith in Jesus will save a person’s soul— T F M/M

Acts 4:12; Jms 2:19; Mt 8:29

1. Like demons people too can have faith that does not [10 save].

Jn 8:30-33, 34

### **What are the elements of living, saving faith?**

\* 2. *Notitia*—Bible knowledge about the basic [12 facts] of the gospel.

Rom 10:17

\* 3. *Assensus*—A person’s [20 assenting] to the facts about Jesus that he has learned.

\* 4. *Fiducia*—Personal appropriation of the truth about Jesus Christ into one’s heart and life, whole-heartedly [20 embracing] it.

Jn 6:54; 1:12; II Tim 1:12

### **In today’s text James will teach us about dead faith by offering us a question, an illustration, and an answer...**

#### **\* The Question**

5. It appears as two questions, but its single thrust is this: Faith without works [14 cannot] save a person, can it?

**[James 2:14]**

6. The problem is that he has faith that cannot save him as proven by the fact that he has no good [12 works] to show for that faith.

Mt 7:17, 20-21; 13:18-23

7. In verses 15-16 James will describe the kind of spiritual fruit a regenerated heart should produce: compassion and [10 care] for the needy.

Jms 1:27, 26, 22

8. A “Christian” whose life produces no spiritual fruit has useless faith and is [14 devoid] of real spiritual life within.

\* **The Illustration**

**[Verse 15]**

Mt 6:11

9. What we have here is a picture of [16 extreme] destitution.

**[Verse 16]**

10. Here we have a person without mercy who can look at someone shivering in the cold and blithely say, “Be warmed,” without lifting a finger to [16 relieve] his or her misery.

I Jn 3:17

11. Faith that witnesses suffering and is not stirred to help, is [16 useless], worthless faith.

Acts 2:45; 4:34; Mt 25:31ff

\* **The Answer**

**[Verse 17]**

12. Faith that isn’t backed up with good works is useless faith that can [10 save] no one.

Acts 8:13, 21

**Q: How would I know if my own faith were dead faith? Ask yourself...**

\*13. Has my faith produced the fruit of [24 repentance]?

Mt 3:8

\*14. Do I enjoy times of communion with God through [14 prayer] and through His Word?

\*15. Do I obey Jesus as my [10 Lord] and Master?

Isa 6:8; Psa 123:2; Lk 6:46

\*16. Do I love the world and the [14 things] of the world?

I Jn 2:15; Jn 17:16

\*17. Does my faith compel me to act out of [10 love] for God and man?