

***“Show Me Your Faith”***

June 24, 2012

Text: James 2:18-20

**A rather pompous Church-leader was trying to impress upon  
some boys the importance of living a consistent Xn life.**

He asked, “Why do people call *me* a Christian?”

After a moment's pause, one boy answered, “Maybe it's because  
they don't know you.”

Xn faith, w/o Xn deeds, is the kind of hypocrisy, that even a child  
can recognize.

**The epistle of James (in the Bible) says that a person cannot  
really be a Xn, if he doesn't do good deeds.**

As we have read in our study of this epistle, James asks=>

*“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has **faith**, but  
he has **no** [good] **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 do not give them what is  
necessary for their body, what use is that?” (Jms 2:14-16).*

Faith that doesn't improve a person's character/moral behavior,  
but allows him to continue responding to others—  
particularly the needy—in the same old selfish/heartless  
way, is useless faith.

James even called it dead faith.

And James indicates, faith like that doesn't save man's  
soul.

**But it's not that a person becomes a Xn by doing good deeds.**

It's that he does those deeds because he's become born again.

Good Xn deeds are a byproduct, of salvation, not the cause of it.

They are the evidence of a deep change in nature w/i a person.

It has been caused by his faith in Jesus X as his Savior/Lord resulting in a spiritual miracle of regeneration and renewal.

Titus 3:5=> *"He **saved** us, **not** on the basis of **deeds** which we have done in righteousness, but according to His **mercy**, by the washing of **regeneration** and **renewing** by the Holy Spirit."*

This is the spiritual miracle of regeneration/transformation, which requires nothing of the person, but a willingness to place the fate of his eternal soul in the hands of Jesus, by faith.

**Before God raised up Martin Luther, it was commonly believed that good works did play a role in one's becoming saved.**

The Xn religion had become mostly empty ceremony, having no spiritual power or redeeming effect on people's lives.

Luther preached that man is saved by God's undeserved grace.

By placing his faith in Jesus X—totally apart from good works.

When the H.S. shows a man/woman the truly-evil nature of his sins, & he/she grieves over them, & asks Jesus to forgive/cleanse them, & give him new/eternal life, X will save his/her soul.

**Although that's a truth we Xns love, there are folks who don't.**

They are spiritual self-starters who want to save (or at least, help save) themselves thru their own religious/moral efforts—the spiritual equivalent of pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps.

They view pleading for God's mercy/help to be humiliating, even dehumanizing.

But the Bible makes it inescapably clear that salvation must be received from Him humbly as a gracious gift—or not at all.

The Apostle Paul=> *“By **grace** you have been saved thru **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; / **not** as a result of **works**, that no one should boast”*  
(Eph 2:8-9).

**For many reasons, it would be wrong to think a person can be saved by anything other than a gracious gift from God.**

Let me give you 3 such reasons=>

1<sup>st</sup>, when you add good deeds, religious ceremony, or anything else to God's unadorned grace, you totally set aside salvation by grace.

A guilty man needs God's mercy/grace, not a pep talk about doing good deeds.

God won't save his soul as a reward for his performing certain good/religious acts, and there is no inherent spiritual benefit to be had by doing them, not even baptism/communion.

He cannot earn God's saving grace, by doing religious works.

Salvation must be a gift of God's grace—not earnable thru man's moral efforts, which would just spoil His offer of grace.

Deeds/works may gratify man's ego, giving him the false impression that he still maintains a little control over his eternal fate;

But until he is ready to sit humbly/quietly before the Lord, as an undeserving sinner, entrusting his eternal destiny entirely to the goodness of Jesus, making no attempt whatever to control the situation himself, he won't receive God's grace.

He must take his hands off the lever, with which he hopes to save his own soul.

Q: To whom will you look for your salvation—you/God?  
2<sup>nd</sup>, to add good deeds to faith in God's grace is to trust in a way of salvation, by which every man/woman has already failed.

It's a game they have already lost before they start to play it.

One single sin decides the matter, makes a person God's enemy, & condemns him to eternal punishment.

Everyone who decides to earn his salvation by his own good deeds has already committed that 1 sin before he even begins—he has lost, & there are no start-overs.

The truth is, that he has sinned far more than once, because every sin counts—whether it involves evil deeds, words, thoughts, motives, imaginations or feelings. It all disqualifies him from gaining eternal life for himself.

So he is already condemned from the start, because of the wickedness in his heart.

Listen to King David's inspired words, about man's sinful condition/nature=> *"There is no one who does good. / The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. / They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one"* (Psa 14:1-3).

3<sup>rd</sup>, salvation by good works would be completely untenable for people in certain situations;

It would be utterly indefensible to even mention it.

E.g. more than once I've been called to share the gospel with a dying person who has lived an ungodly life.

If I were to tell him he could be saved by living a good life, he would think I was mocking him;

His life is about to end—he has no time left to live  
any kind of life at all.

Should I say, “Obey the 10 Commandments...?”

No other idols/gods but the true God.

Honor your parents, and don’t take God’s name in  
vain, fail to keep the Sabbath, murder, steal, lie,  
covet, or commit adultery.

In fact, don’t even do any of these things in your  
mind.

He would cry in his dying misery “Stop! I’ve done all those  
things; I lie here condemned, & it’s too late for me!”

If salvation were achieved by good works, he would be  
right, that man would be as hopeless as the thief on  
the cross who literally could do nothing good,  
because of the nails in his hands/feet.

The fact is that, if a man had all the time in the world, he  
still couldn’t keep God’s Law as perfectly as the Law  
itself demands=> as perfectly as God keeps it.

It won’t compromise w/ you, or accept anything less  
than absolute, flawless perfection.

Just when you might think you’ve done it, you’re  
confronted by the positive side of the Law, which is  
just as mandatory as the negative 10 Commandments=>

Deut 6:5=> “*You shall **love** the LORD your God with  
all your heart and with all your soul and with  
all your might.*”

Lev 19:18=> *“You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself”*

When you really understand the nature of God’s Law, you come to the inevitable conclusion that it is an insurmountable challenge.

**“The Gospel” means “Good News,” & it’s good news because it makes all that irrelevant, & starts over w/ new rules.**

The gospel says, “Yes, you have indeed violated the Law and are condemned by it, but Jesus has already endured the punishment for your crimes, as your Substitute.”

So stop trying to save yourself w/ good works & seek His forgiveness of all your sins, trusting in Him alone.

And for heaven’s sake, don’t try to buy this marvelous blessing from Him, by offering to do something good in return, to earn it or to pay Him back for it.

Just humble yourself, & gratefully accept it as a free gift of His grace.

You need forgiveness; you need to be released/relieved of God’s anger over your sin; you need the power of the H.S. performing the miracle of regeneration w/i you.

In Jesus X, you will find everything you need—just believe it, and believe in Him.

If that describes where you’re at spiritually, then I say to you what preachers have always been delighted to proclaim=>

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved”*  
(Acts 16:31).

Though you are the most wicked person alive, and your  
sins are as red as scarlet, they will be white as snow  
(Isa 1:18).

Through your faith in Jesus alone, you will become born  
again, w/o your ever doing any good/religious deeds.  
Good works can play absolutely no role whatever in saving your  
soul from sin/death/hell.

The minute they enter the picture, they spoil/destroy  
everything.

We must fly by faith—it's a hands-off process, as we trust  
in X alone.

**But now, with this said, let me add that, although we are not  
saved *by* our good works, we are saved *for* good works.**

Earlier I quoted the Apostle Paul=> “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” (Eph 2:8-9).

Now let me add Paul's very next words=> “For we are His  
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ***for good***  
***works***” (2:10).

It might seem strange that good works should be given such a  
negative description regarding the cause of salvation;  
But then be spoken of as the great end/purpose of salvation.  
But God desires for His people to abound in good works, just as  
He does.

He adopts them as His children, gives them His own nature,  
and calls them to live lives that imitate Him,  
empowering them to do so, by sending His H.S. to  
live w/i them.

He wants to raise up a people fit to commune with Himself,  
because they're like Him, possessing His own moral  
attributes.

**Today's text will refute the error, that faith which doesn't  
produce good works can save a person's soul.**

As we saw at the beginning, a "Xn" who can glibly tell a needy  
person, "Be warmed and be filled," & do nothing to really  
help him, has dead faith that is worthless.

James suggests that this may actually be true of "*one of you*"—  
a person in 1 of the churches to which he was writing.

Now he adds, suppose "*someone*" (a different person) were  
to confront that unidentified "*one-of-you*" reader,  
challenging/asking him to produce evidence of his  
faith;

He couldn't do it, having no good works to show for his  
"faith."

This man has made a basic error regarding the nature of Xn faith.

**Our text can be divided into the *Confrontation* of this error,  
the *Cause* of the error, and the *Conclusion* regarding it.**

**\* The Confrontation of the Error**

**[James 2:18]=>** *“But **someone** [the challenger] 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.’”*

**There are various opinions about where the quotation marks should belong (there are no such marks in original Gk).**

I agree with the NASB that they belong at the beginning & end of the quotation in verse 18.

**“Someone” isn’t anyone specific—just an unnamed Xn who might confront the error of another professed Xn, challenging him to produce viable, observable proof of his faith.**

He’s saying in essence, “You claim to have faith, but how do I know you do? For that matter, how do you know you do?”

Faith is invisible, so if the evidence of faith is nothing more than an intuitive feeling, that kind of evidence of too flimsy/subjective & unreliable to risk your eternal soul on it.

You may “feel saved” right now, but what if that feeling vanishes just moments before you slip off into eternity?

You need more objective/reliable evidence of it than that.

Both “Someone,” and the person he is challenging, claim to be Xns, but the difference between them, is that the one being challenged has no works to substantiate his claim of saving faith, so he can’t “show” you his faith.

In fact, his works include the heartless response to the  
poorly-fed/poorly-clothed individuals in verse 15.

Despite that very un-Christian response, however, he still  
insists that he has saving faith, & that he is a true Xn.

**A person like this would prob. respond, “The Lord knows my  
heart, & He doesn’t ask for good deeds to prove my  
faith in Jesus X.**

That assumption is wrong—He certainly will, at the Final  
Judgment.

Rev 20:12 describes that judgment like this=>

*“The dead were judged from the things which  
were written in the books, **according to their  
deeds.**”*

This is the mistake also made by the people in Mt 25, when all  
the nations will be gathered before Christ to be judged.

He will say to those whose lives are full of righteous deeds:

*“Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit  
the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of  
the world. / For I was hungry, and you **gave Me**  
something to eat; I was thirsty, and you **gave Me**  
drink; I was a stranger, and you **invited Me** in; /  
naked, and you **clothed Me**; I was sick, and you  
**visited Me**; I was in prison, and you **came to Me**”*  
(25:34-36).

They will inherit the Kingdom because their good  
deeds give evidence of having been born again.

They will be nonplused by this, having no memory of ever doing such kind deeds for X Himself, so they'll answer=>

*“Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? / And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? / And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” (37-39).*

To which X will respond=> *“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (40).*

In the same manner, the unrighteous will be condemned for their lack of kind/sympathetic deeds, esp. to other Xns (X's “brothers”).

**True/saving faith always produces the fruit of righteous deeds.**

A “Xn” whose life produces no righteous deeds has dead faith (that's the word James used back in verse 17).

He also has no reason for assurance that he is truly born again.

In fact, he is actually lying to himself about his salvation.

1 Jn 2=> *“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments [to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself], is a liar, and the truth is not in him; / but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. **By this we know that we are in Him**” (2:4-5).*

**In our own text, both men (someone & the man he confronts) claim to have saving faith.**

The person identified as “someone” confronts the other man & demands objective evidence that “*shows*” (exhibits, causes to be seen) his faith, in some visible/observable way.

This “someone” is willing to demonstrate his own faith via that same test (his good works), because saving faith w/i his heart has led to an inward transformation, that manifests itself outwardly in his good works, prompted/energized by H.S. who has indwelt him. It has created godly character w/i him, which has reshaped all of his behavior.

But because “faith” in its essence cannot be actually seen, & the good works produced by living faith are missing from the 2<sup>nd</sup> person’s life, he has no way of “showing” his faith; To himself, or anyone else.

### **\* The Cause of the Error**

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> man’s error is caused by his falsely assuming that one’s orthodox theology alone, can save his soul.**

He mistakenly believes that if he belongs to the right religious group who holds to the right theology, that automatically makes him acceptable in God’s sight.

Because James is writing to an audience of Jewish Xns, he alludes to the Shema (Deut 6:4), which is at the heart of orthodox, monotheistic Jewish theology=> “*Hear, O Israel, The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*”

Many of James' readers prob. still recited this twice/day—  
once on every morning, once in every evening.

Orthodoxy like that is good, but it's no substitute for a spiritual  
transformation thru true faith, that creates X-like character.  
Even the worst of beings can hold to an orthodox theology  
and still remain the worst of beings.

[Verse 19]=> *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the  
demons also believe, and shudder."*

### **Why would demons believe in a Judeo-Xn doctrine of God?**

Because they've had direct contact w/ God, so they know it's  
true.

They have seen/met God in all His power/glory, and they  
know in the depths of their being, they are no match  
for Him.

E.g. Job 1=> *"Now there was a day when the sons of God  
[angels] came to present themselves before the  
LORD, and Satan [God's chief adversary among the  
fallen angels] also came among them"* (1:6).

Because Satan/his-demons have actually encountered God, they  
know that the things He prophesies will inevitably come  
true.

They heard Jesus say the eternal fire of hell has been  
prepared for them (Mt 25:41).

They can read Rev 20:10, just as we can, & they have  
no doubt whatever that it will come true=>

*“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

Because Satan and his demons believe they God will actually do these things, just as He has promised, they shudder in terror.

Most people don't shudder over the possibility that they will spend eternity in hell, but they haven't experienced God's power as directly as demons have. They assume that God's mercy/power would never allow that.

If they understood/believed the truth, they'd shudder too.

Many aren't even ready to assume God actually exists.

Demons (who have come into His presence) don't have that option.

So they shudder.

**James' point in verse 19 of our text, is that the faith of people who trust in their orthodox theology alone to save them, is essentially no different from that of the demons.**

They misunderstand the true nature of living faith that saves.

Although it has certain intellectual components, its character is not basically intellectual.

It's a surrendering of will, guided/energized by the H.S., which reaches out to receive from God, a miracle-gift.

It embraces Him wholeheartedly, entrusting one's life,  
one's soul, one's very self into the hands of Jesus, the  
son of God.

**Orthodox theology is a good thing, & James acknowledges  
that, saying, “*You do well.*”**

But merely intellectualizing faith can be a dodge to avoid the  
ultimate issue of surrendering one's will to God.

It is a dodge which the demons have mastered, and so have  
many men/women, who have learned to be  
theological/“religious” w/o being truly Xn.

Until that hard/stiff/resistant will is conquered by X, there  
will be no inner transformation of nature, no renewed  
character, & no outward evidence of good deeds,  
motivated by love of God/one's-neighbor.

The next verse after the Shema (Deut 6:5) is key, commanding us  
to love the Lord our God w/ all our heart/soul/might.

Neither demons nor merely intellectual “Xns,” are willing  
to do that, or are even capable of doing it.

\* **The Conclusion** (to which James draws this reader who claims  
to have faith w/o works)

[Verse 20]=> “*But are you willing to recognize, you foolish  
fellow, that faith without works is **useless** [barren,  
unproductive]?”*

**This man's problem lies in the words “*Are you willing?*”**

It's not a lack of knowledge that has locked him into a  
defective faith, that can never save his soul.

It's a matter of his will.

James becomes very forceful with him, knowing that his stubbornness could take a deadly toll on his soul.

*"You foolish fellow"* is lit. "O empty man/person."

The exclamation "*O*" is seldom used in Scripture and always for the purpose of emphasis.

James wants to reach out and grab this self-deceived man's attention.

This unsaved "Xn" is empty of the truth, so his argument that faith can exist w/o good works is weightless/worthless. And his non-working faith is "*useless*"—unprofitable, lifeless, dysfunctional.

It is faith that cannot/will-not save his immortal soul.

Unless the Spirit enables him to yield to the logic of James' argument, his misunderstanding & his dead faith will convey him to the ultimate/final tragedy, of hell.

It's all just a matter of his willingness to recognize/accept the truth.

**James doesn't tell us how the man responded, but we can only hope that he surrendered his will, believed in Jesus with saving faith, and became a new creature in X.**

A Xn man/woman is the noblest work of God, re-created in the image of Jesus X, His Son, & progressively being made more holy, through the sanctifying influence of the H.S.

\* His/her old nature may have prayed, but not to the true/living God of the Bible.

For the new nature, praying to the true God is as natural as breathing.

\* The old nature murmured, the new nature sings praises to its Savior/Lord.

\* The old nature sought the flesh & the world that is passing away, but the new nature seeks the eternal things of the Spirit.

Believers are linked to Jesus, as branches are attached to a vine.

His life flows thru us, causing us to produce spiritual fruit.

Before we were saved through living faith, we were separated from Him; but now we're in union w/ Him.

We do the good works of Him who always did the things pleasing to His Father, being joined to Him by faith, by love for Him, & by imitation of His life (Jn 8:29).

Believers w/ living faith depend on X, to make them holy.

In our love for Him, we seek greater holiness in our lives, that we might please Him and become like Him.

We progressively put away 1 evil after another, & assimilate 1 virtue after another, as the Spirit keeps sanctifying us from within.

All the while we anticipate that day when we will be like X

*“having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that [we] should be [perfectly] holy & blameless”*  
(Eph 5:27).

In that day we will finally commune with God as friend w/  
Friend, nothing left of sin in our character that might  
spoil/interrupt the joy of our perfect communion w/  
Him.

Every deed we do, will reflect God's nature w/i us, and will  
glorify His name, bringing great joy to us, &  
fulfilling the purpose for which God created us.

## ***“Show Me Your Faith”***

June 24, 2012

Text: James 2:18-20

1. A person cannot really be a Christian if he does not do good deeds.  
Jms 2:14-16
2. But it's not that a person becomes a Christian by doing good deeds; it's that he does those deeds because he has [14 become] born again.  
Titus 3:5; Eph 2:8-9
3. When you add good deeds, religious ceremony, or anything else to God's grace, you totally set [12 aside] salvation by grace.
4. To add good deeds to faith in God's grace is to trust in a way of salvation by which every man and woman has [16 already] failed.  
Psa 14:1-3
5. Salvation by good works would be completely [20 untenable] for people in certain situations.  
Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18
6. The gospel says, “Yes, you have indeed violated the Law and are condemned by it, but Jesus has already endured the punishment for [10 your] crimes, as your Substitute.”  
Acts 16:31
7. Although we are not saved *by* good works, we are saved [8 *for*] good works.  
Eph 2:8-9, 10
8. Today's text will refute the error that faith which does not produce good works can [10 save] a person's soul.

**Our text can be divided into the *Confrontation* of this error, the *Cause* of the error, and the *Conclusion* regarding it...**

**\* The Confrontation of the Error**

**[James 2:18]**

9. Both “Someone” and the person he is challenging claim to be Christians, but the one being challenged has no [12 works] to substantiate his claim of saving faith.  
Mt 25:34-36, 37-39, 40

10. A “Christian” whose life produces no righteous deeds has [10 dead] faith.

I Jn 2:4-5

**\* The Cause of the Error**

11. The second man’s error is caused by his falsely assuming that one’s orthodox [18 theology] alone can save his soul.

Deut 6:4

**[Verse 19]**

Job 1:6; Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10

12. Orthodox theology is a good thing; but merely intellectualizing faith can be a dodge to avoid the ultimate issue of surrendering one’s [10 will] to God.

Deut 6:5

**\* The Conclusion**

**[Verse 20]**

13. Unless the Spirit enables him to yield to the logic of James’ argument, his dead faith will carry him to the ultimate and final tragedy of hell; it’s all just a matter of his [22 willingness] to recognize the truth.

14. We anticipate that day when we will be like Christ; we will finally commune with God as friend with Friend, nothing left of [8 sin] in our character.

Eph 5:27