

True faith // James 2:14-26

//Faith by itself, without works, is dead.

Welcome: I'm so grateful for what God is doing in the Spanish Campus, and throughout all of our campuses at Summit.

- Hello everybody, anybody sick of this cold weather yet? Tell me about it, I was born and raised in a Caribbean island... **You would think all I've been thinking about this week is the Word of God, not entirely true, I've also been thinking a lot of a warm white sandy beach... ☺ forgive me Lord....**

My name is Raudel... Pastor J.D. has asked me to share God's Word this weekend, and I'm grateful to be able to do so.

Today we are not going to be on Judges (don't judge me though)

- But I believe God led me to a passage that we need to hear collectively as a church. **We'll be in James chapter 2, v.14-26**
- I'm going to get into a sticky tension today: A life that completely rests in what Jesus has done, yet is a fully devoted life that actually pleases God. **Why is that a sticky tension?**

I see two extremes in Christians: (**Say this in just a couple of sentences**)

- A) The Christian that is so far removed from the world, that lives in a kind of spiritual bubble of false righteousness, but doesn't intentionally hang out with unbelievers (**because they are afraid of starting to do things that don't please God**) and therefore this Christians does not share the gospel with an unbelieving world, they live in a "caecum" of some kind / enclosed.
 - These Christians are like a light underneath a table (no good)
 - Tend to be very religious and their god is morality.
 - **If their kids are well behaved / makes them look good, & their kids talk with a "yes man/yes sir" they have made it in life...**
 - They focus on the to do's of Christianity...
- B) The other extreme is Christians that are so assimilated with the world, that you can't even tell if they are a Christian.
 - They think they are a light but one wouldn't know it
 - They tend to speak of grace, a lot...

- They speak of justification/salvation but very little to nothing about sanctification
- And folks, **even though sanctification is the work of Christ in us and not our work, newsflash: sanctification does demand our surrendering**
- Many of these Christians can call themselves "gospel centered" or "Christ centered" and they bank on Christ's grace in a distorted kind of way because their daily living / what they do when "no one" is watching / their testimony, stains the very grace that saved them.
- And to be honest they tend to live for themselves and off task of the mission of God

We learn from Jesus that He was full of grace, yet never took his eyes off of God the Father and His Mission. Jesus did not allowed this world to get Him off task.

- In the longest prayer recorded in the Bible, Jesus speaking to God the Father, says: **Father, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." John 17:4**
- Jesus knew exactly what He needed to do, and that's exactly what He did in this short life on this side of heaven.
- And I feel God wants to post the question today: Do you know what you are supposed to do in this short life and are you actually doing it? Are we walking on the good works that God has layed out in front of us to walk in, so that people will see our good works and glorify the Father? Or are we banking on grace yet oddly living however we want to?
- **Grace truly is unconditional love, but that love does demand a response. Think of it this way:**
- **Illustration on Grace:** Grace is like a 1 and half year old that just learned to walk, and as soon as you come through the door from work, **that adorable little thing is approaching you with arms wide open wanting to hug you, with a smile from ear to ear;**
- That is pure love coming your way, **who would see that and walk away?** That's grace. It's pure love **but it demands a response; it bids you to leave behind whatever you were going to do, and come.**
- If you say you have faith in Christ / if you have rested in Christ, but have NO works, YOUR FAITH IS DEAD!

- James 2:17 “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Beloved family the Word of God reminds us today that: **The work of Christ for us starts a work in us.**

Again this topic is difficult. Because we know that we are not saved by works, **not even good works**, we are saved by the Grace of Christ alone.

- When Jesus said, “it is finished”, **it was finished! There is nothing we can add to the work of salvation.** But you see that salvation doesn't come void of good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10)
- You see justification is not just pardon, justification is not just, “you may go, your sentenced has been paid, you may go”, justification is “you are forgiven, yes, because of that **you may come!** His Kingdom comes in your life, His will to be done, not ours”.

Let us break down this James passage a little bit:

Here in James 2, verse 14 through 26 I see at least 2 different kinds of faith that are not true faith.

The first kind of faith we see is:

1. A dead faith.

James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

Now that is a great question isn't it? Straight from God (...if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?). It's a real important question / it's an eternal question... (we can be saved from death / from our sins / from our enemy (satan) / from an eternity without God, salvation is a real important question:

- **Can a faith voided from works save us?**
- And now God, through James lays out a few scenarios for us. Next verse:

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (someone in your neighborhood that you have seen in need; a low income community you pass by on the way to work; / someone in your kid's school that you see with the same worn clothes over and over 'cause their parents don't have much; when you see them all around you **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, *“God bless you / don't worry when God closes a door He'll open another / I'm sure God has*

great things for you / be blessed, trust God, I'll be praying you...” **You see that's the problem with religious people, they says a lot, but they don't do squad....** “*I'll be praying, I'm God will provide meals for you*”, listen, God already provided a meal for them, it's in your pantry, go cook it and bring it to them.... / God already provided a coat for them, it's the one you are wearing, give it to them....

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” **without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?**

17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

You know what something dead does? **Nothing.** / Know what dead faith does? **Nothing.** *Funny thing is the church here in James THINKS they have faith;* James says, “*what faith?*”

- Dead faith is lip service, lip service voided of a living sacrifice
- Dead faith is a professing faith you actually can't practice, because you profess it but don't possess it, 'cause it's dead... dead faith.
- Church I think God wants to search our hearts through this passage

Perhaps some of you inherited dead faith... perhaps you grew up with people around (maybe your own family) that professed to be Christians but you said, “*wow, if this is what it is to be Christian I definitely don't wanna be one...*” you have inherited dead faith / people that cared more about themselves than anyone else; which is inherently not Christian.

- That's typical religion for you, lazy, lukewarm, lifeless
- Maybe you have become **theological** about your faith...
- **Illustration:** *I'm sure you saw the recent report that Raleigh and Durham ranked as the #2 and #3 most educated cities in the nation.*
- **Now, here is the problem with that: That we have a tendency to be theoretical / philosophical / theological but not practical (faith without works...).** It's enough for us to know what's right, punting to do what's right and sacrificial. “*As long as I know what's right and have the “proper” theology, don't worry about what I actually do, and happens behind closed doors*”, in my home...
 - And without realizing it you start to boast about what you know and about what you believe, and you think you are this amazing Christian because of what you know, yet you fail to realize your arrogance, and fail to realize that Christ leads

you to rest, not being idle. Believe me, you want your heart to rest, but you don't want it to go idle, you will die if that happens....

- **We live in a culture that values comfort over sacrifice**, you have got to be careful NOT to take the gospel message of trusting and resting in Jesus, **and incorrectly adapt that to excuse your laziness and spiritual apathy (2x)**
- Jesus says, "He who abides in me will bear much fruit", What or who do we abide in? Only Jesus gives you life, and rest, and yet gives you joy while doing His will.
- Listen you can look like your faith is alive, because we are experts at pretending, but James says you can have a faith that appears alive on the weekend, but is actually dead.
 - **###us**: My mom lives in a tiny house in the country, and she has these two big trees in her front yard, now, **they both look the same, but one of them is dead.** I keep forgetting to send a tree removal company out there, because one of these days that dead tree is gonna fall and hurt somebody. **But hey, to the naked eye, that tree still standing, looks just like the one that's alive, but boy is it dried, hollowed, empty of life, dead.**
 - **There is a faith, says James, that's just like that. It's dead, it is theoretical, philosophical, theological, but not practical.(S)**
- **17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** I know some may say, "*I'm not living on mission / I'm not doing this & that, because the Bible tells me to do nothing, Christ did it all for me...*", listen, with all due respect: **Using the Bible to excuse disobedience to the Bible is not using the Bible at all.** 2x
- Others may say, verse 18: **18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works."** In other words, "*hey you know what James, you have your way, and I have mine, let's just get along / let's not complicate things, we are both right, you have faith, we have works*"
 - And so you get 2 sides in the Christian church: those in the side of faith and grace, but they don't do anything/they are lazy;
 - and those who do a lot of works, but problem is that their devotion and works is what they trust for their salvation.

- Here are the two sides: **18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works."** but God's response is this, let's keep reading that same verse:
- **Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.** Now, all the Hyper Calvinists and Hyper Reformed People in the room; don't get up and leave please, I'm just reading God's Word, I'm just the messenger. I love you 😊.
- **Give God's Word a chance, it answers itself 😊.** ~~Read verse again.~~
- James confronts these two groups that ironically, nearly 2,000 years later, are still arguing....

The side that defends their definition of grace and rest, they say, "*don't worry about a thing, just rest in the Lord, **what we do is nothing***". And the side that defends works says, "*what? do something*"

Those who defend **works** have a tendency to want to earn their salvation through what they do/through their devotion (regardless of religion)

- Depending on religion you may have to pay your karma debt, or visit Meca, or speak in tongues, or get saved by getting baptized
- Works people believe God owes them to love them because of their great devotion....
- Works people tend to live, to prove God they are worthy of being loved by Him. **See, religion is about self, not God. The gospel is about God. There is a big difference.**
- Pastor Ravi Zacharias says: "*Every religion says that the savior by which we can be saved is the person we see in the mirror every morning. True Christianity says the opposite.*" Ravi Zacharias
- Works people tend to be their own saviors, which doesn't save.

Now, on the other hand, faith, grace and rest people, defend that in life "we must do nothing, just trust God and keep on living...". They say:

- "*You know what? Let's just relax, we don't have to get so serious like these so devoted people. / Jesus intercedes for me so it's ok if I don't pray... / God is sovereign He is already taken care of everything... /*
- *We don't have to serve; that's legalism and works, we just need to sit down and receive from the man of God... / fasting? That's for*

Pharisees...”. But church do not undermine our enemy, and do not undermine our wicked and deceitful hearts....

- Yes, Jesus did ALL of the work of our salvation, only He is able to save us, **but that doesn't mean that what we do doesn't matter** / what we do gives away who do we belong to / what we do gives away what is our hope / what we do gives away who do we love most / what you do gives away **whether Jesus is King in your life, or you are.**
- It's true that we can't do anything for God to love us less, **but don't get confused, there is a bunch of things you can do to grief God / to displease Him.**

James confronts both sides and says, you are both wrong:

- Works without TRUST in Christ is you attempting to be your own savior. And faith without works is dead. / What we do matters.
- And that's the first type of faith James warns us about, a dead one, voided of good works.

The second type of faith James presents, it's also NOT true faith, though it looks like it too, but things get way more serious. *We left off in v.18, let's read verse 19:*

19 You believe that God is one; you do well. In other words, *“you believe in God, good for you... congratulations...”* Due know however that: **Even the demons believe—and shudder!**

The second type of faith that James describes is:

2) A faith that is NO different that that of the demons. Even the demons believe... (v.19)

Allow me to say something: **demons also believe in Jesus.**

How is a believe in Jesus one like the ones the demons have? Well, that would be to believe Jesus and do nothing for Jesus / to believe in Jesus and hush the gospel / to believe in Jesus and live for yourself / **when you believe in Jesus, but your lifestyle lacks the evidence that you love and belong to Jesus.**

It's when you can understand very well many things **about** Jesus, without having **affection** for Jesus.... **Listen, you can have good theology**

and have NO affection for Jesus / not have a desire and passion to live for Him.

- No wonder **none** Christians think we are hypocrites, because you profess to have faith/be a Christian, but they are **witnessing** that in your life, **your affections / the desires of your heart have little to do with Jesus.**
 - *###us:* I have an atheist friend of mine that I was having coffee with thee other day, and he said to me, *“why do you seem to be the only Christians that befriends an atheist and separates time to hear me try and disprove God...”*;
 - Now, I know I'm not the only one that does that, and to be fair to Christians he just doesn't know them. But answer honestly, how many none believers have you loved unconditionally and befriended this year?
- Church you can have good theology and NOT have affection for Jesus
- You know what's interesting? That when you read Matthew, John, Luke and Mark, **you see that demons know Jesus well, and even have a great theology about Jesus.** Here is a few examples:
 - **“And he (Jesus) would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”** Mark 1:34 – Demons know Jesus well....
 - **And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”** Luke 4:33-34 Many people can't even say what this demon said, “Jesus you are the Holy one of God”. One more example:
 - **“And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!”** But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, **because they knew that he was the Christ.”** Luke 4:41
 - **You see, demons have good theology too but they do NOT love Jesus / they do not have any affection for Jesus.** Their believe in Christ is not true faith.
- Church there is a kind of faith that is like the one the demons believe with. And it's not true faith at all. **Would you allow God to search your heart and lead you to repentance? Alrededor de quien gira tu vida? Who and what does your life revolve around?** This was me, I had a dead faith, and Jesus in His great mercy gave me life.

- I use to think, *“I believe in God, and I’m a pretty good person, highly moral (more than most) and so I’m alright.... I even serve in Church, so, what else does God want me to do? I’m good.”* **Yet I had a dead faith / my believe was no more different than that of the demons / my theology was good, but my heart did not belong to Jesus.**
- But Jesus through His Word and Spirit gave me life, and freedom, and hope, and good works to walk in each and every day of my life, so that others will see the good works & glorify my merciful Father.

Listen, I **knew** Jesus but I didn’t **love** Jesus. **It’s so evident when you love somebody; how? The joy in you gives it away.... You get all giddy up about that person.** I knew Jesus but I didn’t love Jesus / I didn’t enjoy Jesus / I didn’t live for Jesus / I knew him intellectually, but I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus.

- After I saw His love for me, all I wanted to do was love him back.
- Thank God for blue tooth technology, before Bluetooth technology, people thought I was crazy when I was driving, because to them I was talking to myself... I would be all giddy up talking to Jesus in my car... now I had a vibrant relationship... now people think I’m on the phone, but guess what, I’m still talking to Jesus ☺. Joy gives it away.
- **Do you have true faith in Jesus Christ? Is He real every day to you?**

Listen: A believe in Jesus Christ like the demons, has information, but lacks transformation. Where you at church?

- Do the demons know who Jesus is? Yes or No? **Yes.**
- Do they want to surrender to Jesus? Yes or No? **No.**
- Will they spend eternity in pleasures ever more with God? Yes or No? **No.**
- What is James trying to get at? You believe in God? Good for you, demons believe too, yet is quite possible to know about Jesus and miss Him, and not spend eternity with Him, **‘cause you need more than information and good theology, you need transformation. You need to surrender.**

Some people can take a theology test and pass it, say that Jesus is the son of God, the Holy one, just like demons have said, but it’s not about filling the right answer on a theology test, it’s about your heart being

filled with the only one that can satisfy it and give it eternal life. His name is Jesus. Do you believe enough to follow Him?

- I know there are changes that will take a long time, **but it’s impossible to encounter the savior of the world, and be the same,** at least you should be transformed a little more each day, humbling yourself to His loving leading.

I gotta wrap it up...

Church you can say anything you want about being a Christian, but faith without works is dead.

- I know it’s a difficult tension, because we do rest and trust in God alone. And we are asking, *“well, which one is it? James seems to be saying “do”, and Paul seems to be saying “done”, which one is it?”*
- Let’s pair up James and Paul:
- **“You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”** James 2:24
- **“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”** Romans 3:28
- So which one is it? You are probably thinking, *“you see, the Bible contradicts itself”*; no my friend, it doesn’t; the creator knows more than the creation. Let me give you a helpful analogy.
- **Hospital Visit:**
 - You are in the waiting room at a small doctor’s office.
 - You hear from the waiting room, that the doctor enters an examination room and tells the patient: *“Listen, you need to rest, I don’t want you trying to achieve anything, you need to rest, I’m serious about this...”*
 - Then you hear the same doctor, walk into another examination room, and says to that other patient: *“Listen you need to walk, I need you to go, to get up, to get moving, why are you doing nothing? Get going, get moving, I’m serious about this.”*
 - Now by now you are thinking, **“what kind of doctor is this? he contradicts himself...”** **But oh no my friends, the doctor is not contradicting himself, it just so happen that one patient had a broken leg, and the other patient was obsessed.**

- Listen, you can trust the doctor, what you can't afford is to trust your own assessment. **Paul and James are talking to different audiences / different patients, but it's the same gospel that God gives, to give you life.**
- Besides, Paul and James are friends... don't have time to prove it, but they wouldn't talk contrary to each other.

Church true faith always leads you to action; Jesus does all the work of our salvation, but that salvation comes accompanied with good works for us to walk in. **20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?** If you really believe, in you really trust Jesus more than whatever you have placed your trust and security in, then jump into the arms of the Father, and surrender.

- There is security in Jesus, yes. There is rest in Jesus, oh yes. **But there is also a better life in Jesus.** You'll start to walk in his Kingdom of life as soon as you cease to walk in your mortal one.

You can read the rest at home, for now let us pray: Pray....

End

Notes / thoughts:

Story about professor and the fisherman:

There is a story about a "world renowned" College Professor back in the day, that needed to cross the English channel and paid a local fisherman to give him a ride in his little fishing boat.

- As they are crossing that stretch of sea, the professor asked the fisherman, "*Son, do you know the mysteries of math and science?*"
 - Kind of embarrassed, the fisherman replies, "*No Sir*"
 - The professor responds, "*you've lost a third of your life*"
- A few minutes later the professor asked the fisherman, "*Son, do you know the ways of philosophical and objective thinking?*"
 - The fisherman with a dumb look in his face says, "*No Sir*"
 - The professor responds, "*you've lost another 3rd of your life*"
- All of the sudden a huge storm came rushing in, and the fisherman asks the professor, "Doctor do you know how to swim?"
 - The professor says, "*No I don't*"
 - Fisherman's, "*well, you've lost your entire life buddy*"

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised.

But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to?

The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.

You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself." C.S. Lewis. Mere Christianity

- You see Kings are not into the business of remodeling, Kings rule, and Christ is the most loving King ever, the only one that has loved you and will ever love you with total unconditional love, but He is still a King, and He is not a roommate, He rules.
- God is not into the remodeling business, He wants to tear down the walls, and give you a new heart. Yes, Christ is King, and because He is King He rules, but He is the best person to lead you because He is the only one that has loved you unconditionally.
- He doesn't want to remodel your life, He wants to give you new and better life. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "*You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.*" C.S. Lewis Because He is King, and what a love this King has for us that He gave his own life for our sins.

Listen, we are called to be doers of the Word, not mere listeners: You can come out of University with a PhD on bicycles, you can tell me what Materials bicycles can be made out of, / you can tell me about all the gear ratios in a bicycle and how they work, / you can have all this knowledge, **but until you have get on that bike, and had a few bruises, you don't know how to write a bike;** you may have a Phd but don't know

- You wanna know how we learn to suffer? Suffering.
- You wanna know how we learn to submit? Submitting.
- You want to know how to love? Loving **sacrificially**, practically, putting others above yourself, **going the extra mile.**
- I'm glad we have the most educated cities; I'm glad you read (praise God), **but real smart people simply believe God's word and apply it to their lives.**
- "Father God, I'm not worried about what this family doesn't know, I'm concerned about the much we already know and refuse to put in practice. Help us to surrender."