

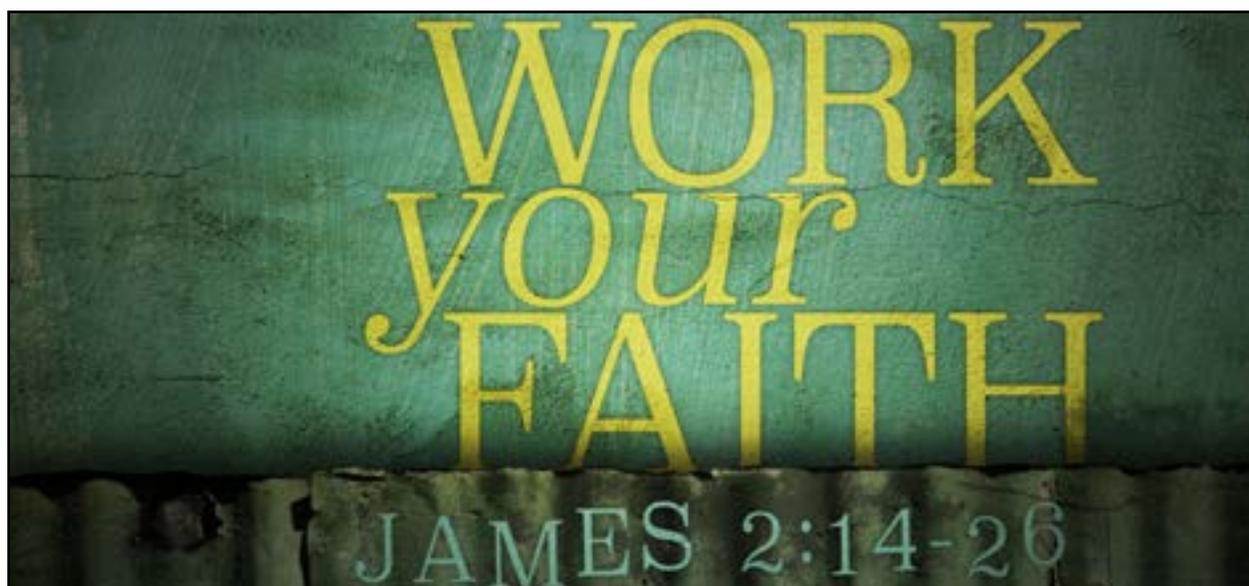
# The Compass

First Family Church

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## Leading Families Toward Spiritual Maturity



### This Week's Core Virtue

***Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-25; 8:38-39): We believe a person has a right relationship with God only by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This makes believers eternally secure in Jesus Christ.***

This week we look at what many commentators consider to be the main thrust of the Epistle to James—faith without works is dead. Many confuse what James is teaching in this text. Is he arguing for a works-based salvation? No. Is he arguing that works are the evidence of true salvation, not the source of true salvation? Yes.

This is a topic that the American Church needs to pay attention to and heed. Too many Christians today are what I call “cultural Christians,” in other words, they rely

on a faulty faith or an intellectual belief in God as the evidence of their salvation. James is quite clear—this kind of faith is worthless.

Many years ago an evangelist came to Grace Church where I was serving at the time. He spoke with great passion about “The Prayer That Sends You to Hell.” This week's title, “The Faith That Dooms You to Hell” is a play off of this title. Like James, he argued that too many Christians rely on a sinner's prayer they prayed when they were a child or at some point in their life to ease their guilty conscience when it comes to eternal salvation. They don't point to the fruit of their salvation, they point to a time when they prayed a pray and accepted Jesus in their heart, yet their life has shown no evidence of salvation from that point forward! Parents need to be especially careful when their children accept Jesus at a very young age and pray a

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## Step 1 ENCOUNTER—God's Word to put yourself in touch with him.

James 2:14-26 (ESV)

### Faith Without Works Is Dead

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> 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? <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish per-

son, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Mark the text to highlight the themes and key points.

#### Faith Without Works Is Dead

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has **faith** **but does not have works**? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> 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? <sup>17</sup> **So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith **apart from your works**, and I will show you my faith **by my works**. <sup>19</sup> You **believe that God** is one; you do well. Even **the demons believe**—and shudder! <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith apart from works is useless**?

<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that **faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works**; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham **believed God**, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a **friend of God**. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by **works and not by faith alone**. <sup>25</sup> And in the same way was not also "Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also **faith apart from works is dead**."

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prayer. Many times when the Spirit of God begins to draw a young man or woman to Christ and to genuine saving faith, Mom or Dad are right their to falsely assure their son or daughter that they are saved... "don't you remember praying a prayer when you were four years old?"

Does this mean that God can't save a young child or we can never know for certain if we are indeed saved? Absolutely not! God does save young children, and we can know we are truly saved, and James tells us what to look for—fruit. Works. Evidence that our salvation is real and living! It is not a mystery. James tells us its as easy as looking at a body and discerning whether it is alive or dead. Look for the vital signs: is there a heartbeat? is their the breath of life? are the eyes responsive? These are all vital signs of a genuine living person, and works are evidence of a genuine, living faith.

James points to some vital signs we should look for when examining ourselves: do we love others? do we care for each other? are we obedient to God's word? Paul provides an extensive list of evidence we should see growing in our lives as a result of our genuine faith: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23).

Do you see this evidence in your life? Again, this kind of faith is not hidden from view...it's obvious. Faith without works is dead, but true, saving faith is a living faith!—Chris Eller

## Step 2 ENQUIRE—the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Use the questions below to guide your reading and to ensure you are grasping the key lessons and themes of the text. This is called *Inductive Bible Study*, in which you ask the questions, *Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *Why?*, *When?*, *How?* as you read the text. (Also known as the “5Ws and an H.”)

1. What is the relationship between faith and works? (2:14)
2. What illustration did James use to explain how real faith affects a person's works? (2:15-17)
3. How did James describe faith that has no accompanying works? (2:17)
4. What is wrong with having faith without works? (2:18-26)
5. What do the demons believe about God? How does it affect them? (2:19)
6. What did Abraham do to show his faith? (2:21-23)
7. What made Abraham righteous? (2:23)
8. How is a person justified before God? (2:24)
9. What did Rahab do? (2:25)
10. How did Rahab show faith? (2:25)
11. How are faith and works like the body and the spirit? (2:26)

### Summary Notes

*Write a one paragraph summary of this week's text including key areas of interest and significant instruction.*

***Consult the commentary on the text and the notes following this page for additional help.***

#### About The Compass

The Compass is a ministry of First Family Church and is edited by Chris Eller. The purpose of The Compass is to help you better grasp the truth of the biblical text from which the weekend sermon is based.

The Compass also connects readers with the principles of discipleship found in 10 Core Beliefs (doctrine) 10 Core Practices (disciplines), and 10 Core Virtues (spiritual fruit).

If you would like The Compass delivered each week to your email box, you can to to [www.thecompass.life](http://www.thecompass.life) for a free subscription.

### Step 3 EXPLORE—the commentaries to answer the questions.

## The Christian and His Beliefs

### The Approach (2:14)

*The False Claim Is Quoted (2:14a).* James now turns to the question of right and wrong in the matter of our beliefs. He begins with the question of faith and works. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” That is the question: can we divorce faith from works?

*The False Claim Is Questioned (2:14b).* Some people see James as a champion of works against Paul, who stood for salvation by faith alone. Martin Luther, whose whole mighty ministry was based on Habakkuk’s famous statement “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4, emphasis added), thought that the epistle of James was “a veritable epistle of straw.” He misunderstood James’s emphasis on works.

We have here the swing of the pendulum away from rabbinical Judaism. The Jews placed all of the emphasis on works, on a rigid observance of the rites and rules of religion. Some Christians went along with all of that. Others went to the other extreme, insisting on no works at all. Such a view turned liberty into license. James brings things back into balance.

James uses the concepts of righteousness and justification in the sense of actual, measurable, perceivable goodness—just as Jesus used it in the Sermon on the Mount. James did not have in mind the “imputed righteousness” that Paul taught (Rom. 3-4; Gal. 3). It is doubtful whether this doctrinal concept ever entered his mind when he appealed to Genesis 15:6. James had a practical, not a theological, application in mind. He was not discussing the question of how Abraham was set right with God or how faith was “reckoned” as righteousness. Paul seized on that aspect of things. James quoted the whole verse, as Paul did, but James was concerned with it as proof that Abraham, when put to the test, lived up to his faith.

We have all met people who say that they believe but whose lives contradict the claim. This was James’s concern.

### The Appraisal (2:15-18)

*A Case to Consider (2:15-16).* James cites a case.

First, the need is discerned: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food” (2:15). James had in mind real need. The Jerusalem church was full of poor people. The noble experiment of the infant, Pentecostal church of having all things in common had not worked out in practice. It was in trouble right from the start (Acts 2:45). Cases of fraud occurred on the one hand (Acts 5:1-11), and instances of great generosity occurred on the other (Acts 4:36-37). The first major squabble in the church was related to this practice of communal living (Acts 6:1-6). Because human nature is what it is, the system broke down, and the church was left with large numbers of poor people on its hands. The situation had been aggravated by the persecution of the Jerusalem church by Saul of Tarsus. He had left many widows and orphans behind him. The situation was so critical that, by the time of the Jerusalem conference, the Jerusalem church urged on Paul the importance of remembering the poor. James was one of the people who advanced this proposal (Gal. 2:9-10)—not that Paul needed urging by James or anyone else to be concerned about the poor.

So a need is discerned. But the need is dismissed: “And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (2:16). To this day, some believers pray for the worlds starving millions, but all of their concern ceases with the “Amen” at the end of the prayer. Such prayers are worthless.

We are reminded of the situation that Moses faced at the time of the Exodus. The Egyptian army was closing in on the fleeing people, and the Red Sea was just ahead. Evidently, Moses stood there and wrung his hands over the situation. God said to him, “Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. 14:15). It was a time for action, not prayer. It was the same when Israel suffered defeat at the hands of the people of Ai. Joshua was bemoaning the situation when God broke into his prayers and lamentations: “Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned...” (Josh. 7:10-11).

A time comes when God expects us to do something about things that cry out for action. Poverty is one of those things. It is all about us. God expects us to do something about it. Pious words are worse than useless. They reveal a cold and callous heart. Jesus never failed to

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help those in need.

**A Conclusion to Consider (2:17-18).** James gives us what we would today call “the bottom line” on the issue. He gives, first, a pontifical conclusion: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (2:17). Paul warns against dead works (Heb. 6:1; 9:14); James warns against dead faith. He insists that we must have a belief that behaves. What James deplors is the kind of “faith” that merely gives intellectual assent to various doctrines of the Bible—the kind of “faith” that claims to believe in the Lord Jesus, who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), and who was indefatigable in the service of hurting people—but at the same time ignores the needs of those all around them. That, according to James and the Holy Spirit, who inspired James to write, is dead faith.

He gives us, also, a pragmatical conclusion: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (2:18). In effect, James says, “All some people do is say that they have faith with nothing tangible to back it up. But I,” he continues, “can show by what I do that my faith is real.”

When I first joined the staff of Moody Bible Institute, a student on campus believed in demonstrating faith by works. His name was George Verwer. Even in his student days, it was evident that the world was going to hear from him. He was a committed soul winner and a successful motivator, and he had a world vision. He was able to get many of his fellow students to blitz various target zones in the Chicago area with tracts and intensive soul-winning efforts.

From the start, he had a vision of the “untold millions still untold.” He began, as a student, by setting his sights on Mexico. He mobilized a number of students to join him one Christmas in an effort to distribute thousands of tracts and testaments throughout Mexico. He secured a large amount of Spanish literature, mobilized a number of students, and set forth on his mission. Some Christian leaders told him bluntly, “George, you cannot do it in Mexico.”

Those were the days when Rome still ruled Latin America with an iron hand. In Mexico it was both difficult and dangerous, if not actually illegal, to do what George proposed. George, however, had a life text: “Nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20). His was the kind of faith that moves mountains, the kind of faith that believes that God says what He means and means what He says. Someone told him that he would never get past the Mexican customs with his gospel books and tracts, but he remained undaunted. He and his friends prayed all of the

way to the Mexican border. When they arrived at the customs barrier, the Mexican customs officials were all dead drunk! The missionaries rode through triumphantly. It was the beginning.

Before long, George had not only begun regular invasions of Mexico during school recesses but also had established a number of Christian bookstores in key Mexican cities. Then he decided to get on Mexican radio with the gospel. Again someone told him, “You can’t do that in Mexico.” Again he fell back on his text: “Nothing is impossible!” George not only had a faith that works but also was blessed with a large amount of common sense. He approached the radio stations on a business basis. He said, “I have a series of bookstores. I would like to buy time to tell people about books that we have on sale.” It worked! Soon, he or his Mexican partners were on the air: “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a special offer this week. We have secured some copies of Billy Grahams book Peace with God. Do you have peace with God? Let me read you a paragraph from this book...”

George graduated from Moody Bible Institute and went off to Spain. Spain was still virtually a closed field to missionaries. Someone told George, “You might have gotten away with it in Mexico, but you’ll end up in prison in Spain.” George simply leaned a little harder on his text.

Again, he used common sense. He did not apply to go to Spain as a missionary but as a student! He enrolled in the University of Madrid. He signed up for the minimum number of courses that would enable him to be a bona fide student—and devoted the rest of his time to evangelism. He scoured the writings of the early church fathers, writings endorsed by Rome. He compiled from the writings those passages that were sound. He published them as tracts—all quotations from the church fathers that Rome revered! He also found an edition of the Spanish New Testament that was free of Romish annotations, one that had the imprimatur of Rome. He was in business! These were the materials that he distributed wholesale! How could the Roman Catholic Church attack him? He was distributing the writings of its own fathers!

Then he went to Russia! That was in the days when the Iron Curtain was solidly in place and when atheistic Communism controlled the lives and destinies of millions. George and some friends made it past the Soviet customs and headed toward Moscow. Along the way, they left a trail of Bibles and tracts. Then they were stopped, searched, arrested, and put in prison. They were interrogated, but George was unperturbed. He was in God’s hands. He and his friends witnessed boldly to their jailers.

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They told them, quite frankly, that they had come to give the gospel to the Russian people.

“You say the Bible is full of lies,” George said. “Then why are you so afraid of it?”

In the end, they were given an armed escort out of the country, and all of their books, Bibles, and tracts were confiscated. “Good!” was George’s cheerful comment. “You can be quite sure that those guards will read the Bibles and literature—if only out of curiosity!”

By this time, George had begun praying for a ship! While he was looking at his atlas, it had dawned on him that nearly all of the world’s great cities are located on the seacoasts and great rivers of the world. What better way to reach them than by the sea? As he was praying one day about his vision, the Lord spoke to him: “George, if I gave you a ship tomorrow, what would you do with it?”

George had his answer ready. Onboard the ship would be Bible teachers, counselors, and foot soldiers to knock on doors and give out tracts. He would have onboard printing presses to turn out tracts by the thousands. He would have onboard books by the hundreds for sale, including textbooks and reference books, so badly needed in Third World countries—an incentive to get people on board. He would have teams who would deal with officials and dock authorities in advance and make arrangements for the arrival of the ship. He would have people to mobilize the local churches and pastors for a major, cooperative evangelistic effort once the ship docked. He would invite the local people, including officials and dignitaries, to come on board. He would offer seminars, Bible classes, and gospel meetings on the ship. People who queued up outside, waiting to get on board, would be shown gospel films. The white sides of the ship could be used for a screen.

So George told the Lord all of this. The Lord said to him, “George, if I gave you a ship tomorrow, you would do none of those things.” George protested, affirming his sincerity.

“No, George,” the Lord said, “you would do none of those things because you do not have a captain, and you do not have a crew. If I gave you a ship, you would have to tie it up in port, and you’d go bankrupt paying docking fees. You would not be able to move that ship a single sea mile.”

“You’re right, Lord,” George said, “so give me a captain, and give me a crew—and then give me a ship.”

One by one, George prayed in his crew. But he still needed a captain. About that time, George invited me to come over to Brussels and participate in a Bible conference. By this time, he had organized a mission called

Operation Mobilization. Every summer, he mobilized hundreds of young people from the United States, Europe, and Latin America to come to Europe to do mass door-to-door evangelism. They converged on Brussels for a week’s orientation and Bible teaching. Then they fanned out in teams all over the continent to tell people about Christ.

During that conference, George introduced me to a young Englishman named Graham Scott. In the course of our conversation, Graham asked me what I knew about George Verwer and Operation Mobilization. I told him what I knew and how George was now asking God for a ship’s captain. “Can you imagine,” I said, “the spiritual audacity of the man! He is expecting a man who has spent his life climbing the professional ladder, and who has achieved the rank of ship’s captain, to give it all up to come live like this?” I pointed to the hundreds of young people all around us, willing to sleep on the floor and eat peanut butter sandwiches in a self-denying lifestyle.

Graham looked at me, and a smile slowly lit up his face. “I know,” he said, “I’m him!”

George was given his boat, and he called it the Logos and sent it out to be a new venture in global evangelism. Then he asked God for another ship! He got that one too! He called it the Doulos. That was many years ago. The story of Operation Mobilization from then until now has been the story of one miracle after another. Some years ago, the mission stated that its teams had encountered some 250 million people face-to-face (not counting its radio and other outreaches) and that, during this same period, it had reached 150 million Indian nationals with the gospel.

Nobody would accuse George Verwer of having a dead faith! There you are, James! What do you think of that?

### **The Application (2:19-20)**

James continues. First, he cites an instance of faith displayed: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (2:19).

Anyone can say that he believes. James puts it thus: “So! You say that you believe! So what? The demons believe. More! They believe and tremble!” The word for “tremble” means “to bristle,” and then “to shudder” or “shiver.” They believe in God and are terrified. Theirs is no mere intellectual assent to a theological proposition. They are very well aware of the doom that awaits them (Matt. 8:29). Throughout the Gospels, when Jesus confronted demons, they recognized Him at once as the Son of God

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and confessed Him as such. The Lord invariably silenced them; their belief in Him did not change them. Their belief was not the kind of belief that saves. So far as their belief in God was concerned, however, it was very much alive indeed. They believed and were filled with horror. James wanted to see in believers something equally real—a faith that expressed itself in observable good works.

James moves on to the case of faith disputed: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (2:20). The word for “vain” here can be translated “empty.” James has already said that “faith without works is dead” (v. 17). Previously, it was more or less an exclamation; here, however, it is an interrogation, as though to say, “God said it! Did you get it?”

Two main words are used for “will” in the New Testament. The word *thelo* means “to wish” or “to desire.” This word embodies the emotional element, emphasizing desire that leads to resulting action. The other word is *boulomai*, which conveys the idea of deliberate determination. This determination might be in accordance with the original wish or impulse, or it might be quite contrary to it. In any case, *thelo* is a stronger word than *boulomai* because the natural impulse is frequently stronger than the reasoned resolve.

James uses the word *thelo*. In effect, he says, “Faith without works is dead and useless. Has that registered? Are you willing to make a decision based on that fact?” James was not asking his readers to make a decision based on intellectual assent to known truth—to do good because it was the coldly logical thing to do. What he wanted was for them to respond because they had a natural, emotional, impulsive realization that faith without works was dead. In other words, the person who truly believes the gospel will instinctively reach out to others.

## The Appeal (2:21-26)

### *The Proof of the Contention (2:21-25)*

The Case of Abraham the Hebrew (2:21-24)

James now produces two witnesses, one a man, the other a woman; one the Hebrew from Ur of the Chaldees, the other the harlot from Jericho. He begins by viewing the remarkable case of Abraham, the founding father of the Hebrew race.

He begins with a great triumph: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (2:21). Abraham’s life was a series of surrenders. God first called upon him to give up his father and his old way of life in Ur. Then he was called upon to give up the well-watered plains of Jordan. Next he was told to give up Hagar and Ishmael. Finally, he was called upon by God to give up his beloved Isaac. All of the other

surrenders were designed to prepare him for this one. He had come a long way from the day he gave up his father to the day when he gave up his son.

Abraham was a great believer. He is mentioned with high honor in Hebrews 11, the picture gallery of the great Old Testament heroes of faith. He was Paul’s chosen example of justification by faith (Rom. 4:1-3, 9-25). He is the reckoned father of all them that believe (Rom. 4:16).

James takes us straight to Mount Moriah, the high point in Abraham’s pilgrimage. There, Abraham’s faith was put to the test—to the uttermost, even to the point where the poised blade was about to be plunged into the heart of his “only begotten son,” in whom was all of his delight, the one who was his only link to the promised seed.

Next comes a great truth: “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (2:22). Faith and works worked together as partners. We see Abraham’s works in action all through the story. He rose up early in the morning because he had work to do. He saddled his ass, and he summoned two of his men. He clave the wood. He took the fire. Then he called Isaac and stepped out resolutely along the appointed path. At last, he saw the place afar off. He halted his servants. He took the wood from them and gave it to Isaac to bear. Then he moved on, taking Isaac with him. He listened to Isaac and pointed him to God. At last, he arrived at the place. He built an altar, laid the wood in order, and turned to his son. He placed him on the altar, took the knife, and he raised his arm.

And faith wrought with his works! All that he had left was his faith. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:17-19). So faith and works went hand in hand. Without that faith, Abraham never could have done it. Without those works, it would never have been done. The faith without the works would be hypocrisy; the works without the faith would be horrendous.

Then comes *a great trust*: “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness” (2:23a). This is a quotation from Genesis 15:6. James now goes back to that time in the life of Abraham before Isaac, the promised “seed,” was born, and before Ishmael, the carnal seed, was born. The event to which James now refers had occurred

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some fifteen years before the birth of Isaac and some forty-eight years before the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. The setting is full of interest.

Abraham had just won a resounding victory over the kings of the East. He had rescued Lot from slavery, met with the king of Salem (Melchizedek), had learned a new name for God, and refused all dealings with the king of Sodom. And, sad indeed, Lot had gone back to his backsliding. Once the excitement had died down and the chatter of Lot's children no longer rang in his ears, Abraham felt his own childlessness more keenly than ever.

That was when God reappeared to renew and enlarge the Abrahamic covenant. He pointed Abraham to the stars. "Count them!" He said, "So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15). At this point, Abraham "believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). That great statement crystallizes the great biblical truth of imputed righteousness.

Then, instead of waiting for God to make good His promise, Abraham tried to hurry things up and help God out. He listened to Sarah's advice and married Hagar. It was a terrible mistake. Hagar gave him a son, sure enough, but it was Ishmael whom he got, not Isaac. Abraham's faith soared, and then it faltered. After that, God had no more to say to Abraham for thirteen long years. When God finally broke the silence, it was to give Abraham an even greater promise and an even grander covenant.

James takes up the Genesis 15 incident. To him, it was a perfect example of faith going hand in glove with works. There is a sense, of course, in which even the unfortunate affair with Hagar was proof that Abraham believed that God was going to give him a son. God had not actually stated, at that time, that the promised seed would come through Sarah.

Paul writes off the Hagar incident altogether. He leaps ahead to Abraham's complete restoration to unadulterated faith (Rom. 4:16-23) as a result of the more detailed promise of Genesis 17.

Now comes a *great testimony*: James reminds us that Abraham was called "the Friend of God" (2:23b). He is called this in 2 Chronicles 20:7 and in Isaiah 41:8. What is meant by this wonderful title can be gathered from the Lord's word about Moses: "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33:11). The background of this statement was the sin of the golden calf and the total, corporate failure of God's chosen people from Aaron on down. There was still one man, however, with whom God could have communion, a man whom He could still regard as His friend—Moses.

Abraham was God's friend. It is extraordinary, when we come to think about it, that God needs those whom He can call His friends. He has many children, but He does not have many friends. How amazing that in the heart of God is that which causes Him to look for friends! We can picture God in heaven pointing out Abraham to the angels: "Do you see that old man down there, the one with the staff in his hand? That's Abraham. He's my friend." And, because Abraham was God's friend, God was in the habit of dropping in on him from time to time to visit him and to talk to him. On one occasion, He took two angels with Him (Gen. 18:1-2).

Anyone can be God's friend. The Lord Jesus tells us how: "Greater love hath no man than this," He said, "that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13-14).

Finally, there comes a great test: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (2:24). It is when faith is married to works that new life is conceived. James does not advocate works as a means of salvation. He does say that works are a proof of salvation. More than that, he points out that "works" are the practical response of the believing heart to the great mandates of the gospel.

The great truth of justification is presented to us in various ways in the Old Testament. Helen H. Shaw has captured the truth of it in a hymn seldom sung these days:

God's sovereign grace selected me  
To have in heaven a place;  
'Twas the good pleasure of His will  
I'm justified by *grace*.

In due time Christ on Calvary died;  
Flowed that crimson flood  
Which makes the foulest white as snow;  
I'm justified by *blood*.

God raised Him up; this is the pledge,  
Should evil doubtings low'r,  
His resurrection quells each fear;  
I'm justified by *power*.

The Holy Spirit guided me  
To what the Scripture saith;  
I grasped the truth; Christ died for me!  
I'm justified by *faith*.

*Continued on page 9 ...*

Now if you doubt that I am Christ's  
If one suspicion lurks,  
I'll show by deed that I am His,  
I'm justified by *works*.

I praise the Lord, 'tis all of Him,  
The grace, the faith, the blood,  
The resurrection power, the works  
I'm justified by *God*.

***The Case of Rahab the Harlot (2:25)***. “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” At first sight, Rahab seems to be unpromising material for justification on any grounds. The poor soul was a pagan prostitute—without God, without Christ, and without hope—under the sentence of death and with no prospect of escape.

Then the two Hebrew spies came, and Rahab seized with both hands her one chance of salvation. The two men took refuge in her house from the Jericho military police who were scouring the city for them. When the police knocked at her door, she concealed the fact that she had hidden them and brazenly outfaced them.

“Sure, they came here, but they left as soon as it got dark. They’re probably out of town and heading for the hills by now.”

As to the ethic of Rahab’s telling lies, it was a time of war, and a different ethic prevails in wartime than in peacetime. Besides, it was the lesser of two evils. To have told the truth would have meant the betrayal of the two men. Also, it was a daring thing for her to do, for had the police searched her house and found the men, she would have been executed as a traitor. Moreover, her act was an expression of her belief in the power of Israel’s God, both to doom and to save.

Once the police were gone, Rahab sought out the spies. She had put two and two together. The exploits of Israel’s God in shattering the power of Egypt and the miracles that had followed the Israelites as they went from place to place in the wilderness over the past forty years were all well known in the city. The recent destruction of the Canaanite kings, Sihon and Og, had brought fear of Israel’s living God upon the people of Jericho.

Only Rahab, however, did anything about it. She not only believed but also acted. She pleaded that salvation might be extended to her and her family. Then she helped the spies escape over the wall on a scarlet rope. That rope, in turn, became the token of her promised salvation. She was to bind it in the window of her house, which stood

on the city wall. She was to shelter, with all of her family, inside that house—the one house protected by the scarlet line. And she was to hold her tongue! Rahab did all of that.

Jericho fell, but Rahab’s house remained standing. All of those people within were saved from the avenging sword. Thus, she was justified by works, the point that James makes—just as she was justified by faith, the point that Paul makes (Heb. 11:31). More! She married Salmon, one of the two spies, and gave birth to Boaz and thus became a human ancestress of the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. 1:5)! Powerful faith! Powerful works!

So then, James has demonstrated the proof of his contention that faith without works is dead. He concludes with the point of contention.

***The Point of the Contention (2:26)***. James sets before us a dead body and a dead belief: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” A corpse, after all, is only a corpse once; the spirit has departed. All that is left is dead clay. You can cleanse that corpse, clothe it, and compose it in its coffin. You can curse it, command it, or caress it. There is no response at all from the corpse. It has no soul or spirit. We can write Ichabod across it—“the glory is departed.”

James makes the obvious application: faith without works is dead. The Spirit of God is not in that kind of “faith.” That is not “a belief that behaves.” The sooner it is buried, the better.

John Phillips, The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring the Epistle of James: An Expository Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 82-93.

# Daily Bible Reading Plan

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2/14	2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19	2/20
Ex. 37:1-38:31	Ex. 39:1-40:38	Leviticus 1:1-3:17	Leviticus 4:1-5:19	Leviticus 6:1-7:27	Leviticus 7:28-9:6	Lev. 9:7-10:20
Matthew 28:1-20	Mark 1:1-28	Mark 1:29-2:12	Mark 2:13-3:6	Mark 3:7-30	Mark 3:31-4:25	Mark 4:26-5:20
Psalms 34:11-22	Psalms 35:1-16	Psalms 35:17-28	Psalms 36:1-12	Psalms 37:1-11	Psalms 37:12-29	Psalms 37:30-40
Proverbs 9:9-10	Proverbs 9:11-12	Proverbs 9:13-18	Proverbs 10:1-2	Proverbs 10:3-4	Proverbs 10:5	Proverbs 10:6-7

For complete details on First Family’s Daily Bible Reading Plan, visit our website at [www.fcgrow.com/biblereading](http://www.fcgrow.com/biblereading).

## WORDSEARCH—all the words come from this week’s text or lesson.

### The Faith That Dooms You to Hell

James 2:14-26  
February 14, 2016

F	W	X	Z	D	E	L	L	I	F	J	M	G	D	P	I	Q	G	T	Q	W	K	N	H	D
Z	E	S	R	L	Y	W	N	M	J	P	V	P	E	F	R	I	E	N	D	O	F	G	O	D
T	H	E	V	E	I	L	E	B	G	H	W	G	M	Y	J	T	F	U	W	E	P	T	D	P
J	Z	L	W	L	U	D	A	I	L	Y	F	O	O	D	U	S	E	L	E	S	S	L	Z	L
F	C	Q	B	Z	I	W	T	B	X	N	U	Z	N	I	P	X	V	A	R	Q	S	S	N	U
A	U	D	M	G	V	V	W	Z	D	E	D	I	S	T	N	U	O	H	M	H	M	S	Z	B
M	B	Y	U	N	W	C	X	R	N	A	E	W	A	X	X	P	D	L	O	F	A	E	T	K
I	I	G	T	H	T	I	A	F	E	A	I	Y	L	Z	A	Q	E	W	B	Q	H	N	U	E
L	B	B	K	Y	S	X	C	D	E	C	F	F	S	Y	U	P	V	A	G	R	A	S	U	L
E	R	U	T	P	I	R	C	S	O	L	I	R	O	N	G	F	A	D	C	G	R	U	E	B
C	C	C	D	M	N	D	J	F	L	O	T	Z	B	O	O	O	H	E	R	E	B	O	O	M
O	V	R	O	A	P	Z	W	Z	I	T	S	C	E	E	I	O	A	M	R	S	A	E	Y	E
L	X	N	G	B	B	O	E	J	B	H	U	A	L	X	K	L	R	R	A	L	O	T	E	R
R	S	U	G	K	R	B	B	A	A	I	J	A	I	V	Z	I	L	A	T	V	S	H	V	T
W	J	W	U	K	O	I	H	C	W	N	G	S	E	C	S	S	O	W	L	O	X	G	F	U
N	E	T	S	R	S	A	Z	D	Q	G	R	I	V	H	G	H	T	E	A	R	T	I	D	N
Q	P	X	A	B	R	O	T	H	E	R	S	D	E	Q	D	S	C	B	I	A	B	R	S	S

- |                     |               |               |          |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| Brothers            | Faith         | Works         | Clothing |
| Daily Food          | Go In Peace   | Be Warmed     | Filled   |
| Dead                | Show          | Believe       | God      |
| Demons Also Believe | Tremble       | Foolish       | Useless  |
| Abraham             | Justified     | Scripture     | Isaac    |
| Altar               | Righteousness | Friend of God | Rahab    |
| Harlot              |               |               |          |

To see the answers to the puzzle, go to [www.thecompass.life/317](http://www.thecompass.life/317)

# Connecting the Family



## “Am I Really Converted?”

I believe in the deeper Christian life and experience—oh yes! But I believe we are mistaken when we try to add the deeper life to an imperfect salvation, obtained imperfectly by an imperfect concept of the whole thing.

Under the working of the Spirit of God through such men as Finney and Wesley, no one would ever dare to rise in a meeting and say, “I am a Christian” if he had not surrendered his whole being to God and had taken Jesus Christ as his Lord....

Today, we let them say they are saved no matter how imperfect and incomplete the transaction, with the proviso that the deeper Christian life can be tacked on at some time in the future.

Can it be that we really think that we do not owe Jesus Christ our obedience?

We have owed Him obedience ever since the second we cried out to Him for salvation, and if we do not give Him ... obedience, I have reason to wonder if we are really converted!

I am satisfied that when a man believes on Jesus Christ he must believe on the whole Lord Jesus Christ—not making any reservation!

### The Fruit of Obedience

Look at the fruits of obedience as described in the New Testament: The house of the obedient man is built upon a rock (Matthew 7:24).

He shall be loved by the Father and shall have the manifestation of the Father and the Son, who will come unto him and make their abode with him (John 14:21, 23).

He shall abide in the love of Christ (15:10).... He is set free from sin and made a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:17–18). The Holy Spirit is given to him (Acts 5:32).

He is delivered from self-deception and blessed in his deeds

(James 1:22–25). His faith is perfected (2:22).

He is confirmed in his assurance toward God and given confidence in prayer, so that what he asks is given to him (1 John 3:18–22)....

What does all this add up to?... Just that the power of God is at our disposal, waiting for us to call it into action by meeting the conditions which are plainly laid down.

We ... have a power within us to do what we are commanded to do. What is it we lack? The power? No; the will.

—A.W. Tozer

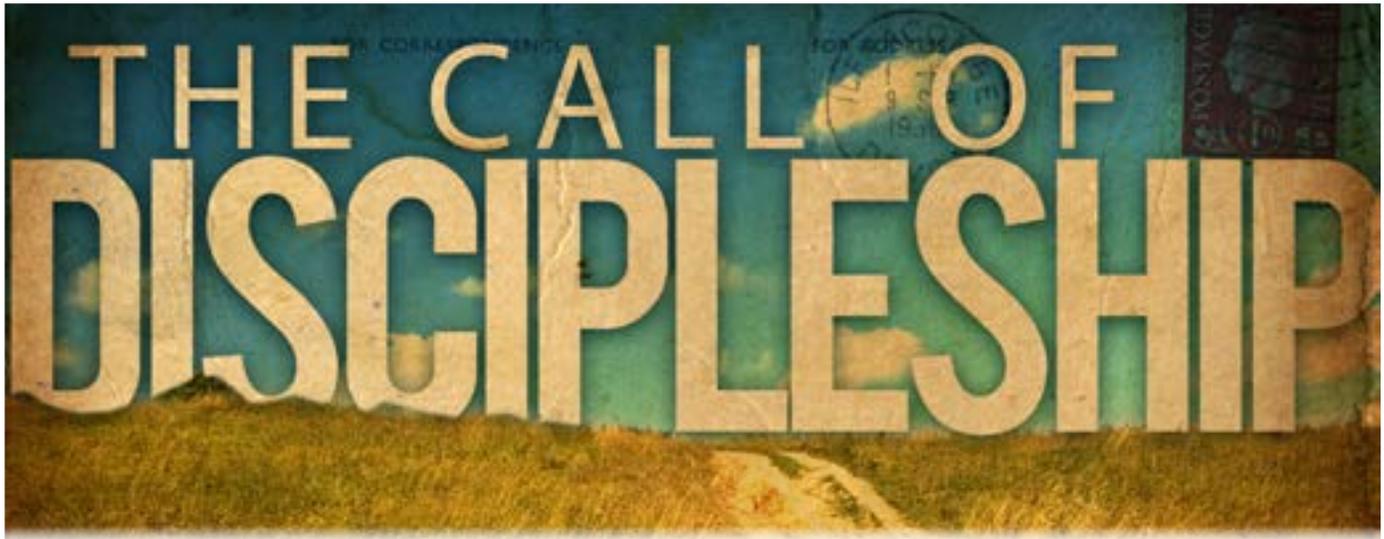
## Memory Time

### Memory Verse

*But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.— James 2:18 (ESV)*

### Key Doctrine

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-25; 8:38-39): *We believe a person has a right relationship with God only by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This makes believers eternally secure in Jesus Christ.*



## 10 Core Beliefs

**The Bible** (*2 Timothy 3:16–17*): We believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

**God the Father** (*Psalms 121:1–2*): We believe God is personally involved in and cares about the daily lives of His children.

**Jesus Christ** (*John 1:12*): We believe in Jesus Christ, His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious death, burial and bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His personal future return in power and glory. We are significant only because of our position as children of God.

**The Holy Spirit** (*2 Corinthians 13:14*): We believe the God of the Bible is the only true God and is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Humanity** (*John 3:16*): We believe all people are born separated from God by sin, but God in his love sent his Son Jesus Christ as their savior.

**Eternity** (*John 14:1–4*): We believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the dead: the believer to life everlasting and the unbeliever to the resurrection of judgment.

**The Church** (*1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Ephesians 4:15–16*): We believe in the church as the body of Christ, which is composed of all believers who have accepted Christ as Savior. We believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

**Stewardship** (*1 Timothy 6:17–19*): We believe that everything we have, including our very life, belongs to God.

**Salvation by Grace** (*Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 3:23–25; 8:38–39*): We believe a person has a right relationship with God only by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This makes believers eternally secure in Jesus Christ.

**Compassion** (*Psalms 82:3–4*): We believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need. ■

## 10 Core Practices

**Worship** (*Psalms 95:1–7*): I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

**Bible Study** (*Hebrews 4:12*): I study the Bible diligently to know God, to become like Christ, and to discern His will for my life.

**Service** (*Colossians 3:17*): I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

**Witness** (*Matthew 28:18–20*): I live to tell the story of Jesus and to make disciples of Him even to the ends of the earth, knowing he is with me always.

**Biblical Community** (*Acts 2:44–47*): I fellowship with other believers in a small group to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

**Prayer** (*Psalms 66:16–20*): I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

**Spiritual Gifts** (*Romans 12:4–6*): I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

**Authenticity** (*John 13:33–34*): I know and understand biblical truths and transfer these truths into everyday life. Who I am

on the inside and outside is a pure reflection of Christ and His Word.

**Simplicity** (*Matthew 6:33*): I seek to live a simple life focused on God and his priorities for my life.

**Possessions** (*Luke 16:11–12*): I seek to maintain an eternal perspective on money and possessions, realizing God has given me all that I have, and that he expects me to manage it wisely for His glory. ■

## 10 Core Virtues

**Gentleness** (*Philippians 4:5*): I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

**Faithfulness** (*Proverbs 3:3–4*): I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

**Hope** (*Hebrews 6:19–20*): I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

**Joy** (*John 15:11*): I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

**Love** (*1 John 4:10–12*): I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

**Peace** (*Philippians 4:6–7*): I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

**Self-Control** (*Titus 2:11–13*): I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

**Humility** (*Philippians 2:3–4*): I choose to esteem others above myself.

**Patience** (*Proverbs 14:29*): I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

**Kindness/Goodness** (*1 Thessalonians 5:15*): I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others. ■