

**Can saving faith be demonstrated apart from works?** (v. 18)

“But someone will say...”

*Either:*

‘You (Someone) have faith  
and I (James) have works’

*Or:*

(Someone) ‘Do you have faith?’  
(James) ‘I even have works’

“Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

James: Faith needs works to be demonstratable; an un-demonstratable faith is not convincing.

**Can faith save if it’s just agreement about certain truths?** (v. 19)

“You believe that God is one; you do well...”

*The Shema:*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 6:4** "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 6:5** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

“Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

James: Faith needs works to be un-demonic; a faith that’s no different than the demons’ is not convincing.

**What sort of faith do you have?**

If someone...

**Are you holding your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without diminishing works?**

My brothers and sisters...

Do you say...

...while not doing...?

How does a true believer hear James’s instruction and exhortation?

(1:25) “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres,” not being a hearer-of-forgetfulness but a doer-of-work, “he will be blessed in his doing.”

Sunday, May 4, 2025  
Danny Capon, *Pastor*

**PROVEN—The Letter of James**  
A Faith That’s Practical, Prudent, and Patient  
No. 12 | Not Diminishing Works, pt. 1  
**James 2:14-19**

**Review**

James writes, in the early years of the church, to help believers understand the dynamics of a proven faith—a faith that’s practical, prudent, and patient in and throughout all of one’s life, which includes:

**Responding to Trials** (1:2-15)

**Responding to the Word** (1:16-27)

Holding faith in Jesus Christ in a way that’s consistent with true faith (2:1-26)

Not showing partiality (2:1-13)

Not diminishing works (2:14-26)

**What is James talking about in the passage before us (2:14-19)?**

How should we understand this passage?

- Chapter one functioned as the introduction to the rest of the letter, which emphasized two significant responsibilities for believers (responding to trials and the word).
- Chapter two begins the body of the letter by (particularly) addressing the way believers should “hold” (or have) faith in Jesus Christ, which then (broadly) is demonstrated in how we treat others:

**Those who are truly believers in Jesus Christ will hold their faith in Him in a way that is consistent with true faith:**

(2:1) “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...”

(2:14) “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”

What is James addressing (combatting)?

Who is James talking about (to)?

A *proven* faith: what is real faith like? how can I know if I have real faith?

“I can *practice* faith my way.” (vv. 1-13)

“I can *define* faith my way.” (vv. 14-26)

-- **2:1-13** By not showing partiality.

-- **2:14-26** By not diminishing works.

- This passage (2:14-26) addresses how believers ought to think about a workless claim to faith (v. 14), provides an illustration to support such thinking (vv. 15-16), and reasons why such a claim is worthless (vv. 17-19, and vv. 20-26):

-- 2:14-26 By not diminishing works

- 2:14 The question: can faith apart from works save?
- 2:15-16 (17) An Illustration of what good is a workless saying
- 2:18-19, 20-26 Some reasons why believers shouldn't diminish works
  - 2:18-19 Diminishing works is not practically convincing
  - 2:20-26 Diminishing works is not biblically consistent

- This passage (2:14-26) is about *not* diminishing works in order to determine if a person's claim to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is proven to be true (vindicated):

(v. 14) "...if someone says he has faith but does not have works..."

(v. 17) "...faith...if it does not have works is dead."

(v. 26) "...faith apart from works is dead."

How can I know my claim to (have) faith is real?

How important are works to my claim to (have) faith?

## Not Diminishing Works, pt. 1

## No. 12

<sup>ESV</sup> **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? <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!

### How should believers hold their faith in Jesus Christ?

#### By *not* diminishing works

What does this mean?

The Question: "What good is it...if someone says he has faith but does not have works?"

**someone says he has faith**

**but he does not have works**

**what good is it**

The Implication: "Can that faith save him?"

**not can *faith* save a person**

**but can *that sort of faith* save a person**

***that sort of faith* is not good for saving a person**

- It is a person's faith (belief) that saves them (Eph 2:8).
- Saving faith does include believing certain truths as real (Heb 11:6).
- Saving faith does express itself in confessing certain truths (Rom 10:9).
- But, a person saying they have faith doesn't necessarily mean it's true.

#### *Two Extremes*

works are so important to my salvation, that my faith is not enough on its own

works have nothing to do with my faith, and saving faith is simply agreeing truths are true

The Illustration: "If a brother or sister..."

**a brother or sister is poorly clothes and lacking in daily food**

**one of you says to them...without giving them...**

**what good is *saying* that**

The Issue: "So also faith by itself..."

**so also *the sort of faith that is by itself***

**if it does not have works**

**is dead**

"A faith without works (by itself) is no more a living faith than a corpse without breath is a living person. Works are not to be viewed as an 'added extra' any more than breath is to be taken as an 'added extra' to a living body. Faith and works (as life and breath) go together and the former cannot exist without the latter." (Ralph P. Martin, p. 85)

"Critical to understanding the argument of the section and integrating it successfully into a broader biblical perspective is the recognition that James is not arguing that works must be *added to* faith. His point, rather, is that genuine biblical faith will inevitably be characterized by works. Trying to add works to a bogus faith is an exercise in futility..." (Moo, p. 120)

Why should believers not diminish works?

- **Because diminishing works is not practically convincing** (vv. 18-19).

What does this mean?