

# At the Pearly Gates of Heaven

James 2:14-20

Wilson Tan

Saving faith is about knowing that we are sinners being saved by grace through faith, by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross (Luke 23:42-43). It is not about the works we can do, but solely about the saving faith through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of James was written for the Christ believing Jews that were dispersed outside of Israel, living among people that did not know Christ. We are much like these Jews, living our lives as Christians among non-believers and people who do not know Christ. If our identity is in Christ, how then should we be living the Christian life? We look at the passage from James to see how to practically live as Christians.

Despite the Christian truth that we can only be saved by grace through faith, James proclaims faith without works to be dead (vv. 14, 17).

## The Truth about Faith and Works (James 2)

### 1. What is faith and works?

Faith requires a person to believe, trust and act despite the discomfort. A faith that saves is believing that one cannot on his or her own effort save themselves. The Christian (saving) faith is not about the accumulation of good deeds that we can use to earn our way to salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Saving faith is simply a belief in our Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him as our Saviour. How do we reconcile the two teachings of James (needing works in saving faith) and Paul (faith alone saves) about saving faith? We look at the

context and audience that James and Paul were addressing.

	<b>Paul</b>	<b>James</b>
<b>Bible</b>	Ephesians 2:8-9	James 2:14-20
<b>Audience</b>	Gentile (non-Jews) believers	Jewish believers
<b>Issue</b>	Bounded by Jewish traditions on keeping the works of the Law	Freedom to do whatever they want
<b>Message</b>	Faith alone saves, not works	Demonstrate Faith through works
<b>Works</b>	Originated from the Law of Moses	Saving faith will produce works

Both Paul and James' teaching on saving faith do not contradict, they converge (Eph. 2:8-10); Paul: we are created for good works; James: faith without good works is dead.

### 2. What is false or dead faith?

Treating Christianity as a form of insurance for a ticket to heaven is not what Christ expects from each of us. False/dead faith is just words without any action or good works. Christ desires for all believers to love Him and in turn, love others (good works). Faith without works is dead. While we cannot see faith, good works show proof of a living faith (v18). A Christian that has living faith bears good

fruit (Matt. 7:17-19). James compares those with dead faith with the demons (v18) who cannot be saved not because they do not know Christ (Matt. 8:29), but because they do no good works. Faith alone saves, but the works that accompany faith shows that we are indeed followers of Christ with living faith.

### **3. How can we live out our Faith?**

#### 3 applications

#1 Consider the Cross – saving faith in Christ will compel us to actively live out the gospel in our daily lives.

#2 Reaching Seekers – pray for the lost and tell those who do not know the gospel!

#3 Building Believers – this is showing care and concern to one another in practical ways and using our gifts to bless others.