



## INTRODUCTION

We're continuing in our series on nine issues people are having with the Bible today. Number four is this:

The Bible contradicts itself at the most basic level. For example; **faith and works** are shown in a contradictory light.

***In one thread of passages we are told: Faith, is the key to salvation.***

### Eph 2

8. For by **grace** you have been **saved** through **faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9. **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.

### Titus 3

5. **not by works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

### Gal 2

16. "knowing that a man is **not justified by the works** of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be **justified by faith** in Christ and **not by the works of the law**; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

***And yet in another, it seems Works are the key:***

### Matt 7

21. "Not everyone who **says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,'** shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven.

### James 2

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

## 1. UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS

Church tradition tells the story of how students of the Apostle Paul visited James. And really, by **second hand understanding**, James got the idea that Paul was teaching, faith to the exclusion of anything else. So chapter two in James, was a response to what James **understood** Paul to be saying. That's not to say that the words of James aren't inspired, every word is still true. But as the story goes, when they did finally meet, they found it was a misunderstanding, and they were actually in perfect agreement.

***The point of the story is this:*** Even from the beginning, those with **partial** understanding had polarized into two camps. There is the "**Let go and let God**" **faith camp**, and the "**God helps those who help themselves**" **works camp**. Now, there is wisdom in both those statements, but you won't find either of them in Scripture.



So, **is Scripture really in conflict here?** Perhaps, it's sitting more squarely in one camp than the other. The thing is; this isn't just an abstract question, **the way you and I understand** faith and works, will dictate **how we live** our Christianity. In churches, there is a significant population that is content to simply **believe**. And the sincerity of their private belief is all they need. Doing anything for, or through God is just extra gravy. In fact, it's kind of- doing God a favor. God owes us.

Then in the "**God helps those who help themselves**" **camp**; there are those who may not say it- but it all comes down to what gets done when they roll up their sleeves. —They forge ahead and hope God is in some kind of agreement with them. In practical terms, it comes down to: ***The church that has the best programs wins! The person who is the busiest, is right with God.***

***Those are two realities playing out in the community of believers right now.*** So what does the Bible really say about faith and works? Like everything else in Scripture; we don't really understand the message until we understand the **concept behind the words**. Let's start with this:

### Eph 2

8. For by **grace** you have been **saved** through **faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
9. **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.

**What is GRACE?** In the original Greek, it is actually translated “gracious love.” (Charis) –*Literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude.*

**What is SAVED?** (sozo) *Besides the basic- deliver or protect; it also means: to heal, preserve, and to make whole.*

**What is FAITH?** (pistis) *It is to be persuaded, moral conviction- about the truthfulness of God; especially reliance upon Christ- constancy- in the system of the Gospel truth itself.*

There are verbs in that definition! Biblical faith is more than mere **passive believe?**

**How about WORKS?** (ergon) –*toil, effort, by implication, an act; a deed, doing labor.*

So if we **reword this passage** using the original concepts, it is saying something like this:

You were made whole, healed, and protected by God- through the influence He had upon your heart; and it is reflected in your life by your gratitude to Him. That happened because you were persuaded. Your convictions on the truthfulness of God became so solid that you began to constantly rely on Christ as He is presented in the truth of the Gospel.

This did not happen, and does not continue because of the deeds you do, or the effort you put out- so don't get proud about it.

**We are heading toward a concept here.** So let's add a few more words to firm it up:

#### Titus 3

5. **not by works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

**Righteousness** (dikaisune; pronounced dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay) *Equity of character or act*

**Regeneration** (paliggenesia; pronounced pal-ing-ghen-es-ee'-ah) *Rebirth- the state or act; spiritual renovation, specifically, by the Messiah*

**So, what we are in our natural selves**, no matter how hard we try; what we do, no matter how hard we try- just doesn't get us right with God. What gets us right is the spiritual renovation by the Messiah. -As He works through the Holy Spirit.

## 2. A WORKING DEFINITION OF REAL FAITH

**Put all of this together and you get God's concept of faith.** Faith is far more than holding some little belief. It is when the **inside... the mind and thinking is completely renovated in its convictions**. It is when inside... there is a **birth of something that was not alive there before**. It is a spiritual component. It is a **Christ influence**. It is a change in our **state of being**.

Here's the picture- **God's idea of FAITH is transformational, it is revolutionary, it is regenerating, it wells up from inside**. It goes far beyond mere belief.



If a person **understands faith** like that, then they'll understand the passion behind the words of James:

#### James 2

14. What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says **he has faith** but does **not have works**? Can faith save him?
15. If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
16. and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?
17. Thus also **faith** by itself, if it does **not have works**, is **dead**.

Let me add one more original word-

**Death** (nekros)- *a corpse*

**We could reword the rationale of James like this:**

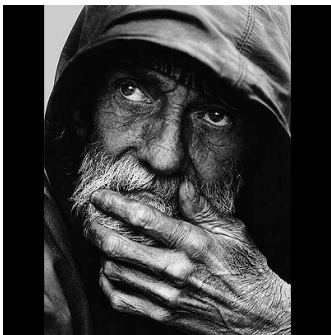
“So, you have some kind of faith. But your faith is a corpse. It’s cold and dead. It’s not moving and can’t be moved. - Does that make sense? Can a person be a corpse inside and have a constant relationship with a living God?”



Real faith is like this: **Imagine you have a seed**. The picture on the seed packet shows the most beautiful flower. Your hope and belief is this: The seed holds all the living genetic information to sprout, blossom, and ultimately, look just like the picture on the packet.

So with great expectations and a little water, you plant that little seed into the soil. And you wait... and you wait... and **nothing happens**.

Finally you dig up that seed and find that it’s turned into a pitted, shriveled little husk. It shows absolutely no signs of sprouting. You have a shell, but it’s dead. Here’s a rather philosophical question: At that point, is it really a seed at all? **...Faith is a seed; it is defined by its living potential for outward growth.**



### 3. RESOLVING GENUINE FAITH WITH WORKS

Faith by Biblical definition is this: It is the **renovation of the Holy Spirit**. So what kind of things blossom from that renovation?

#### **Galatians 5**

- 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**
- 23. gentleness, self-control.**

All of these conditions have one trait in common- **if they are real; they will start on the inside and reflect on the outside**. Real love shows itself in selfless actions. Real joy bubbles out.

Patience, kindness, gentleness... they can’t exist without some form of outward expression. If a person **claims to be filled with kindness** but takes great pleasure in robbing senior citizens and terrorizing little children- we’d doubt them by their actions. If a masseuse claimed to be gentle, but they were known to break bones with every massage; we’d really doubt their gentleness. **–The outer action prove or disprove the inner quality.**

On the other hand, **there are also imitations**. If our good acts are simply out of **duty** or **self-righteousness**- they are empty shells.

Here’s the thing: **We can do good acts without any Godly faith at all**. And there can be good results. But **God is eternal and only what genuinely comes from God has an eternal quality about it**. The best humanitarian acts- in and by themselves can never compete with the **actions of real faith**.

**Give a poor man a pair of shoes** and you’ve done a good act. But it is a temporary act; those shoes will eventually wear out. Give a man a pair of shoes in the name of Christ in such a way that leads to Christ; and it is an eternal act. The shoes will still wear out, but the Grace of Christ will never wear out.

**Faith cannot be over works**; or works over faith, **because they are indivisible**. Faith produces outer fruit and outer fruit is the proof of the faith. It’s like asking, **what’s the real orange**; the pulp and taste on the inside, or the skin and smell on the outside? They are simply **parts of the same whole**.



### THE CHALLENGE

So, even though this issue comes from misunderstanding, it does lead us to rich concepts. But in turn; those concepts lead us to some **disturbing questions**:

**Grace**- the influence of Christ on the heart- saves. **Saved** is to be healed, delivered, and protected by God. And all of that happens **by faith**. And **faith** is a condition on the inside and consequent action on the outside. So...

- **Where does that place the average church where only 5 to 10% are continually showing actions of faith?**
- **What's really happening in, and to, the other 90%?**
- **Those are the facts, you can come to your own conclusion (because you will anyway).**

#### THE INVITATION

Let's go through this in God's order of priorities:

**If there are any in here**- maybe you've gone to church all your life, but you've never handed over your heart, mind, soul, and body to the Spirit of God for that "renovation" God talks about- but you'd like to- raise a hand, make that first outer act; and we'll pray for you right now.

**For everyone else in here**- today, the **prayer alter has a human name and a face**. Your inner faith needs an outlet- and real spiritual outlet involves other people, especially others who are in God's family- that's a basic mindset of the New Testament... so...

Kelly Collins- **Ministry with kids**, teaching, PBS, Christian ed in general, connection groups in the home... if your outer faith leans to those ministries, she's the person to see.

Mike Collins- Teen and **youth ministry**

Steve Anderson- **Missions**; support of our missionaries, prayer and awareness of our Global call- he's your "prayer alter."  
-Meetings every second Tuesday at 5:30pm.

Deacons- **Acts of compassion, and hospitality**, ushering, greeting, visiting shut-ins; - these men *don't* do it all, they are the coordinators. Ask where you can help.

Deaconesses- **Hospitality**, integral in almost every outreach function, women's fellowship. Ask...

**Musicians, drama**, anything that edifies worship, a call of some other ministry God has placed on your heart- see me, we'll talk... and we'll pray.

**If as a church we really understand faith and works- no one will be idle**. And no action we carry out in Christ will be futile.

Our worship service is about to end, but if we are really a fellowship of faith; the service that is worship is about to begin.

