

## 4. True Christian Faith: Is Known by its Works

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have your Bibles, if you keep them open at page 1012, that would be helpful. The name of William Wilberforce is well known to many Christians.

Wilberforce lived in the 18th and the 19th centuries. He was an evangelical believer and a politician. Best remembered, of course, for campaigning over decades to abolish slavery.

But Wilberforce and his friends in what was described as the Clapham sect were continually lobbying about all sorts of matters, continually seeking to do good to other people.

They abolished slavery, of course, but they also established soup kitchens, lending libraries, schools for the poor, deaf and blind. They sponsored smallpox vaccinations.

They campaigned for better working conditions. They went into prisons to release people who were in debt. They funded hospitals. They funded the Foreign Bible Society.

[ 1 : 04 ] They paid for missionaries to go throughout the world. And remarkably, Wilberforce helped set up the RSPCA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

So his life was marked by continual good works done for the benefit of others. And he wrote a few books. But one book, which was an immediate bestseller, and which, until last week, when I bought the last copy, was in sale in the book room, is a Christian book.

It's called A Practical View of Christianity. Its full title is A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Middle and Higher Classes in this Country, contrasted with real Christianity, or A Practical View, for short.

And Wilberforce wrote this book because when he surveyed the churches, he was concerned by what he saw. He writes this, It seems in our day to be the commonly received opinion that, provided a man admit in general terms the truth of Christianity, though he know not or consider not much concerning the particulars of the system, and if he be not habitually guilty of any of the grosser vices against his fellow creatures, we have no great reason to question the validity of his claims to the name and consequent privileges of a Christian.

The title implies no more than a sort of formal and general assent to Christianity. As he looked at the churches, he saw people who considered themselves Christians because they had some kind of understanding, some kind of knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible.

[ 2 : 42 ] People who, perhaps their faith didn't make very much difference to their lives, but they considered themselves Christians anyway. And Wilberforce, of course, was outraged by this.

He knew that Christianity was a doctrinal faith, but he knew that it called for wholehearted obedience and love and good works, such as he exemplified himself. And so he wrote this book to call people back to the doctrines of the faith, and then, of course, on to love and good works.

Well, was Wilberforce right? Is there more to being a Christian than simply having some loose knowledge of some basic doctrines? And if somebody says they're a Christian, how can we be sure of that?

How can we test that claim? These are the questions James was facing in chapter 2. Verse 14 tells us, It seems there were some people in the church who said, Well, of course we're believers.

We have faith. We believe in Jesus. We believe in God. But the particular faith they have was not accompanied by good works, and in fact did not seem to make any difference whatsoever to their daily lives.

[ 4 : 01 ] The question James is asking is, Is that real faith? Is that genuine, saving, justifying faith? Or is it dead? And throughout his letter, as we have seen in our three studies, James' concern is that his readers have genuine faith.

So in chapter 1, he says to them, Consider it pure joy when you face trials, because it is when you face difficulties, that you know whether your faith is real, whether you walk away from Christ, or

whether you persevere with him in times of trial, whether you continue to trust in God when things are difficult.

In chapter 2, he tells us that genuine faith hears and obeys the word of God. It takes time to prioritize studying, listening to, reading the Bible, and then of course putting it into practice. Genuine faith hears and obeys the word of God. And then in chapter 3, we're told that genuine faith is characterized by obedience to God's commands. In particular, the royal law, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And today we ask the question of the relationship between a real faith and works. What is the difference between a dead faith and a saving faith?

[ 5 : 25 ] James gives us two divisions. Verses 14 to 19, I want to study. Under the heading of, Dead faith consists only of words.

And verse 20 down to verse 26, Saving faith is accompanied by works. We thought this morning as our brother Bob preached about things that begin well, and then go off the boil.

Things that start well, and then lose the plot. And it seems from reading James that the early church was in that situation. You'll recall in Acts chapter 2, the church in Jerusalem, those very early days. And at that time we read that the people devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship. They were concerned with the doctrines of the faith.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common, selling their belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as they had need. And that faith was a very practical faith, where the brothers and sisters cared for each other and sought to meet their needs.

[ 6 : 34 ] Well, by the time we get to James chapter 2, things have changed. Verse 15, If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warm and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

And it seems there were some people who were coming to church meetings, who were professing faith, and they saw their brothers and sisters in need, and they did precisely nothing about it.

And James says, What does that tell you about your faith? We can imagine it. Suppose after the service, you're sitting next to someone, you take them for a coffee, and you say, Hello, where are you from?

And they say, Well, I'm actually from Bath Lane. And you say, I didn't realise there were any houses in Bath Lane. And they say, Well, I actually sleep in the street. And you say, Oh, how marvellous. And what do you do every day?

And they say, Well, actually I beg. And you say, Wonderful, wonderful. And you eat? Just whatever I can find in the bins. And what about clothes? Well, I only have one said.

[ 7 : 42 ] Oh well. Lovely speaking to you. Have a nice week. See you later. Something wrong, isn't there, with that attitude. And yet that is precisely what was happening in James' church.

Go in peace. Be warm and filled. And James says, What good is it? Verse 16. It's not an awful lot of good, is it, for the person who's hungry and homeless and in need of clothes.

They leave the church with their belly still rumbling, and their arms still shivering. But it's not very good, verse 14, for the person claiming that faith. What good is it, brothers, if someone says he have faith but does not have works?

Can that faith save him? It is of no benefit to the individual in need, and it is of no benefit to the person professing faith. But then in verse 18, we're introduced to this hypothetical opponent. But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. You know, come on, James, you're being a bit strict here. It's a hard thing being a Christian. And we all have different strengths, don't we?

[ 8 : 49 ] Some people are very good at believing and understanding doctrine, but others are better at practical help, preaching a social gospel, so to speak. And, you know, we're a big body, we're different members of the one body.

Some are believing Christians, some are doing Christians. And James says, You can no more separate faith and good works than you can separate the heat and light from a candle.

The Bible recognizes no faith that does not lead to obedience, nor does it recognize any obedience that does not spring from faith. The two are opposite sides of the same coin, wrote A.W. Tozer.

And James says that the only way to know if somebody is a genuine believer is by their works. Not by their words, but by their works.

And he gives us this example in verse 19. He says, You believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. What he's saying is this.

[ 9 : 49 ] You can hold all the right doctrines, but they might not necessarily do you any good. The demons, of course, have information about God and knowledge of God that none of us could ever have.

We understand from the Bible they once dwelt in his presence and they rebelled and they were cast down to earth. They know an awful lot about God doesn't do them any good. You remember what happened when Jesus went into the synagogue in Mark chapter 2.

In the beginning of Mark's gospel people were asking the question, Well, who is this man with all this power and all this authority who is he? Nobody had a clue. The disciples didn't know. The Pharisees didn't know.

And Jesus goes into a synagogue and there is a man possessed by an unclean spirit. And what does he say? I know who you are. You are the Holy One of God.

The demon knew precisely who Jesus was. But it didn't do him any good. What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

[ 10 : 55 ] Mere doctrine about God, mere knowledge about who Jesus Christ is, is of no benefit by itself. The demons had all the doctrine in the world and yet they feared God because they were rebelling against him and they were not reconciled to him.

And really the problem these people had was they didn't understand what faith was. There's a lot of funny definitions of faith going around. You have this sort of atheist lobby that say things like faith is belief in the absence of evidence.

Faith is believing something you know to be untrue. These kind of humorous descriptions. But there's a more serious error and that is that faith is simply intellectual assent to a series of propositions.

It's simply agreeing with an idea or an opinion. But in the Bible faith is more than that. And John Frame who writes a very helpful systematic theology book called Salvation Belongs to the Lord says there are three parts to faith.

Firstly there is knowledge. You know something. And then secondly there is belief. You believe the thing that you have been told. But thirdly and crucially there is trust.

[ 12 : 07 ] You put your confidence in what you have been told or the person about which you have been told. There is a great difference between just knowing something and trusting in something.

So to give an example last year I found myself with Terry McCutcheon in Niagara Falls. Not in it exactly but just on a boat underneath it. It did feel like we were in it.

It was great clouds of mist rolling over us. I learned recently that in the 19th century there was a man called Charles Blondin who would stretch a tightrope across Niagara Falls and he would walk across it.

He did this in total 17 times. And in fact he died of old age remarkably. That was his job. And on one occasion in 1860 the Prince of Wales was visiting America and he saw Charles Blondin do this. And he said what a remarkable thing to do. And Charles Blondin then invited him onto his back and said he would walk back across the falls carrying the Prince of Wales. What did he say?

[ 13 : 10 ] No way. Not going near you. Had you asked the Prince of Wales do you know and believe that Charles Blondin is able to walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope he would have said of course I've seen it with my own eyes.

But if you said to the Prince of Wales are you willing to trust yourself to him? He would have said no. I'm not willing to do that. And so in the Bible faith is trust in a person.

When I get on a plane I put my faith at the pilot knows how to take off and land. When I go to the hospital if I go to the hospital I would have faith that the surgeon knows what he's doing inside my abdominal cavity.

Faith in the Bible is not simply knowledge that there is one God. Knowledge that there is a person called Jesus Christ. But it is an obedient trust in him. It is a commitment to him as my saviour. The one who saves from sin and death. And a commitment to obey him as my Lord. Not simply knowing certain things about him.

[ 14 : 16 ] And there have been times where the church has forgotten that. James wasn't the last person to meet this. It's likely Wilberforce met it in his own life. In the 18th century there was a group, a Scottish group I'm sorry to say, called the Sandemanians.

And the leader, a chap called Glaz and his son-in-law, Sandeman, put around this theory that all you needed to do to get right with God was to believe in the doctrines of Christianity.

So for example, Robert Sandeman said everyone who is persuaded that the event, that is Christ's death upon the cross, actually happened is justified. Simple knowledge of doctrinal truth they felt was enough to bring somebody into a right relationship with God.

And James says that is absolutely not the case. Faith, apart from works, is useless. Faith that consists only of words is dead.

Well, what does that mean? We're not in the 18th century, but of course there's always a danger, isn't there, that we fall back upon our doctrine as the cause of our salvation.

[15:31] There are many churches today which have abandoned doctrine altogether, but for churches which have a high regard for doctrines such as ours. There is always the danger that we come to love the doctrine more than we love Christ.

But we come to put our confidence in our doctrine and the soundness of our doctrine rather than in Christ. It would be possible, wouldn't it, to go to bed at night with your Bible, your Westminster Confession, your Berkov systematic theology, your piles of books by John Piper by your bedside table, and think that because you are very well acquainted with the doctrines of Reformed Christianity, they're always well with you.

And James says you must be very careful friends, that you do not have a faith which is simply an easy believism, simply an intellectual assent to certain truths about Christianity.

But it raises the question, doesn't it? Therefore, how is someone defined as a Christian? Is it just that they grew up in a Christian home? Is it perhaps if they're from overseas that they lived in a Christian community against the backdrop of a much larger faith group?

Is it because they went to Sunday school? Is it because they enjoy reading Christian books? What is it that defines someone as a Christian? And James goes on to say the reason somebody, the way in which you can tell somebody is a Christian, is whether their faith is demonstrated by their works.

[17:06] Verse 20, do you want to be, verse 21 sorry, it was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar.

22, you see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works. So James moves on to our second point this evening, that saving faith is always accompanied by works.

And he gives us two examples. The first is that of Abraham and the second is that of Rahab the prostitute. In many respects they're similar, but in some respects they're different.

Abraham was the revered father of faith, the father of the Jewish race. Rahab was a Gentile prostitute. But God dealt with them in both the same way.

He dealt with them on the basis of their faith. We're told in verse 23, James takes us back to the story of Abraham.

[18:08] And we're told that Abraham believed God, he had faith in God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. You'll remember the story of Abraham which really begins in Genesis chapter 12.

And in that chapter God makes to him a promise. He says to him, leave your country and your father's house and so on, and go to the land I will show you. I will bless you, I will make you great, I will give you descendants, I will give you a land, and ultimately the whole world will be blessed through you.

And Abraham went. And God had promised him a son. He promised him descendants from his own body. But we notice in Genesis chapter 12 and onwards that Abraham was very old.

He was 75 when God first spoke to him. His wife, Sarah, was barren. So God made a promise, and a promise which seemed very far-fetched to the ears of the natural man.

As time passed, of course, no son appeared, and God repeated his promise to Abraham. He made a covenant with him, in Genesis chapter 15, and we're told that Abraham believed God.

[19:17] He put his faith in the promises of God, and God considered him righteous because he had believed his word to him. The years continued to pass, and it was in fact 24 years, 25 excuse me, before Isaac was born.

So we discover sometimes that God's promises seem far beyond our understanding. And sometimes they take a very long time to be fulfilled, because the Lord keeps his own diary.

25 years later, the son is born, everyone is very happy, of course, great celebrations, and God is praised for his faithfulness. But that's not the end of the story.

And a few years later, God speaks to Abraham again, and he says, take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him as a sacrifice to me.

Genesis chapter 22. Abraham cannot understand what God has asked him to do. Sometimes the promises of God and the purposes of God are mysterious to us.

[ 20 : 24 ] And yet he continued to have faith, and the next morning he gets up early and obeys, taking Isaac up the mountain. And once he's prepared the burnt offering and his Isaac on the altar, he lifts his hand, containing the knife, and as he's about to strike his son, he hears a voice.

And it is a voice of an angel, which says to him, do not kill the boy. Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Now I know that you fear God. For 25 years he had had faith in God, he trusted his promises, even when he could not understand what God was doing, and yet it was when he offered his son as a sacrifice, the angel said, now I know, now I see the evidence of your faith in action.

And it's the same, of course, in the New Testament. We've been studying with Edward the upper room discourse, John 14 to 16. And as Jesus is explaining to his disciples what he requires of them after he has ascended, he makes it very plain that their faith must be visible.

They must demonstrate their faith by their works. So having gathered them around him in John chapter 13, he says, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

[ 21 : 57 ] Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

What is the evidence of someone being a Christian? It is that they love other Christians. They feed the hungry brother. They clothe the hungry brother.

They do not simply send them away saying, go in peace. They show real material concern for the well-being of others. He goes on to say in John chapter 15, by this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

How do you prove you are a disciple of Christ? You bear spiritual fruit. You abide in his love and bring forth fruit to the Father's glory.

How does the world know you are a Christian? Because of your love for other believers. Now I know our works must corroborate our profession of faith.

[ 23 : 05 ] It is very helpful, isn't it, to understand that. There is so much said these days against the Christian faith.

People always dig up the old chestnut of the crusades, don't they? And they say, oh, terrible things Christendom did. Or quite often said, well, look at old Stalin, he was a priest.

Or Hitler, never out of a church Hitler, always talking about providence and his faith in God. And what James is saying is just because somebody uses Christian language, it does not mean they are a believer.

What does their life tell you about the faith they supposedly profess? So what does that mean for us?

What does it mean? Do our works corroborate our faith? Let's look, for example, at James' criteria. His definition of true religion was that people tame the tongue.

[ 24 : 13 ] That is, their conversation be very different from those around them in the world. He was concerned that people would not be defiled. They would be holy in the midst of a world which is by nature ungodly.

He wanted people to show genuine concern for orphans and widows. To show care for others who needed help and who needed love. Do our works, by James' standard, match up to his definition of true faith?

It's quite easy to be a Christian on Sunday evening between half past six and eight. It's quite easy for our works to match our faith. How easy is it for you to be a Christian on Monday morning when you return to work?

How easy is it for you to be a Christian on Tuesday evening having a coffee or a meal with your colleagues? How easy is it for you to be a Christian on Friday nights socialising with friends?

How easy is it for you to be a Christian watching the television or going to the cinema or surfing the internet? How easy is it for you to be a Christian on payday when all that money drops into your bank account?

[ 25 : 26 ] What difference does it make to you to be a Christian? I often ask that to myself. I often say, what would I do differently if I wasn't a believer? Positively, of course, we could say, how are

we using our money and our time and our talents for the benefit of others in a way which we would not be using them were we not believers?

But negatively, of course, we can say, well, what am I not doing that I would be doing if I wasn't a Christian? What am I saying no to? How am I practising and exercising self-control in a pagan world?

What difference does your faith make to your life? What do your works, in your office, in your home, in your leisure time, what do they say about the faith that you profess to have on a Sunday evening?

Charles Spurgeon said, I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they do shine. James is, as ever, to the point.

If your faith is simply a verbal profession, some acquaintance with the truth of Christianity, then your faith is dead. It cannot save. It cannot justify.

[ 26 : 48 ] If your faith makes a very real difference to your life, if it is accompanied by good works, then it is, by James' definition, a saving faith. Is your faith dead?

Or is it a saving faith? Well, you'll notice if we've read this passage, that we come across a speed bump.

Verse 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.

Verse 24. You see that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone. Now, as we've been reading that, perhaps you've been thinking, well, hang on you, this is the 450th year of the Scottish Reformation, and you've just stood up, and you've just read to us that we are not justified by faith alone.

Is there a problem here? And, in the course of history, people have read these words, and it's caused them some trouble. Some theologians have read this, and thought this is a fundamental problem in our understanding of New Testament theology.

[ 28 : 13 ] Martin Luther, famously, complained about the epistle of James for that reason. So, I want to spend just a few minutes in closing, just taking a step back from this passage, and asking the question, how do we reconcile this passage with our reform doctrine of justification by faith alone?

Is it contradictory? Or, is it irreconcilable?

Or, is James simply talking about a different matter which Paul was talking about? And it's a very valid question to ask. So, as I mentioned, we now celebrate the 450th year of the Reformation. And really, one of the key issues, if not the key issue of that period in history, was the question of justification. How does a sinner get right with a holy God?

John Calvin said the doctrine of justification is the hinge upon which the whole of religion turns.

Now, what do we mean by justification? Well, the Westminster Confession puts it this way.

[ 29 : 24 ] Justification, we're told, is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

John Frame puts it a bit more succinctly. Justification is God's legal declaration that our sins are forgiven, and that Christ's righteousness is ours. God declares the believer righteous.

He does not make him righteous. That is, in fact, sanctification. And the Reformers were at pains to say that justification was entirely through Christ alone, by grace alone, and to be received by faith alone.

It was God's work. That's why we sing the song, In Christ alone, my hope is found. Grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.

And the Reformers would often turn to the letter to the Romans, they'd turn to the letter to the Galatians, which deal exhaustively with the subject. And in his discussion of the question of justification, Paul would often refer to Abraham, the father of faith, to make his point.

[ 30 : 37 ] So, for example, in Romans chapter 4, he says, What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

For what does the scripture say? Abraham believes God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Now, to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due.

And the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. What Paul is saying is not that Abraham was justified by works, but he was justified by faith in God's promises.

And we see, therefore, why there is this apparent tension. James has just said Abraham was not justified by faith alone. But the reformers were clear about the role of works.

They said, well, they don't contribute to salvation, but a justified man or woman will, of course, perform good works. Paul, for example, writing to the Ephesians, says this, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

[ 31 : 56 ] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We are not justified because of good works, but having been justified, we continue to perform good works.

So yesterday when I bought Helen some flowers, I didn't buy her flowers in order to persuade her to commit to me. We are already married. I bought her flowers because I wanted to please her.

So our good works do not in some way persuade God to commit to us, but we do them because having been united to Christ by faith, we want to serve and please him.

This, incidentally, is one of the major differences between the Reformed churches and the Roman Catholic churches, which teach that good works contribute in some way to justification.

So that is, in very brief summary, the Reformed position. But then we come to James, and James uses the same language. He talks of faith, he talks of works, he talks of justification.

[ 33 : 05 ] And in fact, he appeals to the same person, doesn't he? He appeals to Abraham. And it seems confusing. What are we to make of it? Well, firstly, we have to notice a different context.

Paul, writing to Rome and Galatia, is asking the question, how can a sinner be declared righteous in the sight of God? How can somebody be brought into a relationship with God?

James, on the other hand, is saying if somebody is professing to be a Christian, how can we know if their faith is true? So they are writing into a very different context.

And the context, therefore, controls the meaning of the words. The three words, faith, justification, and works, seem to have a different nuance in the various passages.

So I quote from Robert Raymond's very helpful systematic theology. I didn't buy the last one.

There's still two on the shelves. But I recommend that to you for a really good, clear, thorough explanation of justification by faith.

[ 34 : 12 ] The words, faith, works, and justification have a different meaning, as dictated by the context. Sir Robert Raymond writes, whereas Paul intends by justified the actual act on God's part whereby he pardons and imputes righteousness to the ungodly, James intends by justified the verdict God declares when the previously justified man has demonstrated his actual righteous state by obedience and good works.

Paul uses justified to mean the declaration of righteousness in a sinner, whereas James uses it to declare God's opinion of the justified man in response to his good works.

He continues, whereas Paul intends by faith, trustful response to the merits of Christ alone for pardon and righteousness, James is addressing those whose faith was tending towards a cold, orthodox intellectualism that was devoid of love for the brethren.

Again, the word faith is used differently, with a different meaning. But we mustn't think, of course, that Paul had no place for works. We're told in Romans, of course, of the obedience of faith.

And in Galatians, that Paul writes about, faith working through love. The apostle Paul's understanding of faith was a very real, practical, obedient commitment to Christ, and not the arid intellectualism of these men in James.

[ 35 : 47 ] Finally, whereas Paul, when he repudiates works, is referring to the works of the law, that is, any and every kind, every work of whatever kind done for the sake of acquiring merit.

James intends by works acts of kindness toward those in need performed as the fruit and evidence of the actual justified state and a true and a vital faith.

Paul's question is how a sinner can be declared righteous in the sight of a holy God. James's question is how can somebody professing to be a Christian provide evidence of that justification in the sight of men.

Paul takes us to Genesis 15, where Abraham puts his trust in the promises of God and is declared righteous. James takes us both to there, but also to Genesis 22, where the evidence of Abraham's

faith is displayed in the offering of his son.

John Calvin says, we are saved by faith alone, but the faith which saves is never alone. So, what about us?

[ 37 : 04 ] What is the nature of our faith? Is it simply words? Or is it faith, genuine wholehearted commitment to Christ, and a corresponding life of love and good deeds?

What is our faith? Is it a faith which trusts God when we face trials and temptations of many kinds, clinging to those very same promises, trusting in his goodness, even though we cannot always understand what he is doing?

Or is it a faith which gives up when things are difficult? What is our faith? Is it a faith which likes the sound of the Bible being read, perhaps likes the sound of songs being sung?

Or is it a faith which hears and obeys the word of God in every nook and cranny of our lives? Is it a faith which shows true religion in our holiness, in our conversation, in our actions?

Is it a faith which loves its neighbour as itself? A faith which shows practical concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ, at home and abroad?

[ 38 : 16 ] Is it a faith which is nothing more than a mere profession of certain doctrines? Or is it a genuine, wholehearted, trusting, loving commitment to the living Christ as Lord and Saviour?

And a life lived in obedience to him and his commands? A life characterised like that of Wilberforce? By love and good deeds? What kind of faith do you have?

A dead faith? A cultural faith? A nominal faith? Or a saving faith? I pray it might be the latter.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much for this opportunity to come to your word.

We thank you that it is a two-edged sword and that you are so very open and honest with us. We ask, Lord, that as we go out into the world we might live lives which are pleasing to you, that our faith might be known by our works, that we might be salt and light, shining before men.

[ 39 : 30 ] We ask, Lord, if there are any here who do not know you in a saving way, who do not have real, genuine faith, Lord, that you will open their eyes and their hearts to understand more of yourself and to put all their trust and all their faith in your Son as the one who alone can justify and save them.

So we ask for your help, Lord, as we seek to meditate and understand the truths contained in this letter. Help us, Lord, to be those who hear your words but who put it into practice each and every day of our lives.

And so we thank you for these short studies in James' letter and ask your blessing upon them in Christ's name. Amen.