

James 2 Works

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The wanted man is Jesse *James* = **JAMES**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of bullet holes in his hat = **CHAPTER 2**
3. The THEME:
Good citizenship takes *work* = **WORKS**

JAMES 2: BACKGROUND

James, the most “practical” book of the New Testament, has very little emphasis on doctrine. The letter is addressed to Jewish converts, “new” Christians (James 1: 2-8), who apparently had problems.

One problem was the false teaching that faith could be genuine without producing evidence in changed lives. James argues that a *faith* that has no works is not faith at all—it is a dead faith.

Any apparent opposition between Paul (Romans 3:28) and James (2:20-26) clearly disappears after close examination. Both agree. They simply approach the subject from different vantage points.

Paul: Works done “under the law” to try to gain favor with God are useless and merit nothing in God’s eyes. Works are not needed, or able, to assist in our salvation. Salvation is God’s free gift through his Son, Jesus Christ.

James: A sharp contrast exists between faith and false profession. Works that flow from the Christian’s life give evidence of god’s love being present. These works, the result of salvation, verify that conversion has occurred. If they are not present, it reveals that professed faith is dead and not valid.

Paul refutes those who taught that works were a means of assisting toward salvation.

James refutes those who taught that faith could exist without the evidence of works.

If Christ is truly present the works will flow from his love. If the works are not present, it proves the absence of faith (regardless of the profession).

James supports what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

KEY VERSES OF JAMES 2

Verse 8

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself”, you are doing right.

The motivation of all good works must be the love of God.

Verse 10

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

No one can claim perfection in God’s eyes. One slip, one offense makes us imperfect in God’s eyes. We need a Savior. The only way to receive perfection is through the forgiveness Christ offers.

Verse 14

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?.

No! Because it is not a true and genuine faith.

Verse 17

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Yes. Faith and works go together in the same way diapers and babies do together.

Diapers have nothing to do with “making” the baby, but once you have the baby, you had better have diapers. You are in trouble if you don’t!

Works have nothing to do with “Making” faith. But once you have faith, you had better have works. You are in trouble if you don’t!

Verse 18

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

No one can meet the cutting challenge to prove faith without works. James, on the other hand, states he can prove his faith by his works.

Verse 19

You believe that there is one god. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

Anyone can profess faith. A mental, historical assent to facts is not yet redeeming faith. Even Satan *knows* God. To “believe” in Jesus merely as we believe in Napoleon or Julius Caesar is not Spirit-given faith.

Verse 24

You see that a person is justified by what he does and not faith alone.

If taken alone this verse can be misinterpreted easily. If you are confused, prayerfully read the first pages of his booklet again (See also Key Chapter booklet *Romans 8: Salvation.*)

Verse 26

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead..

An excellent summary of the chapter.

THOUGHTS ON INTERCESSION

Day 1

Be cautious! It is easy to judge others wrongly (James 4: 11-12). We may not see their works. Perhaps they are weak or immature in their faith. We might expect more from them. However, they may be a bruised reed (Matthew 12:20). If they have any faith at all, regardless how “smoldering”, they have salvation. Do not offend one of these “little ones” (Matthew 18:6). Instead, gently encourage them toward maturity and growth (Galatians 6:1).

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Love is the fuel that ignites good works (See Romans 13:10).

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There should be a sense of urgency to our lives. We are to “et with it” since our time is short. (See Romans 13: 12-14; 2 Peter 3: 10-11).

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It is foolish to praise one person’s work over another’s. Rather, work together to glorify God (1 Corinthians 3:6-9, 4:5).

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Attitude is important. (See Matthew 21: 28-31).

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Luke 12:48: From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

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If you have many talents, much is expected.

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My mother admonished, “Treat people the same. You are not better or worse than anyone else. In God’s eyes we are all the same.” A theologian would have trouble leaving that statement stand without qualification. Yet properly understood, this is exactly what James is saying (James 2: 1-9).

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If you intend to get to heaven by keeping God’s law, you must keep it *perfectly*. No exceptions. Coming close doesn’t count! Since perfection is impossible, you cannot be saved by means of good works. Picture five people attempting to jump across a deep chasm. A leap of 30 feet is required to get across to the other side. The first person jumps 8 feet. The next two jump 10 and 15 feet, respectively. With a great effort, the fourth jumps 20 feet. All four fall to their deaths. A final jumper—far above average—is no fool. He has been practicing. If anyone can make it, he can. With single-minded determination he takes a running start and makes an amazing jump—a foot short! He too dies. *All sin* and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

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No one can keep God’s law perfectly. We all need a Savior. Christ died for all and offers forgiveness to all who believe in him (see also Romans 3:23).

Day 2

By their fruits you will know them. You can tell a lot about people by the way they speak (James 3: 1-12).

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Billy Graham once offered a plaque to be placed over the kitchen sink. It said, “Divine Worship Performed Here Daily.” Like Martin Luther, he equated work with worship—obviously, when done to the glory of God.

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Ultimately, the goal of all creation and all things is to give glory to God! See Matthew 5:15, 1 Peter 2:12).

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God requires good works from believers (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 John 3:23). However, just as our salvation is entirely God’s gift, so also the Spirit to do these good works is *God’s gift*. See Romans 6:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12: 1-3. See also Key Chapter booklet *Romans 6: New Life*).

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As Christians, we struggle constantly against the flesh. God’s loving, spiritual discipline strengthens us in the struggle.

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When Satan tempts toward evil, substitute that desire with a God-pleasing desire. For example, instead of mumbling and complaining, praise and give thanks to God.

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Wealth usually carries power. Even in the church wealthy people can become the source of “trouble” and opposition (James 2:6).

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How foolish to show favoritism toward people! God often chooses to work his ways through those who are the most unlikely recipients. Paul reminds the early Christians of their humble backgrounds. Obviously, there are exceptions; but they are so few that they support the rule. The last shall be first. (See 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31; 4: 8-13; Matthew 19:30).

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Day 3

The works of Rahab (an unlikely candidate) were prompted by her faith. She is listed with the “heroes of faith” in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, specifically verse 31: (See James 2: 25-26).

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Concerning our growth in good works, Luther said, “We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal, but it is the right road. At present everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.”

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The mature Christian constantly strives to grow in good works (1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

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Unbelievers typically feel they can earn favor with God by their works. They will be surprised on Judgment Day (Matthew 7: 22-23). (Read Key Chapter booklet *Romans 8: Salvation*).

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The best way to serve Christ is to lovingly serve others (John 13: 34-35).

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Good works are present in the life of the convert because in Christ he or she is a “new” person (2 Corinthians 5: 17).

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Life can be frustrating. We do get weary. The battle can be fatiguing (Mark 8: 34). Paul reviewed his many conflicts and problems, and then he concluded that nothing was more important than doing the task God had given him to do—preaching the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ (Acts 20:24).

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God created us to do good works! He produces the good works in us. (See Philippians 2: 13; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13: 20-21).

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Titus 2: 7-8: In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Good works become a pattern and discipline that permeate every aspect of a Christian’s life.

Day 4

We encourage others to do good works by setting a good example (Hebrews 10: 24; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

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Worldly people may do works that are praised by others. The motivation for such works varies—reciprocal friendship, fame, recognition. Such works are not acknowledge by God since they are not motivated by the love of God. It is impossible for a non-Christian to do a good work in God’s eyes!

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Both poverty and wealth can be a curse (Proverbs 30:8)

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The best good work you can do: tell people about Christ and their salvation.

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Christian freedom is not freedom to do as you please. It is freedom to glorify God. Unbelievers are not free to do this since they are still enslaved to Satan (1 Peter 2: 15-16).

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Acts 20:35: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

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On Judgment Day God will use the evidence of our good works to prove we had faith (Matthew 25: 35-36).

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Acts 9: 36: In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.

We can become known for good works. A good reputation can inspire and encourage others even after we are gone.

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1 Peter 2: 21: To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Christ is our best example to follow.

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Day 5

The motivation for all good works is the love from God. (See 1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 John 4: 10-11; John 13:35; 15:13)

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It is inconsistent to claim the love of Christ is within you and act as a spiritual snob.

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The heart of Christianity is not a moral code. The essence of Christian living is receiving and then sharing Christ's love with others. We are to be known by the love we show each other.

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God gives gifts of grace to do good works for the common good. They are literally results of God at work in us. Paul lists these gifts in 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12 and Ephesians 4.

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2 Thessalonians 3:6: In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

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2 Thessalonians 3:14: If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

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We are going to be influenced by those we associate with. Choose carefully.

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Life does not create the body, but does give movement and usefulness to the body. Works do not create faith, but do give movement and usefulness to the faith. The two go together—works flow automatically from a genuine (alive) faith (James 2:26).

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Luther said this about the relationship of faith and love: "Faith without love is, as it were, a dream, an image of faith; just as the appearance of a face in a glass is not a real face."

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A small vial of deadly chemicals poured into a reservoir contaminates the water supply for an entire city. In a more disastrous way, those who try to include human works as a means of salvation pollute the pure Gospel. God's free grace alone saves.

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When a person asks God for wisdom in daily living, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does (James 1: 6-7).