



SERIES: FEB-MAR FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 2:14

TITLE: Tylenol or Arsenic?

Have you ever seen one of those cartoons where the character has jumped out of a plane and then digs in their backpack looking for a parachute? Unfortunately, what they find is an anvil. What should have saved them only proved to be their demise. James now wants to challenge us to consider how we do the same thing with our faith.

Here is what he writes in James 2:14.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?

As we've said, the book of James is one of the most practical books of the Bible. It is the "how to live like a Christian." But it's not written for non-believers to pretend they are saved. It's a guide and reminder for Christians to live out the reality of their faith.

That's why James begins by saying, what good is a faith that doesn't prove itself. Our neighbor to the southeast of Nebraska is Missouri. It's the show-me-state. It got its nickname from a representative who basically said, "Talk is cheap. Show me."

That's what James is saying. What good is a bag that says parachute when it's empty or full of weights? It won't save you. What good is a bottle that is labeled Tylenol but is full of arsenic? What good is a credit card if it has no credit? None of these are what they claim to be. They are useless if not deadly.

James uses this regarding faith. You can claim to be a Christian, but if you live like a pagan, something is wrong. Not every kind of faith saves. Only faith that relies solely on the grace of God results in a soul saved, and life changed. Jesus said as much in Matthew 7:16-18.

James will continue to develop this teaching. But remember that this verse is not a one-off but rather building a case for authentic faith. So far, James has identified some marks of saving faith. He has mentioned enduring a trial, impartiality, purity of life, obedience to Scripture, compassion for the needy, and more. Saving faith works. This is faith in real life.

So here's my challenge for you today: Take an inventory of your life for the past day, week, or month. If you were to judge your time, treasure, and talents, what does the evidence show? Does it point to heaven or hell?

Christ doesn't expect perfection but a posture towards loving obedience built upon the grace of God. Today, follow Him, and you will win the day.