



# Incomplete Faith

# Recap

A current **popular myth** in evangelical circles is that salvation is **based on a personal decision** for Christ and that such a decision may or may not result in a changed life. In this paradigm, a child from a Christian home may make a decision at summer camp “to invite Jesus into his heart.” He goes forward at the closing song after a meeting. He gets some follow-up, is given a Bible and told to read it every day. Perhaps when he gets back to his church, he is baptized. He attends church every Sunday, because that’s what his family does.

# Recap

**You must all be quick to listen**  
**Learning**

**+**

**But don't just listen to God's  
word. You must do what it says.**

**Acting**

**=**

**Pure and genuine religion**  
**Transformed**

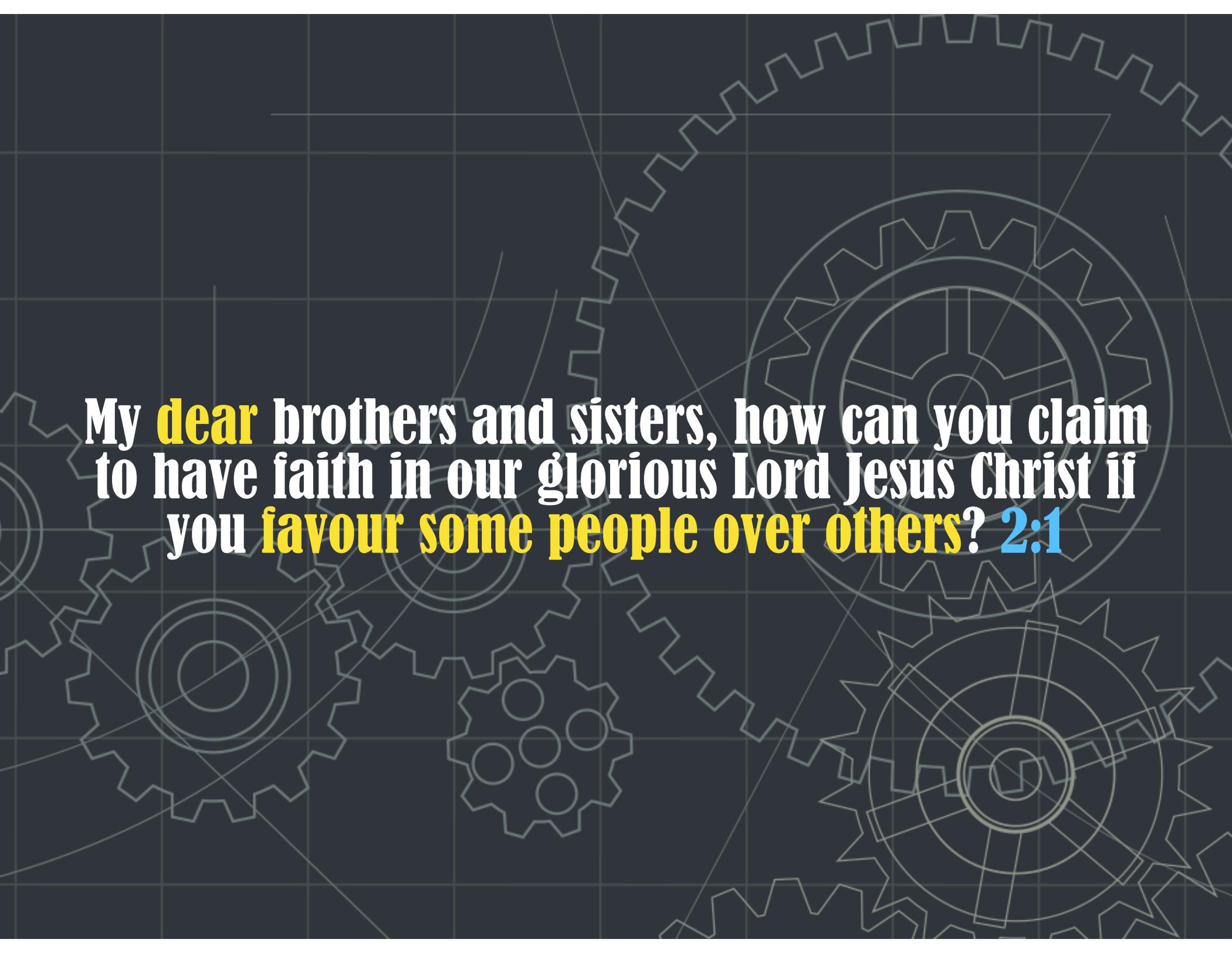
## Recap

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient (**shema**)." **Exodus 24:7**

The word that means "hear or listen," shema (pronounced "shmah") is an excellent example of the difference between Hebrew, which **stresses physical action** and Greek and Western culture that **stresses mental activity**.

Listening, in our culture, is a mental activity, and hearing just means that our ears pick up sounds. But in Hebrew, **the word shema describes hearing and also its effects** - taking heed, being obedient, doing what is asked.

George Sweating, in his book on James, told the story of Blondin, the great tightrope walker. While performing on a cable across Niagara Falls, he asked his audience, "How many **believe** I can walk across this tightrope pushing a wheelbarrow?" To which the people cheered loudly. "How many **believe** I can push the wheelbarrow across the cable with a man in it?" Again, there came a loud response. Blondin then pointed to one of the most enthusiastic men in the audience, and, said, "**You're my man, now get into the wheelbarrow!!!**" Needless to say, the man made a quick **exit**.

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My **dear** brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you **favour some people over others?** **2:1**

**For example**, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, **doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?** vs 2-4

When we elevate or denigrate people we miss the heart of God towards humanity

What is interesting is that James feels this is an important issue for the fledgling church

Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? **But you dishonour the poor!** Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? **Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?** vs 5-7

The rich, powerful and famous have always been the desired "converts." James believes that the Kingdom is built by outcasts

But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich. **Luke 18:23**

Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the **royal law** as found in the Scriptures:  
“Love your neighbour as yourself.” **vs 8**

James calls “one another-ing”  
as us acting like our King

So **whatever you say or whatever you do**, remember that you will be **judged by the law that sets you free**. There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you. **vs 12-13**

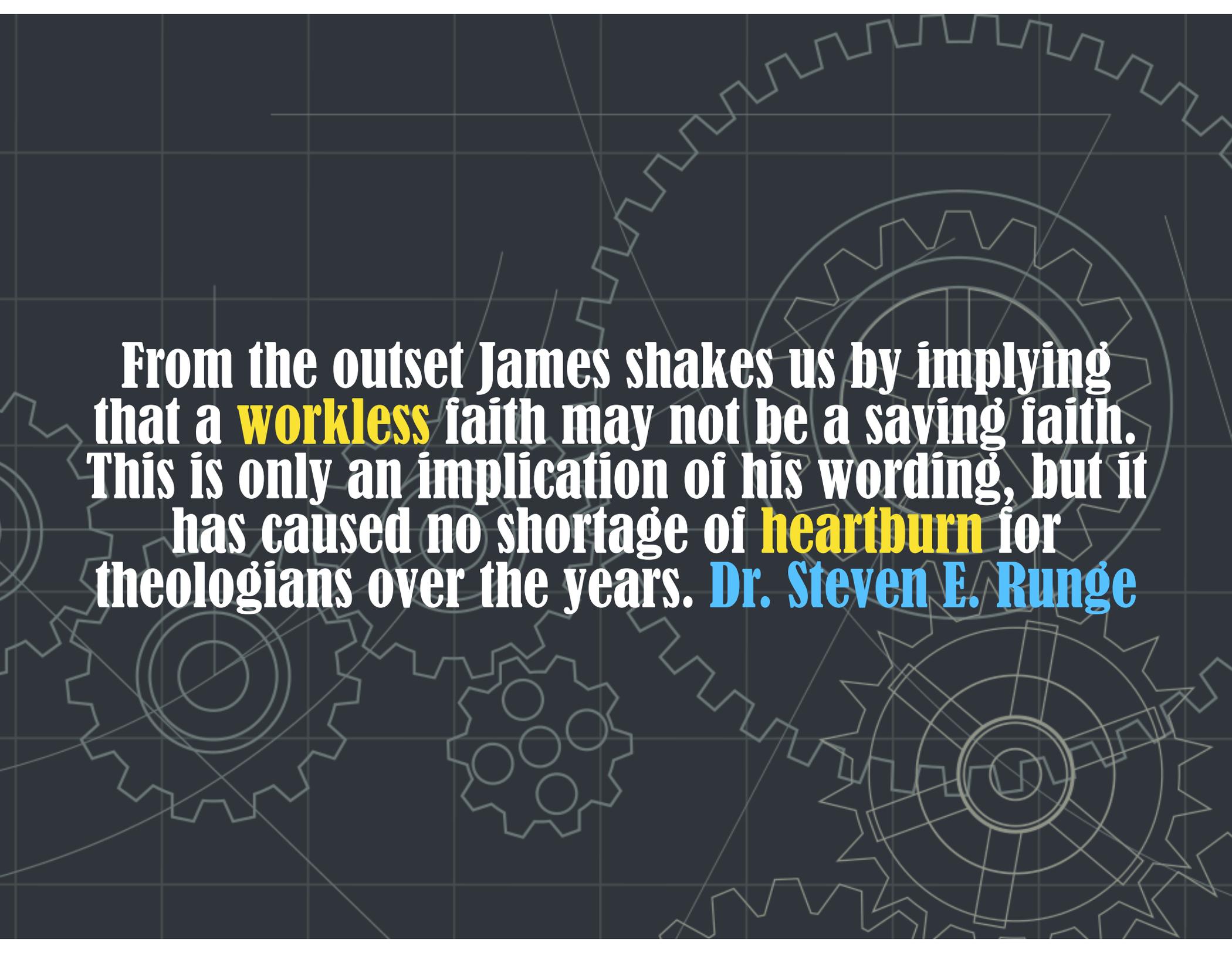
**The law that sets us free can also condemn us**

Once again James is reminding the reader that a **decision** made in the past for Jesus does not mean an assured future outcome

**What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? vs 14**

**This may be one of the most dangerous statements in the New Testament**

**Before we can make scripture say something else it has to say what it says first**

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From the outset James shakes us by implying that a **workless** faith may not be a saving faith. This is only an implication of his wording, but it has caused no shortage of **heartburn** for theologians over the years. **Dr. Steven E. Runge**

The focus here is not disputing whether faith is the basis of salvation. Instead, just as James contrasted the merits of **hearing versus doing**, he contrasts the value of faith alone versus faith that **manifests** itself in works

Throughout James' letter he will attack the idea of Christianity as solely **abstract** pursuit

# James and Jesus

**Prove** by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. **Matthew 3:8**

A tree is identified by its **fruit**. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. **Matthew 12:33**

And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and **produce** a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted! **Mark 4:20**

He **cuts off** every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit... Those who remain in me, and I in them, will **produce** much fruit. **John 15:2, 5**

So every tree that does not **produce** good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their **actions**. **Matthew 7:19-20**

You say you have faith, for you **believe** that there is one God. **Good for you!** Even the demons **believe** this, and they tremble in terror. How **foolish!** Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? **vs 19-20**

**belief**

**behaviour**

**Passive faith is dead faith to James, and dead faith is the equivalent to no faith**

# Proof of Life

## Time

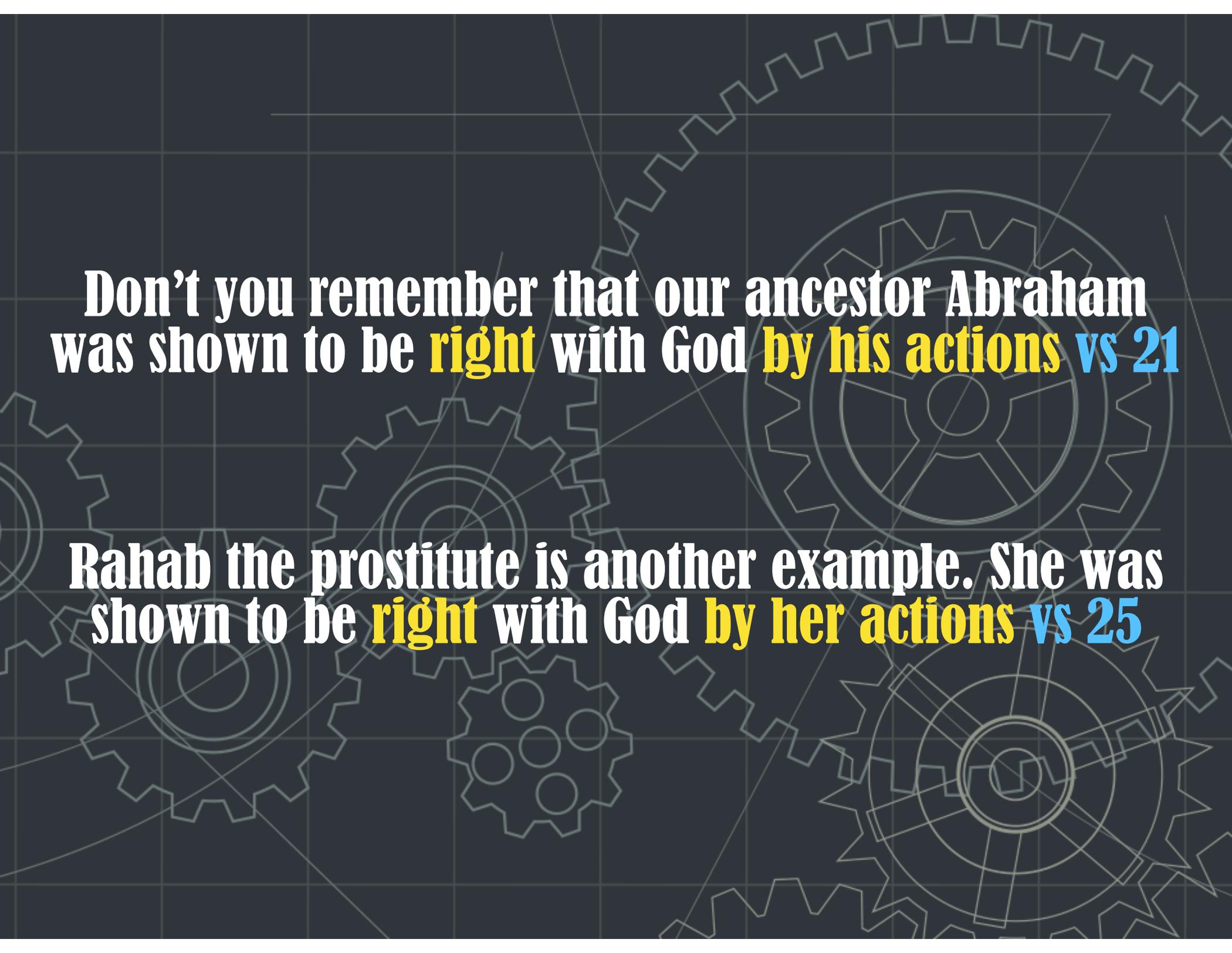
**13% of Canadians attend church weekly**

## Talent

**approximately 40% of a church population volunteers on a regular basis**

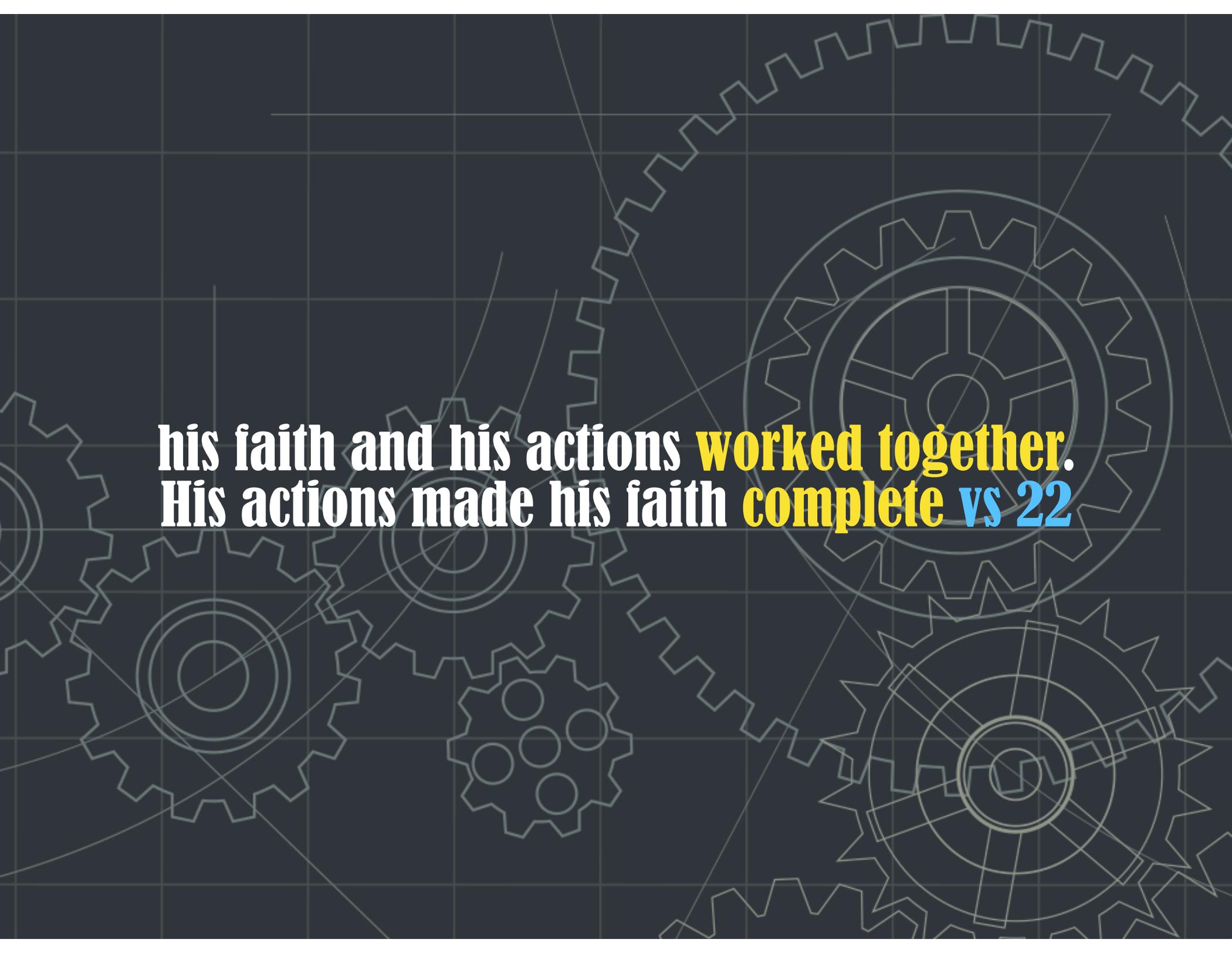
## Treasure

**On average Christians give 2.5% to the church, 75,000+ income families only 1% give (2017), \$551 per person giving verses \$1098 per person alcohol consumption, \$3,584.40 on eating out (2018)**

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**Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be **right** with God **by his actions** vs 21**

**Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be **right** with God **by her actions** vs 25**

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**his faith and his actions worked together.  
His actions made his faith complete vs 22**

**The reason James offends us, is that we have seen Christianity as binary**

**Faith**

**complete**

**Works**

**Spiritual  
inner life-  
prayer, bible  
reading etc**

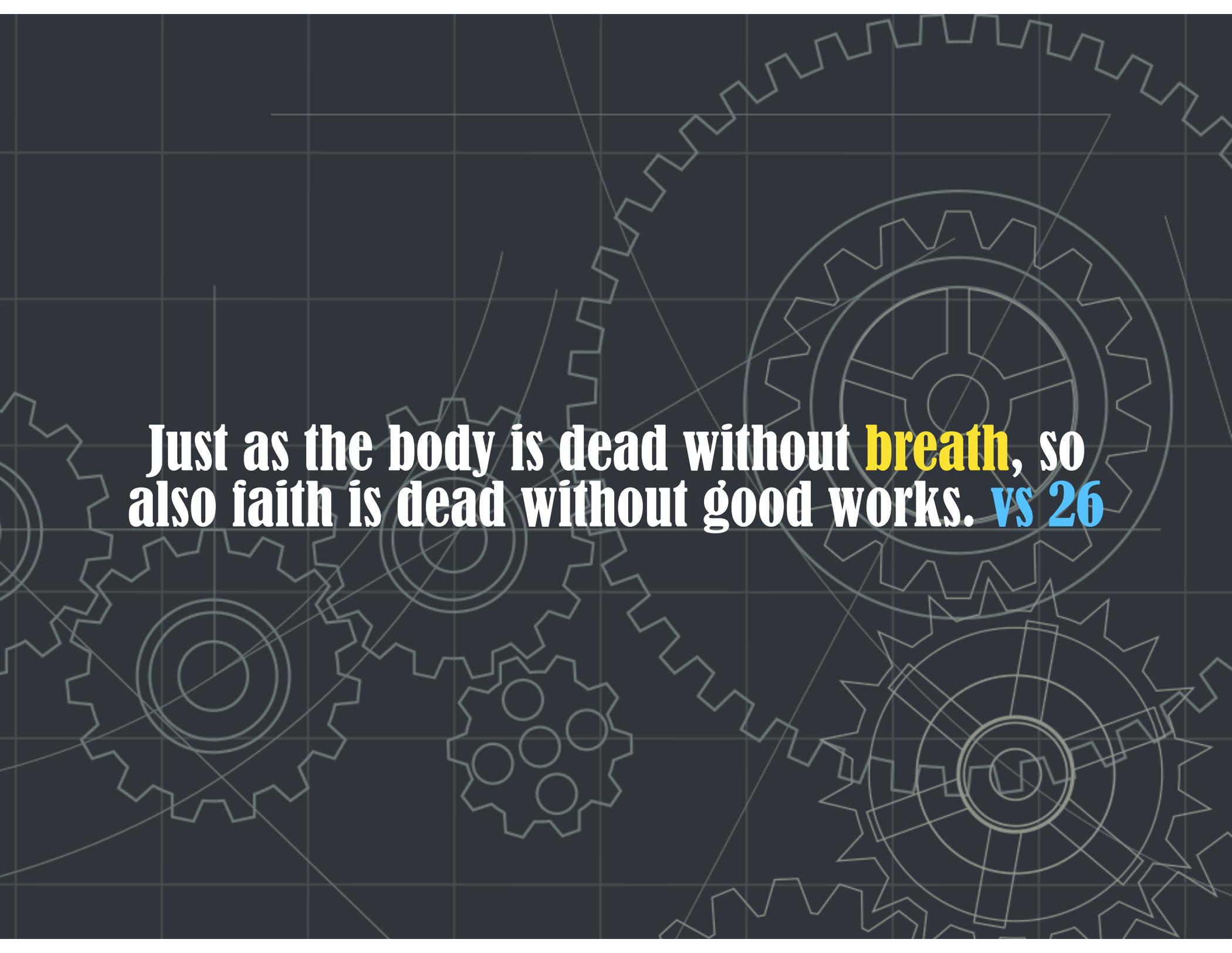
**servicing,  
giving,  
witnessing etc**

**Think of actions as a symptom of a faith that is alive**

# Two Sides of Judgement

On **judgment day** many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, '**I never knew you**. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.  
**Matthew 7:21-23**

"And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, **when you refused to help** the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' "And they will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous will go into eternal life."  
**Matthew 25:45-46**

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**Just as the body is dead without **breath**, so  
also faith is dead without good works. **vs 26****