



[James 2:17](#)

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

[James 2:20](#)

(20) But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?
New King James Version

Just as surely as a dead person does no works, so a [faith](#), a religion, that does not include works is also dead. Thus, a person in whom living, saving faith exists will produce works.

One must also consider [Ephesians 2:8](#), 10, which tell us that [salvation](#) is by [grace](#) through faith, and that the Father created us for good works, which He prearranged for us to perform. Therefore, how can a person with a dead faith, one that produces no works, be in God's Kingdom, since he would be failing to do the very thing for which [God](#) is creating him in Christ?

Furthermore, we are to be in God's image and to imitate Christ. [Jesus](#) says in [John 5:17](#), "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Our spiritual Father is a Creator, and a creator works. Most certainly, Jesus worked during His lifetime on earth, living a sinless life to provide us a means of justification. As our High Priest, He continues to work toward our salvation.

The root of this issue is that people have a dismally vague knowledge of what [sin](#) is, as well as an equally weak appreciation for the dangerous filthiness of sin, which can prevent us from entering God's Kingdom. We live in an exceedingly sinful nation in which we are confronted by sin from every quarter, including from within. Sin is so blatantly exhibited that most people seem to treat it with casual indifference until some form of it—rape, [murder](#), thievery, lying, gossip, an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, drunkenness, etc.—personally hits them.

So many are unaware of what sin is that they ignorantly participate in it. Television and movie "entertainment" overflows with it. In fact, sin is woven so tightly into the fabric of movies and TV shows that one could wonder if any other subject material exists! In America, over one million unborn children are aborted each year, and people euphemistically call this a "privacy right," hiding from the reality that they are murderers! What else can one honestly call the taking of life from an unborn human being created in God's image?

Through Jeremiah, God accuses Judah of having a "whore's forehead," indicating a people so perverted and hardened in their sins they could no longer be shamed ([Jeremiah 3:3](#)). If we as a people have not reached that stage of degeneracy, we soon will because God cries through Ezekiel, "Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence" ([Ezekiel 7:23](#)). Is there any other nation in the Western world that so openly exhibits as many violent crimes as the United States of America?

When one realizes sin's stranglehold on the United States, it becomes clear that a majority of its people are either ignorant of their responsibilities to God and fellow man, or no longer care what God thinks. A recent Barna poll reveals that an astounding 76 million American citizens never darken a church doorway to receive spiritual and moral instruction. How can they possibly appreciate what sin is and does?

Of far greater concern, though, are those who are reading this. God's ministers are responsible to make their teaching of God and His way as sharp and clear as they can so that those they teach can understand, not just the basics, but as broadly and deeply as possible so that it can be lived.

Wrong ideas about [holiness](#) usually lie in wrong ideas about human corruption. The responsibility of the Christian to seek the holiness of God provides the very reason God requires works. [1 Peter 1:15-16](#) charges us, "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

The obverse of this common ignorance of sin is that, without a firm understanding of human corruption, we have little appreciation of the radiant glory of God's holiness toward which we are to strive! Sin lies exposed as the root cause of humanity's corrupt condition, but many, even in the church, do not appreciate the depth of persistent corruption in themselves.

Vague, dim, and indistinct understandings of sin will never serve a Christian well. He must always apply his mind to growing in understanding to throw off spiritual vagueness

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and simultaneously glorify our Father and Elder Brother. If one does not grasp the depth of his carnal heart's disease, it will constantly deceive him into thinking he has little to overcome, thus dragging him into [pride](#). The human heart is so sick God tells us in [Jeremiah 17:9](#) that it is incurable!

Scripture uses terms for sin that are easily understood, but unless one meditates on them, they may not provide a clear picture of sin's many means of exerting its influence. The Bible's terms generally mean something like "missing the mark," "turning aside," or "slipping off the path." They can sound quite innocuous unless one recognizes the devastation sin has caused and ponders it seriously.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[**Is the Christian Required To Do Works? \(Part Two\)**](#)

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