

# James Chapter 2:14-26 – Faith and Works

James 2:14-26

## III. Faith and Works – 2:14-26

### Introduction

If you back away from this chapter, you can see the connection between the first section and this one. James began chapter 2 by giving his audience an example of what their faith shouldn't look like – partiality. In this section he tells them what true faith does look like. Some combine the two sections as sub-points of a bigger topic about faith. I'm splitting them while noting the connection.

### A. Genuine Faith Is Not an Empty Claim – 2:14-17 (Dead Faith)

#### Passage

Here is the text for this section:

James 2:14-17 – <sup>14</sup>What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup>Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

<2:14> Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγη τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σώσαι αὐτόν; <2:15> ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς <2:16> εἶπη δὲ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν, Ἰπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὄφελος; <2:17> οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστίν καθ' ἑαυτήν.

Some see this passage as a contradiction or conflict with Paul and his teaching on salvation by faith. But it is only a difference in emphasis.

And don't forget that every time we see James address an issue in his book, that means that it was an issue among his audience.

#### 1. The Argument - 14

#### My brethren –

Ἀδελφοί μου

James continues his use of this phrase to indicate a new line of thought.

#### Use, profit –

3786 ὄφελος ophelos of'-el-os  
from ὀφελῶ ophello (to heap up, i.e. accumulate or benefit);; n n  
KJV - it profiteth 2, it advantageth 1; 3  
1) advantage, profit

#### Says –

3004 λέγω lego leg'-o  
a root word; TDNT - 4:69,505; v  
KJV - say 1184, speak 61, call 48, tell 33, misc 17; 1343  
1) to say, to speak  
1a) affirm over, maintain  
1b) to teach  
1c) to exhort, advise, to command, direct  
1d) to point out with words, intend, mean, mean to say  
1e) to call by name, to call, name  
1f) to speak out, speak of, mention

#### Has –

2192 ἔχω echo ekh'-o including an alternate form  
σχεῶ scheo skkeh'-o, (used in certain tenses only),  
a primary verb; TDNT - 2:816,286; v  
KJV - have 613, be 22, need + 5532 12, misc 63, vr have 2; 712  
1) to have, i.e. to hold  
1a) to have (hold) in the hand, in the sense of wearing, to have (hold) possession of the mind (refers to alarm, agitating emotions, etc.), to hold fast keep, to have or comprise or involve, to regard or consider or hold as  
2) to have i.e. own, possess  
2a) external things such as pertain to property or riches or furniture or utensils or goods or food etc.  
2b) used of those joined to any one by the bonds of natural blood or marriage or friendship or duty or law etc, of attendance or companionship  
3) to hold one's self or find one's self so and so, to be in such or such a condition  
4) to hold one's self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to  
4a) to be closely joined to a person or a thing

#### Faith –

4102 πίστις pistis pis'-tis  
from 3982; TDNT - 6:174,849; n f  
KJV - faith 239, assurance 1, believe + 1537 1, belief 1, them that believe 1, fidelity 1; 244  
1) conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it

- 1a) relating to God
  - 1a1) the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ
- 1b) relating to Christ
  - 1b1) a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God
- 1c) the religious beliefs of Christians
- 1d) belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same
- 2) fidelity, faithfulness
  - 2a) the character of one who can be relied on

### Works –

2041 ergon εργον er'-gon

from a primary (but obsolete) εργω ergo (to work); TDNT - 2:635,251; n

KJV - work 152, deed 22, doing 1, labour 1; 176

- 1) business, employment, that which any one is occupied
  - 1a) that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking
- 2) any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind
- 3) an act, deed, thing done: the idea of working is emphasised in opp. to that which is less than work

“The plural form we find here occurs often in the NT to denote behavior with ethical and religious consequences.” – Moo

“Actions done in obedience to God.”

### THAT faith –

“Can such faith save him?” - Moo

Not faith, but that particular type of faith.

The Greek construction implies a negative answer.

### Save –

4982 σωζω sozo sode'-zo

from a primary σωσ sos (contraction for obsolete σαος saos, "safe"); TDNT - 7:965,1132; v

KJV - save 93, make whole 9, heal 3, be whole 2, misc 3; 110

- 1) to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction
  - 1a) one (from injury or peril)
    - 1a1) to save a suffering one (from perishing), i.e. one suffering from disease, to make well, heal, restore to health
  - 1b1) to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save or rescue

1b) to save in the technical biblical sense

1b1) negatively

1b1a) to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment

1b1b) to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance

“That kind of faith can’t save anyone.” – NLT

Rom. 2:6 – who WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

John Bunyan – “It will not be said then, ‘Did you believe?’ but, ‘Were you doers, or talkers only?’”

## 2. The Illustration – 15-16

<sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

### Without clothing, naked –

1131 γυμνος gumnos goom-nos'

of uncertain affinity; TDNT - 1:773,133; adj

KJV - naked 14, bare 1; 15

- 1) properly
  - 1a) unclad, without clothing, the naked body
  - 1b) ill clad
  - 1c) clad in undergarments only (the outer garments or cloak being laid aside)
  - 1d) of the soul, whose garment is the body, stripped of the body, without a body
- 2) metaph.
  - 2a) naked, i.e. open, lay bare
  - 2b) only, mere, bare, i.e. mere grain not the plant itself

Naked – “Not necessarily absolute nakedness. Possibly only wearing an undergarment or just ill-clad.” - Vaughan

“Rags full of holes” - Gundry

### Need, destitute –

3007 λειπω leipo li'-po

a root word;; v

KJV - lack 2, be wanting 2, want + 1722 1, be destitute 1; 6

- 1) to leave, leave behind, forsake, to be left behind
  - 1a) to lag, be inferior
  - 1b) to be destitute of, to lack
- 2) to be wanting, to fail

Lacking

## Daily –

2184 εφημερος ephemerous ef-ay'-mer-os

from 1909 and 2250;; adj

KJV - daily 1; 1

- 1) lasting for a day
- 2) daily

## Food –

5160 τροφή trophe trof-ay'

from 5142;; n f

KJV - meat 11, food 2, some meat 2, not tr 1; 16

- 1) food, nourishment

Famishing - has no food for the day

“Cold and hungry”

“The picture James paints comes to life for us in the homeless of our society.” –

Moo

<sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

## Says –

2036 ερω ερω ep'-o

a primary verb (used only in the definite past tense, the others being borrowed from 2046, 4483, and 5346);; v

KJV - say 859, speak 57, tell 41, command 8, bid 5, misc 6, vr say 1; 977

- 1) to speak, say

## Go, depart (Imperative (15.5.4)) –

An imperative, but part of the story, not a command to his audience.

5217 υπαγω hupago hoop-ag'-o

from 5259 and 71; TDNT - 8:504,1227; v

KJV - go 55, go (one's) way 17, go away 3, get thee 3, depart 2, get thee hence 1; 81

- 1) to lead under, bring under
- 2) to withdraw one's self, to go away, depart

This reminds me of the poor beggar who enters the church meeting and is sent to the back of the room.

## Peace –

1515 ειρήνη eirene i-ray'-nay

probably from a primary verb ειρω eiro (to join); TDNT - 2:400,207; n f

KJV - peace 89, one 1, rest 1, quietness 1; 92

- 1) a state of national tranquillity
  - 1a) exemption from the rage and havoc of war

- 2) peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord

- 3) security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)

- 4) of the Messiah's peace

- 4a) the way that leads to peace (salvation)

- 5) of Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is

- 6) the blessed state of devout and upright men after death

This would have been a typical blessing in that day.

“It is not the form of the statement that is reprehensible, but its functioning as a religious cover for the failure to act.” – Moo

## Be warmed (Imperative (15.5.5)) –

An imperative, but part of the story, not a command to his audience.

2328 θερμαινω thermaino ther-mah'-ee-no

from 2329;; v

KJV - warm (one's) self 5, be warmed 1; 6

- 1) to make warm, to heat
- 2) to warm one's self

Be warmed!

## Be filled (Imperative (15.5.6)) –

An imperative, but part of the story, not a command to his audience.

5526 χορταζω chortazo khor-tad'-zo

from 5528;; v

KJV - fill 12, be full 1, satisfy 1, feed 1; 15

- 1) to feed with herbs, grass, hay, to fill, satisfy with food, to fatten
  - 1a) of animals
- 2) to fill or satisfy men
- 3) to fulfil or satisfy the desire of any one

Eat your fill!

## Give –

1325 διδομι didomi did'-o-mee

a prolonged form of a primary verb (which is used as an altern. in most of the tenses); TDNT - 2:166,166; v

KJV - give 365, grant 10, put 5, show 4, deliver 2, make 2, misc 25; 413

- 1) to give
- 2) to give something to someone
  - 2a) of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage
    - 2a1) to bestow a gift
  - 2b) to grant, give to one asking, let have

- 2c) to supply, furnish, necessary things
- 2d) to give over, deliver
  - 2d1) to reach out, extend, present
  - 2d2) of a writing
  - 2d3) to give over to one's care, intrust, commit
    - 2d3a) something to be administered
    - 2d3b) to give or commit to some one something to be religiously observed
- 2e) to give what is due or obligatory, to pay: wages or reward
- 2f) to furnish, endue
- 3) to give
  - 3a) to cause, profuse, give forth from one's self
    - 3a1) to give, hand out lots
  - 3b) to appoint to an office
  - 3c) to cause to come forth, i.e. as the sea, death and Hell are said to give up the dead who have been engulfed or received by them
  - 3c) to give one to someone as his own
    - 3c1) as an object of his saving care
    - 3c2) to give one to someone, to follow him as a leader and master
    - 3c3) to give one to someone to care for his interests
    - 3c4) to give one to someone to whom he already belonged, to return
- 4) to grant or permit one
  - 4a) to commission

#### Synonyms

See Definition for δίδωμι 1325  
 See Definition for δωροδοκία 1433

1325 "to give" in general, opposite to 2983 "to take"; 1433 specific, "to bestow, present"; 1325 might be used even of evils, but 1433 could be used of such things only ironically.

#### What is necessary, those things which are needful –

2006 επιτηδειος epitedeios ep-ee-tay'-di-os  
 from επιτηδες epitedes (enough);; adj  
 KJV - things which are needful 1; 1  
 1) fit, suitable, convenient, advantageous  
 2) needful, esp. of the necessities of life

The Christian has the ability to help them, but only offers a pious blessing.

Go away and I hope it turns out well for you.

#### Body –

4983 σωμα soma so'-mah  
 from 4982; TDNT - 7:1024,1140; n n  
 KJV - body 144, bodily 1, slave 1; 146

- 1) the body both of men or animals
  - 1a) a dead body or corpse
  - 1b) the living body
    - 1b1) of animals
- 2) the bodies of planets and of stars (heavenly bodies)
- 3) is used of a (large or small) number of men closely united into one society, or family as it were; a social, ethical, mystical body
  - 3a) so in the NT of the church
- 4) that which casts a shadow as distinguished from the shadow itself

#### Use, profit –

Same as verse 14.

“What good is that?”

1 John 3:17-19 – <sup>17</sup>But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. <sup>19</sup>We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him,

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan, and the reaction of the “religious” priest and Levite!

“Faith without works is of no profit on two counts: it has no efficacy for the person claiming this kind of faith, for such self-delusion can end only in eschatological disaster, and it does nothing to alleviate the suffering of the needy, who are not helped by pious words alone.” – Martin

Who are the people in our culture today that come to mind when we hear James' example? \_\_\_\_\_

What can we do as individuals in our culture to help the poor needy around us? \_\_\_\_\_

What specifically can we do to prepare for the times when we're faced with the opportunity to help someone in need? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. The Conclusion - 17

<sup>17</sup>Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

#### Dead –

3498 νεκρος nekros nek-ros'  
 from an apparently primary νεκος nekus (a corpse); TDNT - 4:892,627; adj  
 KJV - dead 132; 132

- 1) properly
  - 1a) one that has breathed his last, lifeless
  - 1b) deceased, departed, one whose soul is in heaven or hell
  - 1c) destitute of life, without life, inanimate

2) metaph.

2a) spiritually dead

2a1) destitute of a life that recognises and is devoted to God, because given up to trespasses and sins

2a2) inactive as respects doing right

2b) destitute of force or power, inactive, inoperative

Not merely outwardly barren but inwardly dead.

Ineffectual – Remember 1:26 – “This man’s religion is worthless.”

**By itself, being alone –**

καθ’ ἐαυτήν

Faith which is mere talk is void of all reality.

Adamson – “A faith without works (by itself) is no more a living faith than a corpse without breath is a living person.”

“Faith and works (as life and breath) go together and the former cannot exist without the latter.” – Martin

John Calvin – “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.”

What I believe I practice daily; all else is religious talk.

“James is not arguing that works must be *added* to faith. His point, rather, is that genuine biblical faith will inevitably be characterized by works.” – Moo

Dauids = “A ‘faith’ which is purely doctrinal and does not result in pious action (i.e., charity) is a dead sham, totally useless for salvation.”

## Summary of 14-17

Some see this passage as a contradiction or conflict with Paul and his teaching on salvation by faith. But it is only a difference in emphasis. From Vaughan:

**Entirely different situations:**

Paul was writing to those who thought their salvation was based on their performing of religious rituals. James was insisting that any faith worthy of the name must express itself in deeds.

Paul was expounding the *way of justification*. James was describing the *life of the justified*.

**Different meanings of the same words:**

By “works” Paul means works of the Jewish law (circumcision, etc.), works thought of as means of salvation. For James, however, “works” are works of love, works as proof that faith is alive and real, works as the fruit of salvation.

By “justified” Paul means acquitted, declared to be righteous, treated as righteous. As used by James the word means having a just claim to one's profession, shown to be righteous, vindicated.

**Different intentions:**

James was not contrasting two opposing methods of salvation: one by works and one by faith. James contrasts two kinds of faith - one genuine, the other spurious; one alive, the other dead' one that saves, another that does not save.

“In a different context, James - whose view of faith (as necessary for salvation) does not differ from Paul or any other NT writer - is attacking an understanding of ‘faith’ that sees it merely as a pious sentiment or an intellectual acceptance of doctrine.” - Martin

## B. Genuine Faith Is Not Mere Acceptance of a Creed – 2:18-19 (Demonic Faith)

### Passage

One famous commentator on James says that verse 18 is one of the hardest to interpret of any passage in the NT!

James 2:18-19 – <sup>18</sup>But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

<2:18> Ἄλλ’ ἐρεῖ τις, Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγὼ σοὶ δεῖξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν. <2:19> σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουσιν.

**Say –**

2046 ερεω ereo er-eh'-o

probably a fuller form of 4483, an alternate for 2036 in cert. tenses;

v

KJV - say 57, speak 7, tell 4, speak of 2, call 1; 71

1) to utter, speak, say

Yet a third different word translated “say” in this passage. None of the commentators mention any significance of it.

**Works –**

In order to minimize confusion, some translations use an equivalent word, such as “deeds” instead of “works”. The words mean the same thing, but using different words reduces the apparent conflict between James’ teaching here and Paul’s teaching elsewhere.

## Show (Imperative (15.5.7)) –

Imperative, but part of his argument, not a command to his audience.

1166 δεικνυω deiknuo dike-noo'-o

a prolonged form of an obsolete primary of the same meaning; TDNT - 2:25,\*; v

KJV - show 31; 31

1) to show, expose to the eyes

2) metaph.

2a) to give evidence or proof of a thing

2b) to show by words or teach

Demonstrate, or make visible.

## Without –

1537 εκ ek ek or

εξ ex ex

a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative); prep

KJV - of 366, from 181, out of 162, by 55, on 34, with 25, misc 98; 921

1) out of, from, by, away from

“Apart from”

James' position is that you cannot prove saving faith without works. – Martin

<sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

## Believe –

Note the relationship between the noun “faith” and the verb “believe.”

4100 πιστευω pisteuo pist-yoo'-o

from 4102; TDNT - 6:174,849; v

KJV - believe 239, commit unto 4, commit to (one's) trust 1, be committed unto 1, be put in trust with 1, be commit to one's trust 1, believer 1; 248

1) to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in

1a) of the thing believed

1a1) to credit, have confidence

1b) in a moral or religious reference

1b1) used in the NT of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul

1b2) to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith

1bc) mere acknowledgment of some fact or event: intellectual faith

2) to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity

2a) to be intrusted with a thing

Clearly James is talking about an intellectual assent here. Not a saving faith.

## God is one, there is one God –

This is from the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4

εἷς ἐστιν ὁ θεός

1520 εις heis hie

(including the neuter [etc.] εν hen); TDNT - 2:434,214; numeral

KJV - one 229, a 9, other 6, some 6, not tr 4, misc 18; 272

1) one

The cause of the distinctly different translations is due to a textual variation.

## Well –

Just like up in verse 8 for those who keep the Royal Law, but here with a hint of sarcasm.

2573 καλως kalos kal-oc'e'

from 2570; adv

KJV - well 30, good 2, full well 1, misc. 3; 36

1) beautifully, finely, excellently, well

1a) rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame, well, truly

1b) excellently, nobly, commendably

1c) honourably, in honour

1c1) in a good place, comfortable

1d) to speak well of one, to do good

1e) to be well (of those recovering health)

“Such belief is good as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. It is no more than assent to a doctrine, and in itself has no saving power.” – Vaughan

## Demons, devils –

1140 δαίμονιον daimonion dahee-mon'-ee-on

neuter of a derivative of 1142; TDNT - 2:1,137; n n

KJV - devil 59, god 1; 60

1) the divine power, deity, divinity

2) a spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men

3) evil spirits or the messengers and ministers of the devil

## Believe –

πιστεύουσιν

“The devils (demons) also believe in the existence of God. Indeed, they believe more thoroughly than James' opponents.” – Vaughan



## Tremble –

The demons take their “belief” in God a step further than the straw man, they tremble at the fact of God.

5425 φρισσω phrisso fris'-so  
apparently a primary verb;; v

KJV - tremble 1; 1

1) to bristle, stiffen stand up

2) to shudder, to be struck with extreme fear, to be horrified

To shudder, so afraid that your hair stands up.

“The reaction of fear provoked by contact with God or the supernatural.” – Moo

“At least the demons display some kind of reaction to their ‘faith!’” – Moo

Or this could alternatively reference the fear of knowing they deserve the judgment to come.

“There is a belief which is not nominal, but real, so far as it goes, and yet is miserably defective, wholly ineffectual as regards our highest, our eternal interests.” – John Adam

### What do the demons believe?

- They believe in the existence of God. They are neither atheists nor agnostics. (Wiersbe)
- They believe in the deity of Christ. (Mark 3:11)

Mark 3:11 – And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, “You are the Son of God!”

- They believe in hell.

Luke 8:31 – And they were entreating Him not to command them to depart into the abyss.

The demons believe, and tremble. But they are not saved!!!

“True saving faith involves something more, something that can be seen and recognized: a changed life.” – Wiersbe

### Summary of 18-19

In addition to James’ building argument, this passage also should challenge each reader to assess the validity of their faith.

Being a Christian is not just believing the right stuff!!!

### The Reality of a False Faith

Some may be uncomfortable hearing and talking about it, but James makes it clear that there is the real possibility that a person can think they are a Christian, but are not.

James 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.

My testimony.

I believed the right stuff, but I wasn’t changed.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The reason I lived right was external, not internal.

The entire book of 1 John was written to help people discern the difference between real and false faith. In 1 John there are 58 different instances where he defines 23 distinct evidences of salvation!

## C. Genuine Faith Produces an Obedient Life – 2:20-26 (Dynamic Faith)

### Passage

James 2:20-26 – <sup>20</sup>But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

<2:20> θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστίν; <2:21> Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνεύγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον; <2:22> βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη, <2:23> καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἡ λέγουσα, Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη. <2:24> ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον. <2:25> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρα ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα; <2:26> ὡσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

<sup>20</sup>But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

### Recognize –

γινῶναι

NAS Word Usage - Total: 221

ascertaining 1, aware 7, certainty 1, come to know 1, comprehend 1, felt 1, find 3, found 2, kept...a virgin\* 1, knew 13, know 104, know how 1, knowing 3, known 25, knows 14, learn 1, learned 1, perceived 1, perceiving 2, put 1, realize 3, recognize 7, recognized 1, recognizing 1, sure 4, take notice 1, unaware\* 2, understand 11, understood 6, virgin\* 1

- 1 to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel
  - a to become known
- 2 to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of
  - a to understand
  - b to know
- 3 Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman
- 4 to become acquainted with, to know

### Do you even want to know...?

“Such knowledge would frighten him into doing the charitable deeds that he does not want to do. They would cramp his lifestyle, uncharitably comfortable as it is.” – Gundry

“To realize” – Lenski

### Foolish –

κενέ

NAS Word Usage - Total: 18

empty 2, empty-handed 4, foolish 1, futile things 1, vain 10

- 1 empty, vain, devoid of truth
  - a of places, vessels, etc. which contain nothing
  - b of men
    - i. empty handed
    - ii. without a gift
  - c metaph. destitute of spiritual wealth, of one who boasts of his possession, yet is without the fruits of faith
  - d metaph. of endeavours, labours, acts, which result in nothing, vain, fruitless, without effect
    - i. vain of no purpose

Empty man, or empty-headed man.

### Without –

As above.

χωρίς

NAS Word Usage - Total: 41

apart 10, besides 2, independent 2, itself 1, separate 1, without 25

- 1 separate, apart
  - a without any
  - b besides

“Apart from”

### Useless, dead –

The translation “dead” is due to a textual difference.

ἀργή

NAS Word Usage - Total: 8

careless 1, idle 4, lazy 1, useless 2

- 1 free from labour, at leisure
- 2 lazy, shunning the labour which one ought to perform

**That kind of faith is useless with respect to salvation.**

This is a pun! Faith that lacks works does not work!

Gundry – “Faith without works is **workless**.” “Advances a wordplay that means workless faith isn’t just faith apart from works. It’s also faith that doesn’t work salvation in a person.”

Baker – “James is trying to shake us out of our delusion that we are saved if we are not.”

<sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

### Abraham our father –

Lenski – “Being Jewish Christians, the readers of James wanted to be true spiritual sons of Abraham and have a faith exactly like his.”

### Justified –

ἐδικαιώθη

NAS Word Usage - Total: 39

acknowledged...justice 1, acquitted 1, freed 3, justified 24, justifier 1, justifies 2, justify 4, vindicated 3

- 1 to render righteous or such he ought to be
- 2 to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered
- 3 to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be

Abraham’s faith was vindicated by his works.

Historical aorist. “It implies that God is the Judge who pronounces the verdict ‘righteous!’



## By works –

“By’ in our versions is unsatisfactory. The works did not declare Abraham righteous; God did this, for He is the agent implied in the passive. ... God’s verdict on Abraham arose ‘out of’ works: this verdict was the outcome, the result, of works.” – Lenski

<sup>22</sup>You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

## Working –

συνήργει

NAS Word Usage - Total: 6

causes to work 1, helps in the work 1, work together 1, worked 1, working 1, working together 1

- 1 to work together, help in work, be partner in labour
- 2 to put forth power together with and thereby to assist

Imperfect tense, indicating this was habitual.

“Dynamic faith involves the will.” “True saving faith leads to action.” –Wiersbe

“Though working together, then, faith and works play different roles. Faith plays an underlying role, works an evidential role.” – Gundry

## Perfected –

Here is James’ favorite word again: telos.

ἐτελειώθη

NAS Word Usage - Total: 24

accomplish 2, accomplished 1, finish 1, fulfill 1, full number 1, made perfect 4, made...perfect 1, make...perfect 1, make perfect 1, perfect 2, perfected 7, reach...goal 1, spending the full number 1

- 1 to make perfect, complete
  - a to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end
- 2 to complete (perfect)
  - a add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full
  - b to be found perfect
- 3 to bring to the end (goal) proposed
- 4 to accomplish
  - a bring to a close or fulfilment by event
    - i. of the prophecies of the scriptures

“Abraham’s faith was brought to its goal.” “It is passive: *God* brought Abraham’s faith to its goal.” – Lenski

“Brought to maturity.” – Blomberg and Kamell

<sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.

## Fulfilled –

ἐπληρώθη

NAS Word Usage - Total: 87

accomplish 1, accomplished 1, amply supplied 1, approaching 1, complete 1, completed 3, completing 1, elapsed 1, fill 3, filled 16, fills 1, finished 1, fulfill 20, fulfilled 20, fully carry 1, fully come 1, fully preached 1, increasing 1, made complete 2, made full 5, make full 1, make complete 1, passed 2, supply 1

- 1 to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
  - a to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally
    - i. I abound, I am liberally supplied
- 2 to render full, i.e. to complete
  - a to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
  - b to consummate: a number
    - i. to make complete in every particular, to render perfect
    - ii. to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)
  - c to carry into effect, bring to realisation, realise
    - i. of matters of duty: to perform, execute
    - ii. of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass ratify, accomplish
    - iii. to fulfil, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment

## Believed –

Abraham did not believe *in* God. Abraham believed what God said. – Lenski

Ἐπίστευσεν

NAS Word Usage - Total: 243

believe 118, believed 73, believers 3, believes 29, believing 10, do 1, entrust 1, entrusted 6, entrusting 1, has faith 1

- 1 to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in
  - a of the thing believed
    - i. to credit, have confidence
  - b in a moral or religious reference
    - i. used in the NT of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul

- ii. to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith
  - iii. mere acknowledgment of some fact or event: intellectual faith
- 2 to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity
- a to be intrusted with a thing

### Reckoned –

ἐλογίσθη

NAS Word Usage - Total: 41

consider 6, considered 2, counted 1, counting 1, credit 1, credited 9, credits 1, dwell 1, maintain 1, numbered 2, propose 1, reason 1, reckoned 2, regard 4, regarded 3, suppose 1, take into account 3, thinks 1

- 1 to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over
  - a to take into account, to make an account of
    - i. metaph. to pass to one's account, to impute
    - ii. a thing is reckoned as or to be something, i.e. as availing for or equivalent to something, as having the like force and weight
  - b to number among, reckon with
  - c to reckon or account
- 2 to reckon inward, count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate
- 3 by reckoning up all the reasons, to gather or infer
  - a to consider, take into account, weigh, meditate on
  - b to suppose, deem, judge
  - c to determine, purpose, decide
- 4 This word deals with reality. If I "logizomai" or reckon that my bank book has \$25 in it, it has \$25 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers to facts not suppositions.

### Righteousness –

δικαιοσύνην

NAS Word Usage - Total: 91

right 1, righteousness 90

- 1 in a broad sense: state of him who is as he ought to be, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God
  - a the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain a state approved of God
  - b integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting
- 2 in a narrower sense, justice or the virtue which gives each his due

Lenski – “In these subsequent verdicts on Abraham his faith with all its works did not *make* him righteous, God merely acknowledged what Abraham had been *made*. Although he was not righteous but a sinner, God counted, reckoned, pronounced him righteous, and did that not because of the worth

and merit of his act of believing but because of the worth and merit of his act of believing.”

<sup>24</sup>You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

### Justified –

Same as above in verse 23.

δικαιοῦται

### Paul versus James?

But how can Paul and James not be seen as contradicting one another?

Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Rom. 4:1-5 – <sup>1</sup>What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. <sup>5</sup>But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

“In Rom. 3:28 Paul writes ‘without works of law,’ these works are entirely different from the works of faith of which James speaks.” – Gundry

James does not teach that justification depends on works to the exclusion of faith nor even on works in addition to faith. James’ teaching is that justification is simply by faith, but it is the kind of faith that moves the heart and regulates the life; a faith that does not lie dormant and inoperative, but manifests itself in active obedience. The thrust of the passage, therefore, is against reliance on false faith, a faith that is important and worthless.” – Vaughan

Gundry – “It wasn’t his works that were credited as righteousness. It was his having believed God that was credited so. As proofs of faith, his works enabled such a crediting of faith even though faith as such isn’t righteousness.”

Look what Paul also said:

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

If you look at the two writers’ messages carefully, there is no conflict. They are complementary.

Gundry – “We have shown that James is dealing with God’s *subsequent* verdicts and not, as Paul, with God’s *first* verdict, when, as Paul states it in

Rom. 4:5, God 'declares the ungodly man righteous.' Every subsequent verdict is drawn 'out of works' and not 'out of faith alone.'"

<sup>25</sup>And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

"In conformity with the law that two or three witnesses are required to establish a legal case, James cites Rahab as an example in addition to that of Abraham."  
– Gundry

### **Rahab –**

ἡ πόρνη

It is so awesome that James turns from his first example of Abraham, the cream of the crop, the "father of our faith," to a gentile prostitute as the second example to prove his point. James uses the exact same words to talk about Rahab as he did Abraham. It is true of the greatest and the least. And it's true about every one of us.

<sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

### **Dead –**

νεκρά

NAS Word Usage - Total: 128

corpse 1, dead 122, dead man 3, dead men 1, dead men's 1

- 1 properly
  - a one that has breathed his last, lifeless
  - b deceased, departed, one whose soul is in heaven or hell
  - c destitute of life, without life, inanimate
- 2 metaph.
  - a spiritually dead
    - i. destitute of a life that recognises and is devoted to God, because given up to trespasses and sins
    - ii. inactive as respects doing right
  - b destitute of force or power, inactive, inoperative

When we see a body that's not breathing, no one hesitates to say it's dead. When we see a person who says they have faith, but have no works, then the diagnosis is as clear. "Faith without works is just as dead." – Lenski

### **Summary of verses 20-26**

"Only an operative, fruit-bearing faith is a saving faith." – Vaughan

If you look at Hebrews 11, the "Hall of Faith", you'll see listed person after person whose works proved their great faith!

## **Conclusion**

True faith will produce works. If there are no works, there is no true faith.