

JAMES—CHAPTER TWO

OUTLINE

I. Greeting (1:1)

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

1. Through the development of perseverance (1:2-4)
2. Through growth in wisdom (1:5-8)
3. Through a right perspective on wealth (1:9-11)

B. Perseverance Produces the Reward (1:12-18)

1. The ultimate reward—the crown of life (1:12)
2. The chief impediment: sin—its cause and result (1:13-16)
3. The source of all good—and His gift to us (1:17-18)

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1. The right attitude (1:19-20)
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B. The right behavior: doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

C. The right standards (1:26-27)

1. Empty religion (1:26)
2. True religion (1:27)

IV. Living Ethically (2:1-13)

A. Avoid partiality (2:1-7)

B. Follow the ‘royal law’ and mercy (2:8-13)

V. Faith Producing Good Works (2:14-26)

IV. LIVING ETHICALLY (2:1-13)

A. AVOID PARTIALITY (2:1-7)

Biblical Text

KJV—1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

NIV—1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by

my feet,” **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? **5** Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? **6** But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? **7** Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

NASB—**1** My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. **2** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, **3** and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” **4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? **5** Listen, my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? **7** Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

1. Structure of Main ideas

a. Principle: do not show favoritism—v 1

- Supported by example—discriminating against the poor—vv 2-3
- This is just one example—there are many other ways to show favoritism
- But this was a problem they had in the Jerusalem church—see 5:1-6—problem of the rich

b. What is favoritism?—v 4

- To make distinctions among yourselves
- To become judges with evil motives

c. How God works—historical evidence—v5

1. God chose the poor for two things

- o To be rich in faith
- o To be heirs of the kingdom

2. Not just all the poor—but those who love Him [the Kingdom is promised only to them]

d. Contrasting behavior—v 5—of the church members

1. But you have dishonored the poor—implied: whom God has honored

2. Implied—that they have done this in two ways

- o By discrimination—honoring the rich and not honoring the poor
- o By association—by honoring those whose behavior is not godly

e. Why these rich persons should not be honored—vv 6-7

- They oppress the [other] church members—many of whom are poor
- They drag the [other] church members into court
- They blaspheme the name of Christ

2. Do not show favoritism—or ‘partiality’

a. Biblical phrase = ‘respect of persons’

1. **προσωπολημψια**

a. Meaning = one who takes/snatches another’s face
 one who is a ‘face-receiver’
 one who is taken with one’s face/presence/person
one who is influenced by outer appearance, not inner character

b. Biblical examples where this is addressed [same noun]

- o **Rom 2:11**—God is impartial; He will judge the Jew and the Greek alike—there will be wrath and tribulation for those who do evil, and glory and honor for those who do good
- o **Eph 6:9**—masters are to treat slaves well—realizing that their Master is in heaven—and there is no partiality in Him
- o **Col 3:25**—wrongdoers will receive their punishment from the Lord—everyone will receive the consequences of the wrongs they have committed—without partiality

c. Cognate—**προσωπολημπτησ**—‘respector of persons’

- o **Acts 10:34**—Peter said to Cornelius—“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality.” [God is not respector of persons]

b. The initial reason

1. Because we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

2. So—we are to be like Him

a. He is like the Father—not a respector of persons [Acts 10:34]

b. He did not show favoritism—He ministered to all [though he delayed Gospel to Gentiles]

- o Rich (Nicodemus, Levi, Joseph of Arimethea)—and poor (the crowds)
- o Male (most of his followers)—and female (the Marys, Martha, Salome)
- o Jews—and Gentiles (Legion, Syro-Phoenician woman)
- o Jews—and Romans—the centurion (healed his servant)
- o Jews—and Samaritans—Samaritan woman and Samaritan leper (one of ten)
- o Pharisees—and priests—followed Him

c. Later reasons—partiality reveals flaws in your character—v 4

1. ‘partiality’ in verse 4 = **διακρινω** = to judge, to call into question, to condemn, to separate

2. Meaning—(NIV) ‘discriminate’—(NASB) ‘made distinctions’

3. To do so is not always bad

- o A judge must separate right from wrong—fact from falsehood
- o Such a judge must be ‘impartial’
- o **Example:** statue of Lady Justice
 - Goddess: ‘Justitia’ (Latin)—Dike (Greek)
 - Blindfolded—weighing impartially on scales in left hand
 - Double-edged sword in right hand—representing Reason and Justice
 - Old Bailey—not blindfolded—so she can see scales and see to use sword

4. But *here* it is ‘to discriminate with evil thoughts’

- o To separate for wrong reasons—to ostracize
- o Usually due to personal bias—to serve one’s own interest
- o **Example:** butcher with thumb on scale

3. One example here of partiality—deference to rich over the poor

a. All the discriminating factors are external

1. Rich man—gold ring and fine clothes

- o Fine clothes = shining/splendid clothing (εσθησ) is related to word for aesthetics

2. Poor man—dirty clothes—no ring is mentioned because he has none

b. Why the contrast between ‘fine’ clothes and ‘dirty’ clothes [instead of cheap clothes]?

- The KJV translates this as ‘vile raiment’—which could mean very cheap
- But it was probably dirty too because the poor man has only one set of clothes
- He would have to go naked in order to wash his clothes
- Has so little money he could not afford to clean them—like many homeless persons

c. Where the two people are invited to sit

1. The rich man gets a ‘good place’

a. Like Jesus’ criticism of the teachers of the law

Mk 12:38-40—Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widow’s houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.

b. Notice—the actions of the scribes above

- They probably had to go to court in order to confiscate the widow’s houses
- Just like these rich people in James 2—who ‘drag you into court’

c. Historical examples

- Medieval monks and clergy who sat in choir—while people stood in apse
- Rich congregants who donated and paid pew rents—for the best seats in church

2. The poor man is relegated to the second or third place

a. Either made to stand—with no seat at all—no real ‘place’

b. Or to sit **under** the footstool

- Can mean ‘by’—but KJV version is better—literally ‘under’ the footstool—**υπο**
- Obvious position of servitude and humility
- Footstool—a metaphor—for conquerors who put their feet on necks of the defeated
- Every use of it in the NT is about submission of underlings to one’s authority

c. Example

- God will make the Lord’s enemies into His footstool—Mk 12:36
- Quoted in several NT passages from Ps 110:1
- Heaven is God’s throne—earth is His footstool—Mt 5:36; Acts 7:49

4. What are other examples and ways we show partiality?

- Stereotyping—profiling strictly on the basis of appearances:
 - **Example** of homeless person who took preaching classes at Agape BC
- Churches that discriminate
 - When we ‘target’ only certain ‘markets’ for membership—focused membership
 - When we refuse to reach out to all our community—and meet needs around us
 - When we accept only one ‘style’ because we are uncomfortable with others
- Other forms of discrimination
 - a. Based on inherent, natural qualities—is wrong
 - Racial
 - Gender
 - Age—to young or too old
 - Cultural—ethnic
 - People with physical or mental limitations
 - b. Based on actions, activities and habits—not always wrong to ‘profile’
 - Smoking—Arlington still allows it in restaurants
 - Tattoos—say something about personality and influences on a person
 - Profiled drivers—certain ages and types of cars
 - Promiscuous dress—fashion or sex?
 - Drinking and Gambling—what does it say when president wagers with PM?
 - Bar-hopping—Bourbon Street a culture unto its own
 - Homosexuality—is it a condition or a behavior?
 - c. What is always wrong
 - To dislike persons because they are different
 - To refuse to love/care for a person and share Christ with them

5. Why do we ‘discriminate’ in the *wrong* way?

- Lack of understanding—misperceptions about others
- Fear of those who are different from us
- Reluctance to change—getting out of our comfort zone

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IV. LIVING ETHICALLY (2:1-13)

B. FOLLOW THE ‘ROYAL LAW’ AND MERCY (2:14-26)

1. Biblical Text

NASB—8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. **9** But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. **11** For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12** So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. **13** For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

NIV— 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," [you are doing right. **9** But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. **11** For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. **12** Speak and act as those who are

going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, **13** because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

KJV—8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: **9** But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. **10** For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all. **11** For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. **12** So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. **13** For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

2. Structure and key points of passage

v 8—the Royal Law stated

vv 9-11—transgression of the Law

v 9—the transgression and the transgressor

- violation of the (royal) law = showing partiality
- this makes the violator a ‘transgressor’

v 10—perfection—requirement to keep the whole law

v 11—example—one violation makes a person a ‘transgressor’

v 12—the ‘law of liberty’—behave as one subject to this law

v 13—judgment and mercy

- judgment comes to those who do not show mercy
- mercy triumphs over judgment

3. Summary of ideas

- Christians follow the Royal law—love your neighbor
- We are still responsible to follow the Decalogue
 - The latter part of the Decalogue shows us how to love our neighbor—the Royal Law
- We are set free to follow the ‘perfect law of liberty’—see 1:25
 - Set free from sin, death, and empty legalism under the Law
- The Royal Law and the Law of Liberty—but emphasize mercy, not judgment
 - If we show mercy to others, we will receive mercy
 - If we are judgmental, we will be judged by the same standards

4. The Royal Law

a. There were two great commandments

1. Jesus identified them in **Mt 22:37-39—Mk 12:30-31**

- o Love the Lord your God—the greatest and foremost commandment
- o Love your neighbor as yourself—the second, which is like the first

2. Jesus drew these commandments from OT sources

- o Love the Lord your God—**Dt 6:5**
- o Love your neighbor—**Lev 19:18**

3. Jesus emphasized the importance of the two commandments

- o **Mt 22:40**—on these two commandments all the Law and Prophets depend
- o **Mk 12:31**—there is no greater law than these

4. Significance of these two laws

- o They explain the meaning of the Decalogue
- o One keeps the first four commandments to show love for God
- o One keeps the last six commandments to show love of neighbor
- o If one keeps these two laws—one has perfectly kept God's law
- o But it is not done out of legalism—rather out of concern for relationships

b. James has already mentioned the first of these commandments—to love God

1. As the prerequisite for receiving the 'crown of life'

- o Promised to everyone who love God—**1:25**

2. Those who really love God—*obey* God

- o They are 'doers of the word' and not 'hearers only'—**1:22**
- o They do this by following the 'perfect law of liberty'—**1:25**
- o So—they don't obey out of legalism and fear—but out of loving obedience

c. Now—**2:8**—James shifts to the *second* of these two great laws—love your neighbor

1. Jesus emphasized its importance separately—in the Sermon on the Mount

- o **Mt 7:12**—the **Golden Rule**—sums up the Law and the Prophets

2. Jesus explained the *second commandment* more fully in Luke

a. **Lk 10:25-37** = Luke's 'two great commandment' passage that parallels Mt 22 and Mk 12

b. A lawyer seeking eternal life says these are the greatest commandments—Jesus agrees

c. Then Jesus answers the lawyer's question—"But who is my neighbor?"

d. Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan

e. Key point at the end of the parable—**Lk 10:36-37**

- o Jesus asks—who of the three men proved to be a neighbor to the robbed man?
- o The lawyer answered—"The one who showed **mercy** to him."

d. The logical connection from **2:8** to **2:13**

- o Christians are to keep the Royal Law
- o This includes loving our neighbor as ourselves
- o When we love our neighbor properly—we show them mercy

5. Transgression of the Law—**vv 9-11**

a. James's warning

1. Showing **partiality** violates God's law

2. **προσωπολημπτειω** = discriminate, respect the external person, to snatch faces

a. The verb form of the noun in **2:1**

b. So—James returns to the original theme of chapter 2

c. This means the same thing as being 'judges' with 'evil motives'—**2:4**

b. Jesus implied this in the Parable of the Good Samaritan

- Notice—who did *not* show mercy in this parable
 - o The priest and the Levite
 - o They were probably prejudiced against the 'unclean' man—who was 'half dead'
 - o They showed 'partiality'—**Jas 2:9**
 - o They were 'judges' with 'evil motives'—**Jas 2:4**

c. The result of showing ‘partiality’

1. One becomes a ‘transgressor’—a sinner

a. Noun—**παραβατησ** = lawbreaker

b. Taken from verb—**παραβαινω** = one who steps out of bounds (outside the circle)

2. Why a ‘transgressor’?

a. Because it violates God’s law—the *second* great commandment—the basis of the last six

b. Because it goes against God’s very nature and character—remember points from **2:1**

o **Rom 2:11**—God is **impartial**; He will judge the Jew and the Greek alike—there will be wrath and tribulation for those who do evil, and glory and honor for those who do good

o **Eph 6:9**—masters are to treat slaves well—realizing that their Master is in heaven—and there is **no partiality** in Him

o **Col 3:25**—wrongdoers will receive their punishment from the Lord—everyone will receive the consequences of the wrongs they have committed—**without partiality**

o **Acts 10:34**—Peter said to Cornelius—“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality.” [God is not respecter of persons]

3. Policy of ‘zero tolerance’—**v 10**

a. Jesus said the *whole* law—every jot and tittle—still has authority—**Mt 5:17-19**

b. Paul said—all those of the ‘circumcision’ are required to keep the *whole* Law—**Gal 5:3**

c. If one keeps all the rest of the Law but stumbles at one point, he is still a ‘transgressor’

d. Nobody can keep the law perfectly—so we are all sinners—i.e. transgressors—**Rom 3:23**

e. Transgressors are outside circle of obedience and righteousness

o Out of relationship with God

o And unholy in God’s sight

4. Example of ‘zero tolerance’—v 11

- a. If one does not commit adultery but does murder—then he is still a sinner
- b. Implication—*any* violation of *any* commandment makes a person a transgressor
- c. Not excuse can be given based on type or degree of sin—they *all* make us unrighteous

6. The Law of Liberty—v 12

- a. Refers back to 1:25—the ‘perfect law of liberty’
- b. Remember what it means to have ‘liberty’ in Christ

1. We learn the real truth

Jn 8:31-32—*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*

2. We are free from sin [and death]—and the empty traditions of men

Jn 8:34-36—*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

3. The new law of the Spirit of life in Christ—did what the old Law could not do

Rom 8:2-3—*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. . . For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out ‘Abba, Father!’*

4. Free from empty legalism—which brings bondage [Paul tells the Galatian legalists]

Gal 2:4—*But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

c. In this context—James brings out several important points about judgment

1. Christians *will* be judged on their actions—“so act as *those who are to be judged*”

- o This is not the *basis* of our salvation

- o But we are still responsible to be obedient—we don't get a free pass on behavior
 - o It is the *evidence* that we are true followers of God—doers and not hearers only
2. Jesus highlighted the importance of words

- a. Our words reveal something about our inner character
- b. So what we say is a basis for judging our character

Mt 12:36-37—*But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give a accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your swords you will be condemned.*

- c. Words (external actions) do not *cause* one to become corrupt—but words indicate there is inner corruption that produces them
 - Note context—**Mt 12:33-35**
 - Jesus said that a good tree produces good fruit, a bad tree bad fruit
 - He also said—a good man brings out of good treasure that which is good—but an evil man brings out of evil treasure that which is evil

d. So the adage “sticks and stone may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” is not true when applied to the one who hurls those words—the person who speaks evil words will reap evil consequences.

3. Judgment will not be based on just a single word/incident—but a lifestyle of speaking/acting

- ‘speak’ and ‘act’ are present active indicatives—suggesting continuous action

4. And the basis of this judgment is the Law of Liberty

- o Do not worry about the legalistic adherence to rules
- o Instead, focus on two relationships—loving God and our neighbors
- o Then we will keep God's commandments—out of love and respect
- o And certainly—do not worry about holding to (613 Rabbinic) traditions of men

d. James also reinforces the earlier theme—we are to *act* rightly, not just affirm right things

1. See earlier reference to hearing and doing—**1:22**—***But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.***

2. Here the focus shifts to *speaking* and doing

- a. It is not enough to *say* the right thing—we must act on it as well

b. **I Jn 3:18**—*Little children, let us not love with word or tongue, but in deed and truth.*

3. This emphasis on *doing* anticipates James’s main point in the next section (2:14-26)

o It is not enough to have faith—we must act on that faith too

4. It also reminds us of the judgment of actions by the nations at the end—**Mt 25:31-46**

o Jesus said there will be a separation of sheep and goats

o The basis for this will be how we treat “the least of these”

o The action is not the cause of judgment—the action shows the character that is judged

5. Even Paul—who is so often *seen* to emphasize faith more than works—put it this way

II Cor 5:10—*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

7. Judgment and Mercy—v 13

a. The danger of ‘judging’

1. Judgment will be merciless to one who shows no mercy

a. This does not say not to judge—it talks about *how* to judge—always tempered with mercy

b. Who is it that ‘shows no mercy’?

o The person who ‘shows partiality’ and is a ‘judge with evil motives’

2. We will be judged in the same way we have judged others

o Jesus said—**Mt 7:1-2**—*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

3. It obviously refers to the wrong attitudes that James has already condemned

- Those who have treated the poor judgmentally will be judged the same way
- Those who have shown no love to poor brothers will be judged the same way

b. What this does not mean—what it does mean—regarding accountability

1. This does **not** mean we should not hold others (and ourselves) accountable to God’s word

2. It **means** we should not be prejudicial—hypercritical—or unmerciful in dealing with others

c. The triumph of mercy

1. Mercy—compassion—should guide our relationships with others

2. Mercy—compassion—for others causes us to see them in a different light

- o Not based on exterior conditions or circumstances
- o But caring for the real person beneath the exterior

3. It also guides us in speaking words of ‘judgment’ to anyone

- o Show loving concern for their soul, salvation, and witness—always be redemptive
- o Not a ‘holier than thou’ spirit—remember the ‘beams’ in our own eyes—**Mt 7:3-5**

d. It also reminds us of what Jesus said about mercy

1. In the Beatitudes—a positive promise

Mt 5:7—*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*

2. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant—a negative warning

Mt 18:21-35—the master was merciful to his indebted servant, but showed him no mercy when the servant showed no mercy on his own debtor

e. It reinforces the Old Testament emphasis on mercy for the dispossessed

Zech 7:9-10—*Thus the Lord of hosts said, “Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.*

f. He closes on a triumphant note

- o If we follow Christ and the Royal Law and the Law of Liberty
- o We will consequently show mercy—as an inherent part of our redeemed character
- o And mercy—with us as with God—always trumps judgment!

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B. Follow the 'royal law' and mercy (2:8-13)

V. Faith Producing Good Works (2:14-26)

KJV—**14** What [doth it] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, **16** And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [doth it] profit? **17** Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. **18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. **19** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. **20** But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? **22** Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? **23** And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. **24** Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. **25** Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [them] out another way? **26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

NIV—**14** What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? **15** Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. **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. **19** You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. **20** You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? **21** Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? **22** You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. **23** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. **24** You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. **25** In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? **26** As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

NASB—**14** What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, **16** 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? **17** Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. **18** But someone [fn17] 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." **19** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **20** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **22** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; **23** 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. **24** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **25** 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? 26 For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

A. OUTLINE OF TEXT

1. The main point

- Three times the main point is made: faith without works is dead faith—see vv 17, 20, 26

2. Two introductory questions (v14):

- What good is it if you have faith but no works?
- Can faith by itself [without works] save a person?

3. Illustration—situation addressing the questions (vv15-16)

- If someone needs help and you only speak empty words of advice—what good does it do?

4. Conclusion (v17)

- Faith with no works is dead—powerless by itself

5. Explanation—a contrast explains the principle (v18)

a. If one person has faith and another has works

b. If one thinks he can *show* his faith without works—which is wrong

c. The other can show his faith *by* his works—which is true

- o Implied point—[*Showing* something takes action—not just words or intent]
- o Implied point—[But you can't produce *real* works without faith behind it]

5. Principle—belief by itself is not enough (vv19-20)

a. Illustration of this point—even the devils believe and tremble—v 19

b. Reiteration of main point—faith without works is dead—repeats conclusion in v 17

- o Implied questions
[So, what kind of faith does make a difference?]
[So, what is the role of works?]

6. The role of works in justification (vv21-26)

a. The reasoning (vv23-24)

1. The argument is predicated on the fact that faith justifies—v 23

- James quotes Gen 15:6—Abraham believed and God counted it as righteousness

2. The point asserted = the only faith that justifies is faith that produces works—v 24

b. Two examples

- o These show that *working* faith is what *actually* justifies
- o The examples are Abraham and Rahab
- o The central point

1. Example 1—Abraham (vv 21-23)

- a. Abraham was justified by his works—when he offered Isaac on the altar
- b. Abraham's works *did* what his faith intended—his works *finished* his faith

2. Example 2—Rahab (v25)

- o She was justified by receiving the messengers and helping them to escape

c. The conclusion—v 24

1. This is found in verse 24—between the two examples
2. The point—a person is justified not just by faith, but by works also
3. Another way of stating the main point
 - a. The main point in vv 17, 20, 26 = faith without works is dead
 - b. Here—only faith *with* works can justify—only then is it alive enough to work!

7. Final summary statement—v 26

- a. Reiterates the point made in verses 17 and 20
- b. The point = faith without works is dead
- c. Illustrated by an analogy
 - o Just like a body without spirit is dead
 - o So faith is inanimate—lifeless—without works