

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 22, James 2:14-20

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 22, James 2:14-20.

We're ready now to move into the second portion of chapter 2. As you remember, we have the exhortation at the beginning of chapter 2, my brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, which he then goes ahead and substantiates by developing the supporting argument with regard to partiality.

Actually, the supporting arguments are the twofold argument here in 2:1 through 13, namely that partiality is contrary to the election of God, to God's election of the poor. That is found, of course, in 2:2 through 7. And then that partiality is contrary to the law, 2:8 through 13. One might say contrary to God's law, 2:8 through 13.

Now, in 2:14 through 26, he actually supports all that he's been saying in 2:1 through 13 by introducing really the argument regarding justification. Justification by a faith that expresses itself in works over against separating faith from works, insisting now that any faith that is true faith, that is valid faith, must have as its corollary what he goes ahead to call works. This, of course, suggests that the problem, the fundamental problem lying behind 2:1 through 13, is a bifurcation, a dichotomy, a separation of faith and works.

Of course, by this point, we know how James feels about bifurcation and division. He operates on the basis that God is one. That's a fundamental truth about God, which he derives from the Shema in Deuteronomy 6. Here, O Israel, the Lord, our Lord, is one God.

God is one, not simply in the sense that there are no other gods, but which, of course, is one aspect of the meaning of the Shema and perhaps a dominant one there in the Deuteronomy context. But there's another aspect to it, too, which James picks up upon, and that is that God is one in the sense that he is undivided, that he is whole, that God perfectly coheres around the center of commitment to do good, commitment to give, and to give good towards his human creation and specifically towards his people, those who believe in him. Now, this bifurcation, then, is, as I say, very offensive to James.

He sees this as a fundamental repudiation of the faith. And so, this business of showing partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, suggests, as I say, a dichotomy within the person. This cannot be.

So, he substantiates, then, what he says regarding the problem of showing partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ by the argument regarding faith and works, that is to say, faith and must cohere over against being separate. Now, that's why we say here that he moves from the specific exhortation to the general principle. So, you have both substantiation and generalization here because obviously, what he goes ahead to say in 2:14 through 26 applies not only to partiality, not only to the kind of bifurcation that he has been describing and lamenting in 2:1 through 13 but applies more generally.

So, the specific exhortation supported by the general principle. Of course, the general principle is that faith, apart from works, is dead. We have this in 2:14 through 26.

Now, as we stand back and look at the whole of this portion, 2:14 through 26, we'll see that, at least in my judgment, he sets forth the principle in 2:14 through 17 through a series of rhetorical questions. Then, he goes ahead and gives supporting arguments to this principle in 2:18 through 26, which, of course, means that we have substantiation here. The principle is set forth in 2:14 through 17, and then he substantiates or supports or gives reasons for the validity of this principle in 2:18 through 26.

Now, with regard to the principle itself, as he articulates it in 2:14 through 17, you read here, is dead. Now, he begins here, of course, with the declaration in verse, and actually, I should have given the verse for reference here, in verse 14. And that is, the declaration has to do with one's own faith without works.

What is a prophet, my brethren? If a man says he has faith but has no works, can his faith save him? Then he goes ahead and gives evidence for this, which, of course, really involves substantiation. He actually substantiates this claim that it is of no profit if a man says he has faith and has not works, that his faith cannot save him. And he says, the reason I say so, I say this, and the reason why you ought to believe it, is if a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warm and filled, without giving him things necessary for the body, it has no profit.

Then he goes ahead and draws a conclusion from that, which essentially parallels the declaration at the beginning of the paragraph. So, he ends here in verse 17 with a conclusion, an inference. This, of course, is a kind of logical causation, drawing an inference from what he has said.

So, faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. Now, with regard to the declaration in 2:14, what does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith and has not works? We note here that James engages in an imaginary dialogue. Really, what he does

here at this point, he's going to continue it on through the end of the chapter, is to engage in what we call a diatribe.

Now, in general English parlance, a diatribe means a rant or the like, but this is not what we have in mind. Diatribe comes from the vocabulary of ancient rhetoric, and it has to do with the practice that was quite common among ancient speakers and writers and rhetoricians, and that is to make their case, to make their argument, by engaging in a kind of dialogue. Maybe one might even say a kind of argument, but certainly a kind of dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor, an imaginary dialogue partner.

And so, he begins this already here, with this imaginary person who says he has faith but does not have works. Now, we note here that this person, this interlocutor, claims to have faith but does not have works. Note carefully, and this involves a close reading of the text, note carefully what we have here.

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Notice he does not say if a man has faith but no works. But rather, if a man says he has faith, but has no works. This indicates that this man does not actually have faith.

He says he has faith, but has no works. Now, James could have said, what does it profit a man if he has faith but has no works, or if he says he has faith but says he has no works? But no, you do not have any correspondence between these two members of the contrasting statement.

He says he has faith, but in fact, he has no works. As I say, this indicates very subtly, but I think quite effectively, that this person does not actually have faith. He is claiming to have faith, but does not actually have at least what James would consider true faith, or any faith that is worth having.

This conclusion will be reinforced later here in the paragraph. Now, the main point of the verse is, of course, this is the predication that he makes, the assertion that he makes, that it does not profit him. What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but has not works? Now, of course, this is a rhetorical question, and so it's not a matter of asking a question for information.

It is a declaration in question form, and so he is really making an assertion. It does not profit a person who says that he has faith, but has not works. It does not profit him.

Now, the term profit here is *ta ophelos*. It is of no profit. There is no profit in it, and the word *ta ophelos* here, which the RSV translates as profit, indicates, and this is the best that I can come up with here, indicates an advantageous effect.

Notice here that the assumption, which is part of the Christian understanding of faith, which James shares with his readers. Otherwise, of course, he wouldn't put this in the form of a rhetorical question. He realizes that they will accept this. The assumption here, which is part of the Christian understanding of faith, which James shares with his readers, is that faith, by its very nature, leads to advantageous effects.

He is saying that, James is saying, that the man who says, the person who says he has faith, but does not actually have works, does not have true faith, because this does not qualify according to the criterion of true faith. It does not have advantageous effects. So, if a certain kind of faith can be shown to have no advantageous effects, it is by its very nature not true Christian faith at all.

By the way, we have here the use of the article in the Greek. He does not say, therefore, the word profit. What is the profit? we might say.

The point is, though, that quite often, the article in Greek, the definite article in Greek, is used demonstratively. And therefore, in this case, if the article is, in this passage, actually used demonstratively, it can be translated, can be understood, to mean, can this kind of faith save him? Can this kind of faith save him? As a matter of fact, that is a judgment of A.T. Robertson, a New Testament Greek, that he sets forth in his so-called large grammar. Incidentally, it is called the large grammar because when he originally wrote it, it was over a thousand pages long.

Then a few years later, he decided he had a great deal more to say, so he came out with a second edition, which had an additional 500 pages. But in Robertson's large grammar, this is what he says, and I think he is quite right. Can this kind of faith save him? Now, the advantageous effect that faith is assumed to have for the believer is indicated explicitly in this context.

Do you see it? Salvation. Can his faith save him? Or again, since this is in the form of a rhetorical question, restated in declarative form, his faith cannot save him. By the way, this statement does suggest that he has a kind of faith, but not true faith.

It's a kind of faith that cannot save, and, therefore, is not true of faith. Now, this notion of salvation, James is going to link in just a few verses from here, a few verses down, he's going to link with justification. But at this point, he is talking about salvation.

He uses the word salvation. Salvation in this context is probably understood in the sense, primarily understood, in the sense of escape from end-time judgment. On the basis of the immediate context, that's exactly what he was talking about in the immediately preceding verse.

Verse 13, for judgment, is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy, yet mercy triumphs over judgment. Which, incidentally, is tied to the showing of mercy. A point that would be made in 2:16, and hence tied into the concept of faith.

Now, he goes ahead, having made this declaration, this initial declaration in 2:14, to support it in 2:15 and 2:16. Notice James' method. He likes putting forth exemplary scenarios. We saw in an earlier segment that that's exactly what he does in 2:2 through 4, where he wants there to support the exhortation to show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He supports that by this very vivid scenario there. He does the same thing here. Incidentally, he especially likes to present negative sort of scenarios.

Those that show some sort of difficulty in support of what he has just said. And again, that's what he does here. So, you have a scenario.

Again, there's no reason to think that he's thinking of an event that actually occurred. But he is creating this scenario in order to make the point. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? Again, in context, this almost certainly is what James has in mind when he talks about mercy or when he talks about mercy in verse 13.

Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. This then illustrates an unmerciful sort of behavior, the lack of showing mercy. Now, I mentioned, of course, that this salvation, let me just mention here, going back for a second, that this salvation that he talks about in verse 14 almost certainly has primarily in the notion of end-time judgment and salvation from end-time judgment.

But I think it is also related in James' mind to present salvation, to liberation, in other words, to the kind of freedom that Christians can experience now, which is an aspect of salvation in James' soteriology, in his doctrine of salvation. Again, though, this is supported by the immediate context, verse 12, so speak, and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. And, of course, he had earlier talked about the law as a law of liberty in 1:21, well, in 1:25, which also involved the salvation of the soul in 1:21.

So, his understanding of salvation involves both present deliverance from those things that keep us in bondage, that prevent us really from a full experience of the kind of rich life that God wants to give to his people now, understood especially, of course, as a release from bondage, as well as salvation in terms of future consummation. Now, as I say, the evidence is found in this, or the support is found in this scenario, in verses 15 and 16. This is a hypothetical situation.

It is an example of faith without works, which is included to demonstrate the point that such faith is profitless. It has no advantageous effects. Now, of course, this is structured, verses 15 and 16 are structured according to contrast here.

And it's essentially a contrast between the speaking of a prayer over against actual giving. What runs this business of relating to the poor person in terms of speech, which does not include any sort of corresponding action? The contrast is between speaking without doing and doing.

The speech, of course, is actually a blessing in a sense. Go in peace; be warmed and filled. Now, this business, this contrast between speaking without doing and doing, of course, is exactly what he has in mind, what he had in mind in verse 14.

What is a profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? There you see, you have speech without action. Here, you also have speech without action. I think it's important to note then the relationship to, also to, there's a, even as he talks about speech without action here, there is a connection between speech without action here and hearing without action in 1:22 through 25.

The problem back in 1:22 through 25, which he says, which, you know, involves being doers of the word, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves, that involved hearing without action. Now, this involves speaking without action. It may be that a type of faith is expressed in the prayer, be warmed and filled.

Here we have, incidentally, the passive voice. Now, we mentioned when we were talking about interpretation and interpretive, different types of interpretive evidence, the importance, potential importance at points of inflection, and changes in the form of the word that indicate its grammatical meaning and significance. Here, we have the passive voice.

In other words, it's not a matter, it's not a matter of, of, of someone doing something, but rather of something being done to someone. That's what we mean by the passive voice. Here he says, says, be warmed and filled.

Now, one of the functions of the passive voice in the New Testament is what is called a so-called divine passive. Pardon me for being a little technical at this point, but it's not a hard concept. Sometimes, if you want to get really fancy about it, it is called the passive of divine circumlocution. It involves the use of the passive voice when there is no explicit indication of who does the action. That's what you have here.

He doesn't, he doesn't say, be warmed and filled by someone. When you have the passive used without an indication of who is responsible for the action, simply stating the passive without any indication of who, of who does it, that, that, that can be the divine passive. And when you have, and when you have the divine passive, that really

means that God is the unnamed subject of the action or the, I should say, the unnamed actor, which case in this passage, be warmed and filled by God.

He's saying, may God warm and fill you. Incidentally, the divine passive is, is used probably, well, almost certainly as a device. And this was especially common among, you don't really have it much in, in, in, in the Greek of the period in general, but it's found mostly in the New Testament.

It's kind of, it's largely unique to the New Testament and who, and, and, and actually to Jewish Greek writers of the time. And it's found especially among those New Testament writers who are, who are Jewish. The point of it is that it's a way of talking about the action of God without actually using the word God or the name God.

The Jews held the name of God in extreme reverence. You know, of course, how much the Old Testament emphasizes the majesty and the glory and the sacredness, the sanctity of the name of God, which, of course, is expressed in the Ten Commandments. I shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

And so, the Jews were very sensitive with regard to the sanctity of the divine name and held God's name in such reverence that they believed that even by uttering the name, the word God, any more than was absolutely necessary, they vulgarized it. They trivialized it. So, they developed a number of expedients to talk about God without the use of the divine name.

One of them was the divine passive. So, it was just understood that if you use the passive voice without an explicit indication of who does the action in context, it was pretty clear that God may very well be in mind that they could talk about God without actually using the word God. This concern with regard to the sanctity of God's name, of course, is a problem that modern people tend not to have.

But, they certainly did have that kind of conviction. Incidentally, another, another expedient, just as an aside, that they developed, I think, although this has been challenged recently, but I think it's the case, and I think there's still a consensus that this is so, is, which you have especially in Matthew's gospel, to talk about the place where God dwells as a kind of substitute for the divine name. So, the kingdom of heaven is really, in Matthew's gospel, synonymous with the kingdom of God.

Matthew uses the kingdom of heaven about 33 times the kingdom of God four, but only in those passages where it's important in terms of the context actually to name God do you have the kingdom of God. Otherwise, the kingdom of heaven is used, which is entirely synonymous and identical with the kingdom of God. But again, it's a way of avoiding the use of the divine name by talking about the place where God dwells over against, well, talking about the place where God dwells as a way of talking about God.

So, this is actually a kind of prayer. May God warm and fill you. So, we note that, and the implicit comparison than between saying one has faith and this statement, because this does then express a certain kind of faith, a certain kind of faith in God, that God is good and that God will provide you with what you need.

It really involves a spoken belief, expressing even a desire that God will somehow meet the needs of these poor fellow Christians. And by the way, he's not talking simply in this passage about the poor in general, but about the Christian poor, a poor brother and sister. This has to do with how one relates to others within the community of faith, a fellow Christian.

Now, this person then who utters such a blessing, a wish, or a desire, this person knows accurately the situation that is suggested by what this person says and knows accurately the merciful. Verse 13, mercy triumphs over judgment. And 511, you have heard of the steadfastness of the Lord, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

So, the person knows accurately the situation, knows accurately the character of God as it bears on the situation that God is merciful, but refuses to involve himself in the work of God in this situation, refuses to act on what he knows. I say he because that's the language that is being used here, to act on what he knows. Work, therefore, involves two things, according to this passage.

Active consistency with spoken belief. It's extremely important to note. What does James mean when he talks about works here? In this passage, in this context, it means, first of all, active consistency with spoken belief.

And secondly, actively sharing the work of God. That is, becoming partners with God in God's redemptive, merciful activity. One other brief comment with regard to verses 15 and 16 here, and that is that, although the RSV translates verse 15 as ill-clad if a brother or sister is ill-clad, actually, the word here is *gunnoi*, which really basically means naked.

It can mean ill-clad, but that is not the way it usually is understood. It's not the way it's used. It typically and basically means naked.

This has a two-fold significance, and that's probably the way it ought to be translated here. Of course, the reason why it's translated ill-clad is that it has to do with a person who lacks resources for adequate clothing. But the fact that he talks about nakedness here points, on the one hand, to the whole issue of shame.

He is actually, I think, picking up on and expressing another aspect of poverty. It doesn't have simply to do with material distress or material deficiency, but there is a

shame attached to it, which also, in addition to the material need and material deficiency, cries out to be addressed in terms of merciful action. The shame of poverty, there is a social stigma attached to it, which, of course, is linked to this whole notion of shame, which is really typically expressed in terms of nakedness within the biblical tradition.

First of all, just as an example, in the fall narrative, they were naked but were not ashamed and the like. So, as I say, there is a conceptual connection between nakedness and shame. But then beyond that, this may be, we can't say for sure, but it may be an allusion to Jesus' discussion of the sheep and the goats that you have in the 25th chapter of Matthew.

In terms of evidence, we know, of course, that there are several passages in which James echoes the teachings of Jesus that are found especially in Matthew's gospel. And so, James seems to have been acquainted with the Jesus tradition, especially the Jesus tradition that is connected with Matthew. Not that he necessarily knew. As a matter of fact, I think there's no way that he knew Matthew's gospel because the gospel would not have been presumably until some years after this epistle was written.

But he seems to have been acquainted with the Jesus tradition that Matthew also was acquainted with and incorporated. And, of course, you remember, I was naked, and you did not visit me or you did not clothe me. You did not give me clothing and this kind of thing.

And so, he may be going back to the Jesus tradition and reminding his readers that Jesus himself considered this kind of thing of sufficient significance to include it within his teaching while he ministered on earth. Now, there is a causation here where he says, basically, having this kind of faith profits nothing. That's the point, of course, of the very last statement in verse 16.

Any one of you says, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, yet what does it profit? The way of putting it is, it profits nothing. Now, this is somewhat ambiguous; the statement is open-ended and may actually involve two things that are bound together. We're answering the question, what exactly does he mean when he says here, it profits nothing.

What is the point? As I say, it may involve two things that are bound together. First, he is suggesting it does not profit the poor person. He goes away, notes, and goes in peace.

By the way, let me just mention this. We saw in the scenario in 2:2 through 4 that James uses spatial description and spatial realities to point to relational realities. The

person put forward in the scenario in 2:2 through 4 says to the wealthy person, the person who has means, have a seat here, please.

The spatial nearness suggests relational intimacy and relational connectedness. Whereas, when he says to the poor person, stand there, that spatial distance points to relational distance, wanting to have nothing to do with the person. That may be suggested here by what the person says in our scenario in verse 16, go in peace.

Now, this is highly ambiguous because, of course, going in peace was typically a kind of blessing. But in this context, one has to suspect that James has something else in mind too. And that is that beneath this pious language, go in peace is a desire to be rid of this person, a desire to be separate from him, to have this poor person go away from him.

Go in peace. At any rate, he goes away, notes, go in peace, still naked and hungry. Now, this kind of faith then, and this is what we're making at this stage, this kind of faith has no advantageous effect within the community.

It is profitless, it is profitless to the poor fellow Christian. It is profitless to the community. The fact that it has no advantageous effect on the fellow Christian implies that it has no advantageous effect on the person who says he has this kind of faith.

Notice that the fact that the obvious, the manifest fact that it does not benefit the person, the person who is poor, also suggests it does not benefit; it does not have any advantageous effect for the person who says it as well. Now, there is, of course, a close connection between the individual and the community. This is a poor Christian brother.

If this type of action does not benefit the community, it suggests it does not benefit the individual either. If it does not benefit the community or others in the community, the suggestion is it does not benefit the individual either. So, there's a connection.

Profitless for other Christians indicates it is profitless for the has such faith, which really leads into the second thing that I think he has in mind with regard to his being profitless, and that is it does not profit the person himself, the man himself who utters this quote-unquote blessing because he has not shown mercy and therefore is judged by the God in whom he claims to have faith, the God of the law, which is really the law of love. The God of the law is the God of love, and this person is not showing love and therefore is not really placing confidence in does not really have a relationship with the God of love who is a God of the law and the God who shows mercy. Verse 13 and again, 5:11, how can a person truly believe in the God who commands? Verse 8, you shall love your neighbor as yourself and who judges on the

basis of mercy shown to others and at the same time contradict the law of love and refuse to show mercy.

Manifestly, that is impossible. That is why James can draw the conclusion he does draw in verse 17, so faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. This includes what he has said regarding such faith being profitless when he says it's dead.

It includes what he has said regarding such faith being profitless, verse 14, but it goes beyond it. Verse 17 is not simply a restatement of verse 14, where he talks about the profitlessness of faith, but it goes beyond it. Now he talks about the deadness, the deadness of this kind of faith.

It is not simply a matter that this kind of faith does not issue advantageous effects and advantageous benefits. But when he goes ahead to say it is dead, he is insisting, James is, that such faith is incapable of doing anything at all, not simply that it lacks advantageous effects, but it is incapable of doing anything at all. That, of course, is a character of a corpse.

A corpse cannot do anything. It's incapable of doing anything. This kind of faith is dead in the sense that it is incapable of doing anything at all.

For all practical purposes, it doesn't exist. It does not, it does not, it not only does not produce works, it is unable to produce works. A faith without works manifests its deadness, its inability to do anything.

It has no life, no vitality, and is not of God. For God is a God of life and has nothing to do with death. Of course, this suggests that works are not an added extra to faith, but rather an essential expression of faith.

A person who does not have works does not have real, genuine, valid faith at all, not the kind of faith that matters. Now, he goes ahead, of course, in verses 18 through 26 to support these claims that he has made in verses 14 through 17. And again, he continues the diatribe, this discussion, this dialogue, with the imaginary interlocutor.

But someone will say. So, he begins then with an anticipated objection. But someone will say.

In other words, in contrast to what I've just said, there may well be a contradictory opinion, a different point of view, which will now be expressed in this quotation. So, you have an anticipated objection here to what he has said, a rejection of verse 17, that faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. The objection here is that faith can be separated from works.

That faith and works are separable. Someone will say, you have faith, and I have works. As I say, the essential claim is that faith and works are separable.

Now, this implies a certain understanding of faith on the one hand and a certain understanding of works on the other hand. That is to say, this statement implies that faith and works are of such a nature that they can exist in isolation. That they can exist in isolation.

Now, a couple of things with regard to this statement. There's more here than meets the eye. If we go beneath the surface a bit.

We do know, of course, at least we have every reason to think, as we move through verses 18 through 26, that James has either Paul or a certain understanding of Paul, of Pauline, of Paul, or of Paul's teaching, or Pauline teaching in mind. I am inclined to think, as this will become clear as we move through this, that James is not so much arguing against Paul as against a kind of misunderstood Paulinism, a kind of misunderstanding. One might even say a kind of perversion of Paul's thinking, of Paul's teaching regarding justification.

But this notion that one Christian can have faith and another Christian can have works, might also be addressing another aspect of a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching, and that has to do with Paul's teaching regarding spiritual gifts. You know, you remember that, well, you find this especially, but not exclusively so, in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14. Of course, this is also found in a brief passage, a brief portion of Romans 12, that Paul talks about, of course, spiritual gifts in the community, and Paul makes a point that not everyone has all the gifts that God has distributed gifts so that certain members of the community have certain gifts, and other members of the community have still other gifts.

Every member of the community has some gift, and some members of the community may have more than one gift, but no one has one; everyone has all; everybody has at least one gift, but nobody has all the gifts. And, of course, the community needs all the members with their various gifts in order for the community to function well. This notion of the distribution of gifts within the community, and as a matter of fact, remember that in 1 Corinthians 12, one of the gifts is a gift of faith.

So, James may here be addressing a misunderstanding or a misapplication of Paul's teaching with regard to the gifts of the Spirit within the church and says, essentially, I have faith, and you have works, so that faith and works now are understood according to the framework of Pauline distribution, the Pauline notion of the distribution of gifts within the community, that some people have faith and other people, other Christians, have works. Clearly, James wants to correct that notion,

and, of course, quite obviously, that's not what Paul had in mind at all. But, again, it may very well be a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching here.

But note, too, that in the flow of this argument, given James' emphasis that faith without works is dead, that is to say, that one should not claim to have faith without having works, really, it's very surprising that this interlocutor with whom James is engaged in an argumentative dialogue says what he says. You have faith, and I have works. After all, wouldn't you expect this person to say the opposite? You have works, and I have faith.

But this person who is taking issue, this imaginary interlocutor who is taking issue with James, says, you have faith, and I have works. What's going on? As a matter of fact, that sends some tension with what Paul says in the very next statement in 18b. He says to this person, show me your faith apart from works, and I, by my works, will show you my faith.

But this person actually doesn't claim to have faith. He claims to have works. What's going on here? Scholars, of course, have debated what's going on here for a long, long time.

I can simply tell you what I think and why. By introducing this statement in such a surprising way, whereas you'd expect him to say, you have works, and I have faith, saying instead, you have faith and I have works, I think that James is suggesting here that he does not wish to argue simply that faith without works is dead. That it's impossible to have true faith without works.

But he also wants to make the opposite or the converse point, and that is, it is impossible to have works without faith. Not only is it a matter of being objectionable to claim that you can have faith without works, but it would also be objectionable for anyone to think that works are possible without faith. Not only faith without works but also works without faith cannot be obtained.

Now, this response then, he goes from this anticipated objection in verse 18a to the objection answered in 18b through 26. And what he does here is to appeal, first of all, to the nature of faith. This is found in verse 18b.

So, what you really have here is a kind of interrogation. This claim, you have faith, and I have works, is a problem, which he then goes ahead to address, really to solve. It also, of course, involves a claim that James considers to be false, and he, therefore, goes ahead; in terms of these appeals, he goes ahead to support his James implicit claim that this statement, this objection from the interlocutor, is wrong.

So, he begins by saying this is wrong because of the nature of faith itself in 18b. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I, by my works, will show you my faith. This

is really an appeal to reality, an appeal to the interlocutor to back up his claim that faith and works are separable, to back up his claim, and suggesting that that claim is undemonstrable.

It cannot be backed up. It cannot be supported by facts, by reality. It is contrary to reality.

He challenges the interlocutor to back up his claims, and he appeals to reality. He says you must demonstrate this versus engaging in bare assertion. Now, the assumption that lies behind what James is saying here is this.

The nature of confession of faith is such that for it to make any sense at all, it must be demonstrated. Another way of putting it, faith, by its very nature, must be expressed.

A non-expressed faith or a non-expressible faith undercuts the claim of faith itself. It robs the claim to have faith in any substance. Now, he goes ahead and appeals also to demons.

In verse 19, you believe, and of course, this is from the same root as faith, *pistis* is faith, *pisteueis* here, you believe, you have faith that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe and shudder.

Okay, this is an interesting verse. He appeals to demons here in his argument. As we unpack this, there are really three points that James wishes to make here.

There are really three points that we should make with regard to this verse. The first is that the object of faith is explicitly identified. James now explicitly identifies the object of faith.

This is the only time in the book of James that James actually talks about the object of faith. That is to say, what one has faith in is what one believes. For James, faith is not only faith as personal trust and commitment, as is emphasized in Paul.

It is that, but, as a matter of fact, we saw that in 2:1, whereas I said in the other segment, I think we do have the objective genitive, that is to say, that the object of faith is our Lord Jesus Christ. This is faith, as I say, personal confidence in the person of Jesus Christ. You find that in 2:1. I think you find it also in 2:21 through 23, when he says, Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. That involves personal confidence, that is to say,

placing confidence in the person of God. So, it is true that part of James' understanding of faith is personal trust and commitment in the person of Christ, in the person of God, as is emphasized in Paul.

But James also understands faith, related to that, James understands faith as adherence to a creed, that is to say, placing confidence in a certain understanding about God, a certain notion about God. Faith as adherence to a creed and a specific creed, and that is the unity of God. You believe that God is one.

You believe something about God. I think we have to be careful not to separate faith as creedal affirmation with faith as personal trust or commitment too much. Because, of course, in order to have faith in the person of God, one must know who and what God is.

So, creedal belief as creedal affirmation, creedal assent is part of, one might even say, inseparable from personal trust or confidence. As a matter of fact, one can talk piously about having personal confidence, have faith as personal confidence or trust in God, but if you do not know who God is if you do not have faith as an affirmation of right thinking or right, one might even say, right doctrine with regard to God, your personal faith, your personal commitment may turn out to be idolatrous. Have faith in God, but the God you have faith in is not the true God and does not correspond with the God as he is presented in Scripture.

So, there is a deep, a profound connection between faith as theological assent and faith as personal commitment and trust. One of the dangers, I might just say incidentally, of a de-emphasis upon serious theology and theological thinking, which is found in some parts of the church. This has always been the case, but especially perhaps in recent years, is that it runs very seriously the risk of idolatry. All that to say is that James has this holistic understanding of faith.

It involves personal trust and commitment in a God who is known, who is known rightly, and especially is known as being one, the Shema, the very heart of the Jewish faith, of the Hebrew faith. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God. If you believe that God is one, you do well.

In James here, then, faith is seen as assent to the unity of God. And we note that this assent receives James' mark of approval. If you believe that God is one, you do well.

As he had said in verse 8, if you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbors yourself, and you do well. This is a basic theological affirmation between the argument and the exhortations of the epistle as a whole. As we saw throughout, James emphasizes the unity of God as a basis for practical Christian life.

Now, this might be understood as a kind of creedalism, but James' point is that it is creedalism only if it is not accompanied by works. It is creedalism only if it is not accompanied by works. The thing that makes faith mere creedal assent over against the commitment of my person to trusting commitment to the person of God and Christ is the expression of such faith in action.

The thing that makes assent to doctrine creedalism versus a kind of personal trust that establishes a personal relationship, notice, a friend of God, it's according to Abraham, that establishes a personal relationship that expresses that personal relationship, a living, vibrant faith is the absence of works. True belief in the creed will involve the commitment of the whole person and should thus invoke faith in the Pauline sense, which is manifested by works. Incidentally, in a sense, this whole business with regard to what many people, many Christians, now refer to as mere creedal assent or mere intellectual assent, I think it involves anthropology, a view of humanity that was unknown in the ancient world and among the biblical writers.

Because if you dig down a little, if you dig down deep in terms of the biblical view of humanity, I think you'll find that their assumption is that if a person really truly believes something is true, that it will necessarily affect the whole person. I think, in other words, it seems to me that they would have had some problem with the concept that a person could be fully persuaded, one might say cognitively or intellectually, of something like the resurrection of Jesus without that affecting the person holistically. Now, James talks about divided persons as a problem and so we know that that idea was out there, but there is a deeper sense.

As a matter of fact, this is one reason why James has a problem with dividedness. There's a deeper sense that human beings are whole, that they're integrated. One of the tendencies, this may not be the case so much in certain parts of the world, but one of the tendencies in the West that characterizes modernity in the West is to compartmentalize, to compartmentalize personality.

And you have a kind of anthropology, a view of humanity, that allows for the possibility of a kind of compartmentalization that would have been, I think, quite alien, quite foreign to the thinking of ancient persons, especially biblical persons. Now, what we have here, though, secondly, beyond the object of faith being explicitly identified here, is that the object of this faith, that is, the belief in the unity of God, demonstrates the inherent and blatant contradiction of holding faith without works. The separation of faith and works implies a separation, a disunity, and a dichotomy within God himself, which is exactly the opposite of what faith maintains.

Do you believe that God is one? The belief that God is one implies that faith and works are one and that they cannot be separated. Of course, this also expresses a deeper assumption. By the way, this involves implications that we talked about when we were talking about method.

This implies, by way of assumption, that the Christian life is a reflection of the being of God himself. Now, the third point here is that the inefficacy, the ineffectiveness of the salvation of faith alone without works, is indicated by the comparison with demons. That, of course, is the main point he's making.

That's why he introduces demons here. You believe that God is one, you do well, even the demons believe and shudder. The demons also affirm the creed, but that kind of faith obviously will not save them from eschatological judgment.

There is, however, here, I think, an element of contrast between the person who says that he has faith and does not have works and the demons who believe that God is one. I think there is also a contrast as well as a comparison. Now, at one level, he's clearly making a comparison between those who would separate faith and works and the demons who have a kind of faith.

They believe that God is one for whom clearly that faith is profitless. It does not advantage them at all. They realize no salvation from it.

There's clearly a comparison between the person who says he has faith but has not works and these demons as described here, but there may also be a contrast. This is often missed by interpreters, but at least it's clear to me that you may also have a contrast between the person who says, I have faith but does not have works, and the demons who believe that God is one and shudder. There is an element of contrast here that may also underscore Jane's point.

That is, even in demons, this belief leads to action. They believe and shudder. The demons realize that faith without works on their part will lead to judgment and, Jane's may be implying, if they could repent and bring their behavior into line with their faith, they would.

That's why they shudder. The demons are, therefore, more aware and accurate in their perception of things than are these Christians. Now, it's a very interesting observation that in the Bible, the devil and demons have good theology.

They obviously have their problems, but theology is not one of them. You remember in the synoptic gospel tradition, you find this in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that the devil, Satan, realizes early on that Jesus is the son of God. Immediately after Jesus' baptism in Matthew chapter three, you have at the beginning of chapter four the temptation of Jesus by the devil, where the devil tempts Jesus precisely in his role if you are the son of God, which, incidentally, in the Greek is a first-class conditional statement, which assumes the fact that it could be translated, perhaps should be translated, since you are the son of God, do this, or since you are the son of God, do that.

Of course, even before human beings and even before the disciples come to realize that Jesus is the Son of God, the demons do. So, the devil and demons have good theology. That's not their problem.

But at any rate, this is, I think, a very effective argument on James' part and a very interesting one that he buttresses his point hereby, of all things, appealing to the faith insofar as you can call it that, the faith of demons. Now, and of course, really, you have the argumentum a fortiori here. If this is ineffective, if this kind of faith is really of no advantage to demons, how much more is it of no advantage to us? Now, he goes ahead then to appeal to scriptural testimony and this gets pretty involved.

So, I think this is a good place to pause here, and we can pick up in the next video segment.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 22, James 2:14-20.