

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 23, James 2:21-26

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session number 23, James 2:21-26.

Now, James moves next to appeal to scriptural history, and this is really the nub of the judgment that he wishes to make.

And, of course, James considers God to be, in some sense, the author of scripture and, of course, certainly the prime mover in terms of salvation history that you have recorded in the Old Testament. And so, this appeal to scriptural history is very much an appeal to God. This is really the crowning argument that he is able to make.

We have this in verses 20 through 25. So, we read here, Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? 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 works. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way. For as a body apart from the Spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

Now, in verses 21 through 24, he discusses Abraham, and then he will continue his appeal to scriptural history by bringing in someone from scriptural history who could not be more different from Abraham, as we'll see, Rahab, indicating that this is the case not only with Abraham but was typically the case in scriptural history. So, he begins with Abraham here in 21 through 24, and you have really a chain here. So, he moves from one thing to the next.

We have a recurrence of causation. He begins with justification. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? Now he addresses this interlocutor, who represents the alternative point of view here, as a shallow man, really an empty, vain person.

This actually is quite significant because James is suggesting here that this theological problem, as I say, this theological conviction that one can separate faith and works, that is legitimate, is valid to have a kind of faith that does not express itself in works,

is really not simply a theological problem, it is a moral problem. That is to say, it has to do really with the character of the person. It stems from a kind of emptiness, a kind of vanity in the sense of being empty, a kind of corruption of the depth of the person himself.

In other words, there is a personal problem that leads a person to adopt this point of view: you shallow man. The moral corruption of the heart of the person, or at least the moral vapidness of the heart of the person, may very well lie, he is suggesting, may very well lie behind this. Now he goes ahead to say, he makes a claim here that faith apart from works is barren.

The word here is *argos* [2:20]. Now, clearly, on the surface, this business being barren means that it, of course, does not bear fruit. It is useless.

It is inactive. It is idle. It does not do what is that which is necessary to be done for right standing, right relationship with God.

But I think that it is pretty clear that he is using this notion of barrenness because of the importance of barrenness in the story of Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament, and suggesting really that, and really drawing upon the remembrance that right at the heart of covenant, the covenant relationship between God and Abraham and Abraham's descendants was the promise of fruitfulness, was a promise of descendants, many descendants. So, barrenness really in the Old Testament was a kind of metonymy for no covenant relationship, for being outside of covenant relationship, for not enjoying covenant relationship with God, whereas experiencing fruitfulness was the sign, was the expression of covenant relationship with God. In some ways, it was a substance at that point of covenant relationship with God.

So, he is indicating here that the whole notion of relationship with God, of covenant relationship with God, is bound up with this question of the nature of faith in God. And, of course, faith also in the Abrahamic narrative, as he will go ahead to point out, stands at the center of the covenant. So, there is a connection between faith and fruitfulness, and between faith and covenant, on the one hand, which involves faith and fruitfulness, and no covenant relationship, which involves lack of faith and lack of fruitfulness.

But the kind of faith that Abraham had, of course, was fruitful. It actually resulted in something. It overcame barrenness and the like.

Now, here, of course, in verse 21, Paul introduces a notion of justification. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? Again, he states this in the form of a rhetorical question, which indicates that they know the answer, or at least they should know the answer. That is to say, it's a way of saying it's quite obvious, isn't it? On the basis of a fair and impartial reading of the

Scriptures, Abraham, our father, was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar.

This is not some sort of hidden mystery. It's manifest in the Scriptures. Now, justification is, I think, quite clearly a Pauline term.

There are some scholars, such as Luke Timothy Johnson, who has written a fine commentary, one of the very best, by the way, on James, who disagree with this and suggest that James is using justification without any reference to the fact that this was a term that was used by Paul at all. But it really is hard to, in my judgment, it's hard to conclude when James talks about justification as he does here, that he is not to some extent in some way in dialogue with Paul. Paul's use of the term, other than James, by the way, only Paul uses justification in the sense of, in the New Testament, uses a justification language in the sense of salvation and the right relationship with God.

Only Paul does that. The word is found that way only in one passage outside of the Pauline epistles, and that is in the 13th chapter of Acts, where Luke is reporting Paul's sermon before the synagogue there at Pisidian Antioch. But there again, Luke, that comes from the mouth of Paul as a character in the book of Acts.

So, this is, I think, a Pauline term. I think it's very difficult to get away from that. But James uses it in a somewhat different sense than Paul, or at least he does; maybe a better way of putting it is that he does something slightly different with it than Paul does.

Contra Paul, over against Paul, Abraham's justification is not found at the point of Abraham's belief in the promise of God, which found physical expression in circumcision, which was Genesis 15:6. According to Paul, and this Paul is very consistent at this point, according to Paul, Abraham was justified in Genesis 15:6. That is the point at which Abraham experienced justification. And let's just remind ourselves what we have here. Of course, in Genesis 15:6, James will actually quote this passage as well.

And again, this is another suggestion that James may very well have Paul in mind here. And Abraham, or Abram, believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. Paul picks this up, for example, in Romans chapter 4, verse 3, beginning with verse 2 of chapter 4. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Then he goes ahead to say what Paul does in verse 10. How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after but before he was circumcised.

Now, Abraham was circumcised in chapter 15. And so, Paul is being very explicit here that Abraham was justified by faith at the beginning of chapter 15, before his circumcision at 15:6. And you have a similar argument that Paul makes in Galatians as well. So that faith was reckoned to him as righteousness before his circumcision.

As a matter of fact, it might be helpful to just remind ourselves of what Paul says in the other place where he really discusses justification. And that would be in Galatians chapter 3, verses 6 through 9, the justification of Abraham, I mean. Thus Abraham, we read in Galatians 3:6 that Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

You see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed. So, then, those who are people of faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.

I might mention here just incidentally that although when Christians in general think of justification, they think, of course, of Paul. And when they think of Paul, they often think of justification, especially true of Protestant Christians. So, many Protestant Christians, particularly in the line of Luther, believe that at the center of Paul's thinking of Paul's gospel is justification.

In fact, and one can make that point, I suppose, but in point of fact, Paul uses justification language only in two of his epistles, in Romans and in Galatians. And so, there is a question just in terms of the appearance of the term, how central it was. Now, those in the Lutheran tradition and even people like C. K. Barrett, who was a Methodist, will argue, and I think there's some validity in this, that the idea of justification is found in Paul even where you do not have the word.

So, you do not necessarily have to have the term in order to have the idea. And that's fair. That's fair.

But at any rate, we just need to put this in some perspective. But clearly, James considers, well, clear in my mind, that James considers the issue of justification to be really quite significant for Paul and at least is arguing against certain ones who, in my mind, took Paul's notion of justification by faith and misconstrued it. And James, as I say, seems to be arguing against a misconstrual of Paul's notion of justification by faith.

But at any rate, Paul's understanding of justification, as it pertains to Abraham, is that he was justified at Genesis 15:6 before circumcision or before anything else, at anything else that followed it in Genesis 15:6. For James, though, Abraham was not justified, that is, declared to be righteous in Genesis 15, but in Genesis 22, the

binding of Isaac, the Akedah passage in Genesis 22, when Abraham offered up Isaac. That's why he says here, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac upon the altar? Now, the expression of Abraham's faith for James was not circumcision, as Paul takes it. I think you have a slight disagreement here.

It's not necessarily a contradiction, but anyway, James doesn't argue, at least we have to say, the way Paul does. The expression of Abraham's faith for James was not circumcision as it was for Paul, but the offering of his only son Isaac there in Genesis 22:12. God declares through his angel, the angel of the Lord, God declares in Genesis 22:12, Abraham obedient or righteous. The declaration of Genesis 15:6, as far as James is concerned, simply points ahead to and anticipates this obedient expression of Abraham's faith in Genesis 22.

As a matter of fact, we're going to see in verse 23 here that, I mean, in James 2:23, James sees Genesis 22 as a fulfillment of Genesis 15. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. There on Moriah, Genesis 22, Abraham was shown and declared to be righteous on the basis of this work, as James calls it.

Abraham was declared by God to be righteous because he actually was righteous. He obeyed God. Remember what the angel of the Lord, speaking really the words of God, said to Abraham there in Genesis 22:18, you have obeyed my voice.

And Abraham showed his actual righteousness by having faith that issued in action. So, that is, that's the claim he makes regarding justification. Now, he goes ahead and moves from justification to accompaniment.

This is found in verse 22. Of course, this is a conclusion from what he writes. So, by the way, this is a good example of logical causation.

Goes back, makes a statement, then draws an inference from it. You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works. And incidentally, that word complete, completed, that's translated completed, is from teleo, it was brought to perfection, was perfected by his works.

Now, at this point, James realizes that he might be misunderstood. By the way, we should say accompaniment and completion or perfection. At this point, in verse 22, James realizes that he might be misunderstood.

His emphasis upon works may lead to the conclusion that he downplays the role of faith, that faith is not important. That's especially true on the basis of what he says, said, the claim he made in verse 22, verse 21, was not Abraham our father justified by works? James realizes that he might be misunderstood, that his emphasis upon works may lead to the conclusion that he is downplaying the role of faith, that faith is

not important, and that the only thing that matters is works. In verse 22, then, James sets the record straight.

Faith was active, literally, worked together with. As a matter of fact, you have the word *sunerge*, that's sun, the prefix, with *erge*, which is a verb form of *ergon* or work, worked together with. Faith was active, worked together with, and assisted Abraham's works.

In other words, Abraham's works would have been impossible without faith. On the other hand, works complete—notice again the word *teleao*, bring to perfection—works complete or perfect faith. That is, works perfect or complete faith in the sense of causing faith to do what faith was meant to do in the first place, to bring one to the place of being declared righteous before God because one is actually righteous.

As Peter Davids puts it, again, this is another very fine commentary, incidentally, on James. As Peter Davids puts it, faith assists works, works perfect faith. I might just mention here at this point that this raises serious questions. What James says here raises serious questions about an improper division between what theologians refer to as imparted righteousness and imputed righteousness.

Of course, the whole notion of justification has to do with righteousness. Justification, the word justification is *dikaiosisune*, from *dikaios*, which is righteous. So, justification means to make or declare righteous.

Justification has everything to do with righteousness, in other words. And so, as I say, I think the argument of James raises serious questions about drawing to the wrong kind of distinction between imputed and imparted righteousness. According to theological jargon, imputed righteousness is acquittal before God.

It's the declaration by God that I, though a sinner, am forgiven. That's imputed righteousness, as it's usually called, over against imparted righteousness involves really moral transformation so that I really am enabled, empowered by God to live a life that is pleasing to God, a life of obedience, a life of righteousness in that sense. But James' argument here suggests that the declaration by God, the declaration by God that a person is righteous or is justified, must also involve the reality of actual righteousness in the person.

As I say, that the declaration by God that a person is justified, it was reckoned to him as faith, that the declaration by God that a person is justified will be accompanied by real moral empowerment and actual righteousness so that you cannot ultimately separate declared righteousness and actual righteousness. Well, at any rate, he goes ahead then and draws a conclusion from accompaniment to completion and from completion to fulfillment in verse 23a. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned him as righteousness.

This, of course, is Genesis 15:6. In other words, God's reckoning of Abraham's faith as righteousness in Genesis 15:6 was based upon God's recognition that Abraham's faith was true faith, the kind of faith that was issued in works, verse 22. God saw there in Genesis 15:6 that Abraham's faith was valid, was true faith, was a kind of faith that worked, that expressed itself in works. And that judgment on the part of God of the character of Abraham's faith was fulfilled, was realized, and was confirmed by what Abraham actually did in Genesis 22.

That assessment of Abraham's faith proved to be accurate when Abraham offered up Isaac in Genesis 22. Thus, the fulfilling of Genesis 15:6, which declared Abraham's faith to be a righteousness faith. Now, this leads then by way of causation; you see, you have a chain here, one thing leading to the next.

This leads according to, and what you have really, in a sense, is a theological retelling of the Abraham story here as it pertains to his faith. This leads then to what may very well be the climax of this retelling of Abraham's story, and is found in verse 23b, and he was called the friend of God. He was called the friend of God.

Now, there are two passages, not in Genesis, in the Old Testament, where Abraham is called God's friend. The first one is found in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, verse 7. 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, verse 7. Didst thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham thy friend? But also, in Isaiah 41:8. Isaiah 41:8. But you Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham my friend. I think he has; James has especially this passage, Isaiah 41:8, in mind because here God himself calls Abraham his friend.

Abraham my friend. So, this I think quite clearly is climactic in the progression. The ultimate function of faith, which issues in works, is personal reconciliation to God.

On the basis of Abraham's faith, which issued in works, this kind of relationship was achieved. The demands of personal relationship require actual righteousness. It's inconceivable to think of a person who is living a life of disobedience or rebellion against God, or even a life of indifference to obeying the commandments of God, being a friend of God, having any relationship with God at all.

The demands of personal relationship require actual righteousness over against a claim that does not do the works of God but, in fact, performs works that are contrary to God's will and purpose. Remember, we saw earlier that in 2:9, works are inevitable. If you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law of your work sin.

If you show partiality, you work sin. You are going to produce works. The only question is whether they are works of righteousness or works of unrighteousness.

The claim to faith that does not do the works of God, but in fact performs works that are contrary to God's will, works sin, and to God's purpose, that is at cross purposes with his own work, of course, is a contradiction of the whole possibility of having anything like a real relationship with God. Friendship, of course, involves mutual intimacy and fulfilling the conditions of a relationship, celebrating the intimacy of a relationship thus achieved. Later, James will say in 4.4, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Now, this comes in, leads to the general conclusion in verse 6. Again, this is logical causation. I say that's number 6 here. This general conclusion is found really in verse 24.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. Now, on the surface, this seems to contradict Paul. As a matter of fact, in the passage that we read from Romans 4, if Abraham were justified by works, he'd be justified.

If Abraham were justified by works, he would have something to boast about, but not before God. So, on the surface, it seems to contradict Paul. But in my mind, it actually contradicts a misunderstood Paul.

Now, I don't know whether James believed that he was arguing against Paul, when in fact he wasn't, because he misunderstood Paul, or whether he was arguing against people in his circles who had misunderstood Paul. I suspect it's the latter. But at any rate, it really amounts to the same thing.

I don't think you have a contradiction of Paul here. The works that James talks about are not the works of the law that Paul talks about, which is a usual referent when Paul speaks of works and is always a referent when Paul speaks of the impossibility of being justified by works. When Paul uses works, he's talking about the works of the law.

James implies that one must be saved by faith. This is implied, really, in verse 24. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

When he says not by faith alone, James implies that one must be saved by faith, but by a kind of faith that issues in works. It is on the basis of works, that is, works that stem from faith and must have faith as their foundation and active agent. It's on the basis of those kinds of works that God declares one righteous at the final judgment.

There is no forensic justification for sinners. That is to say, a matter of a kind of divine fiction, whereas God sees us as sinners, looks upon us as sinners, but sees Christ instead. There is no forensic justification of sinners.

There is a forgiveness of sin. There's forensic justification in that sense, but not a kind of justification before God that involves forgiveness without obedience. There is no forensic justification for sinners in that sense.

God declares as righteous, justifies those who are truly righteous, that is, who please him. This is actually the usual meaning of *dikaio*, or to justify, in the Septuagint, in the Greek Old Testament, one who pleases God because of actual righteousness. *Dikaio* in the Septuagint means to make or declare righteous, that is to say, and therefore to be acceptable to God, to make or declare righteous and therefore to be acceptable to God.

This is the basis of judgment, but such works are impossible without faith that stands behind them and is active in them. With this, Paul would have no quarrel. Notice, for example, what Paul says in Romans 2:6 through 11, for he will render, God will render to every person according to his works.

To those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are factious and do not obey the truth but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, for glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek, for God chose no partiality.

Now, just to say something here with regard to Paul, first of all, just to set the record straight, when James says here in his conclusion in verse 24, so you see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Just to be clear, nowhere does Paul talk about justification by faith alone. There are some translations of certain passages in Romans where *alone* is added, but that actually is not found in the original Greek.

That was added actually by Luther. It was Luther, in his German translation, who added *allein*, faith alone there, in Romans especially, Romans 3:28. But nowhere does Paul say that one is justified by faith alone.

Also, we need to be clear that that when Paul uses works negatively, talking about being justified or the attempt to be justified by works or the like, which doesn't work, it's not effective as far as Paul is concerned. When Paul uses works negatively, Paul is talking not so much about actions as attitude. This notion about being justified by works or the attempt to be justified by works involves an attitude on the part of the person. Paul is not talking about righteousness on the part of the person, that is to say, about a life of obedience to God.

That's not the referent when Paul talks about works in a negative way. When he uses works in a negative way, he's speaking attitudinally as a conviction that we can establish ourselves as righteous before God on the basis of our actions. This is the essence of sin, which the law in its legal form encourages, and hence, you have the connection in Paul between sin and the law.

But Paul actually does sometimes use works positively, really very much synonymously, or at least in accord with how James uses works here. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 1.3, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Jesus Christ and the love you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, as he says here. What you'll note here is we have heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this, you had heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel which came to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing so among yourselves from the day you heard and understood the grace of God in truth. Here, you find then that faith is really expressed, as I say, in works. But you find this, especially in Ephesians 2:10 where Paul says, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. You also have this kind of thing Galatians, actually in Galatians 5.6 where Paul says, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail but faith working through love. Faith is working through love.

Here you find then that love, which, by the way, he'll go ahead to say in verse 14 of chapter five, for the whole law is fulfilled in one law, one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. If you understand, in other words, 5.6 in light of what he goes ahead to say in 5.13, you'll see then that faith expresses itself in obedience, in love, which really is the heart of the will of God as expressed in the law. So, the works of Paul are a necessary expression of true faith.

As a matter of fact, in Romans 6:1-12, Paul engages in an argument that in many ways is similar to what James says there in chapter two. As a matter of fact, in Romans 6, Paul is attempting to avoid exactly the kind of misunderstanding that James is arguing against in the second chapter of his epistle. What shall we say then, Paul says in Romans 6:1, are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead

by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

For he who has died is freed from sin. And by the way, that word freed is *dikaio*. For he who died is justified from sin.

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him.

The death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Actually, he says essentially the same thing, the same kind of thing, in Galatians 5:13 through 15, where he argues so much, of course, in the earlier part of this epistle for justification by faith. He says in 5:13, for you were called to freedom, brethren. By the way, note the connection between freedom here, Paul's use of freedom here, and James' understanding of the law as a law of liberty, a law of freedom.

For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

Now, at this point in his argument, he realizes that a person might say, well, you've argued on the basis of Abraham, but that's only one person in the whole of salvation history as reported in the Hebrew Scriptures. Maybe he was an outlier. His experience, perhaps, was unique, aberrational.

So, James then addresses this potential objection by introducing Rahab in verse 25. And note you have explicit comparison here. And in the same way, was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? So, one might object that Abraham's experience was unique.

So, James brings in another example to make the point in the same way. But Rahab could hardly be more different from Abraham, a woman, a pagan, a proselyte, a prostitute who lived hundreds of years later than Abraham. Thus, the experience of someone so different from Abraham, the same experience of justification on the part of someone so different from Abraham, points to the fact that throughout the whole history of Israel, persons of all sorts and at all times were justified by works and not by faith alone.

Rahab was known for her faith. Although James simply assumes this, he doesn't draw explicit attention to it. But she was, of course, known for her faith.

She was a person of faith, as is indicated, and this is almost certainly what James had in mind, by what she says in Joshua 2:9 through 11. I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you, for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

And, of course, in Hebrews 11:31, in the famous Faith Hall of Fame there in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, Rahab is mentioned as an example of faith. Mere assent to a creed could not have saved her life, or the lives of her family, or the lives of the spies. Mere assent to a creed could not have saved her life, had she not acted to protect the spies.

Her works, which stemmed from her faith, saved her and also were of advantageous effects to the community of faith, to the spies, the Israelite spies, and of course, what she did made possible the whole conquest of the land and the realization on the part of Israel of experiencing the covenant blessings of the land. Of course, what she did for the spies was to show hospitality. She gave lodging, food to those in need.

This then brings James to his general substantiatory conclusion. He's been talking about particular persons, Abraham and Rahab. Now, he goes ahead and draws a general conclusion from it, but he does so in the sense of substantiation.

In other words, he says that this is the way God acted in relation to these people because of a general principle, for as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead. Now, you obviously have a comparison between death of the body and the kind of death that is manifest with the separation of faith and works. Two things, I think, James has in mind here.

First, he indicates that the separation of works and faith is related to the theological concept of death. It points to and results in disintegration and destruction in all sorts of areas and in all sorts of ways. It stems from death and it leads to death.

It has nothing at all to do with the living God. He ties this in with the whole notion of temptation and sin that he had discussed in chapter 1. But each person, 1:14, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, then desire when it has conceived and gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death. It belongs to the same realm as that chain that he has described in 1:15.

The second point that he seems to be making here is that the separation of faith and works destroys both faith and works. Neither is good for anything, neither can fulfill its intended purpose without the other. Faith without works is like a rotting corpse, a despicable, grotesque, useless, and unclean thing, while works without faith is like an amorphous spirit without a body.

By the way, although that would have been a felicitous thought among many Greeks in the Greco-Roman world, this was a grotesque notion and actually inconceivable notion in Jewish thinking. In Jewish thinking, a human being does not have a body. A human being is a body. You can't think of a human being in terms of an amorphous spirit, but that's what James was playing on.

Faith without works is like a rotting corpse, despicable, grotesque, unclean, useless thing, while works without faith is like an amorphous spirit without a body, a vapor that has no power, no meaning, no, in Jewish thinking, no real existence. So, mentioned here, we talked about partiality already and the logic behind this. Let me just say something here with regard to the synthesis of 2.1 through 13, going back a bit to that.

The problem that we have really behind 2:1 through 4, Christians were, or at least he's suggesting that Christians might be inclined to show preference and deference to the wealthy among them over against the poor among them. This inclination points to several deeper problems, especially an attitude towards persons that reflects the general human disposition that is contrary to God and God's standards, that is, evil and worldly. Specifically, this attitude involves the following.

In terms of faith, a practical repudiation of the faith that such Christians claim to hold, a contradiction of the nature of faith, the object of faith, their experience of faith. You remember this from our discussion. In terms of discernment, it involves confusing the relative value of fleeting, ephemeral outward appearances with that of lasting and ultimate concerns, faith, love, and the possession of the kingdom.

In terms of perspective, it involves viewing this worldly status and position as more significant than status and position within the kingdom of God. In terms of possession, it involves an attitude that may reflect a greater desire to acquire possessions, what the wealthy could give them. This lie is part of the motivation for fawning over the rich and distancing themselves from the poor.

Then, too, which he'll pick up again in 4:1-10, to acquire the end-time benefits of possessing the kingdom of God. In terms of power, this involves a behavior that was based upon fear and intimidation from powerful persons rather than fear of God and God's judgment. By the way, that's an aspect I didn't mention before, but 2:6b-7 suggests that one motivation for the way in which they treat the wealthy has to do with fear and intimidation in terms of what the wealthy could do to them.

Then also in terms of presumption, this would involve assuming the role of judge. A role that belongs to God alone, presuming upon the role of God, arrogating to themselves the role that belongs to God alone. In terms of piety, this behavior is opposed to true religion and true piety, which involves a profound irony because this behavior, at least James presents this behavior in the context of the worship of the true God, behavior that comes to expression precisely in worship.

He does so to indicate that such worship is a contradiction of the worship of the true God. Then, in terms of approval, by preferring the rich to the poor, these Christians would tacitly be approving and affirming the actions of the wealthy and rejecting those of the poor. All of these are the first specific examples of things that bind and enslave persons over against the freedom of the law, the law of liberty.

They need freedom and salvation from all these things and the judgment that stems from them. These passages are specific examples of faith without works and involve specific examples of not enduring trials. This is in part, as I say, a response to the oppression of these Christians by the wealthy, as is suggested by these passages.

Okay. I think this is probably a good place to pause and we'll pick up then when we resume with chapters 3 and 4.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session number 23, James 2:21-26.