

# Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 30, James and Paul

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture 30 on James and Paul.

All right, let's get started.

What I want to do today is try to wrap up our discussion of James and focus, we'll spend most of the time focusing on one particular text for two reasons. One is because it seems to lie at the heart of James in a sense and summarize what is distinctive and unique about his letter. But second, it has caused a fair bit of question and controversy as far as how we read it and what this says about James' relationship to Paul's letters and Paul's teaching.

And so, I want to spend a little bit of time looking at that text in particular, but very briefly summarize two of the other themes we talked about. We said that one way to understand the way that James is put together is to see the letter of James as kind of continually cycling through three different themes. Sometimes look at them from slightly different perspectives, but the theme of testing and endurance and then the theme of wealth and poverty, and then wisdom and speech.

I want to say a couple of things about all of those themes that will focus primarily on chapter two in James and James' teaching and relationship to faith and works, what he's trying to emphasize, and how we might read that in light of what Paul has said as well. But before we do, let's open in prayer.

Father, we ask for your presence with us and your enablement as we think about and discuss what is nothing less than your very words in revelation to us. And again, as I always pray, may we better grasp what this text meant and how it would have been received by the first readers. But at the same time, may we continue to hear it as the ongoing revelation of yourself to your people today. And may we understand better how to respond in light of that. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

All right. One of the issues when it comes to interpreting James that we've seen, and in your notes I'm talking now about the theme of faith and works, but to kind of introduce that, we said that James, the book of James is often read in a post-Pauline context. That is, we have been taught to read it, or we're used to reading it in light of having come to grips with Paul's letters and what Paul wants to emphasize, especially due to the legacy of Martin Luther and his emphasis on justification being solely by God's grace through faith and not dependent on any works that we do to merit or earn that. And in a sense, that then has become the essence of the pure gospel that

now becomes a filter or at least a measuring stick by which we measure all the other books of the New Testament.

And that would certainly also perhaps lend itself to the fact that the Pauline epistles are situated very nicely right in the center of the New Testament. In a sense, you have the Gospels and Acts before it, but then everything else coming after it, so that at the center of the New Testament canon stands Paul's letters that kind of function as a measuring stick for how we read and understand everything else. So, due to the fact that at least in a sequential reading, the fact that we come to Paul's letters first seems in a sense to set us up for then how we have to read the rest of the New Testament.

So, we come to Hebrews and we come to James and the other letters having Paul's gospel thoroughly ensconced in our minds. That is God has provided a way for salvation and justification that is based not on any works that I perform to merit or earn that, but based solely on God's gracious action in Christ. And the only appropriate response is faith in Jesus Christ.

So, we're saved by God's grace through faith. And this is not of yourselves, it's a gift of God. It doesn't come from human works so that no one will boast, to use Paul's words from the book of Ephesians.

Now again, that almost becomes a lens then through which we read the rest of the New Testament. And probably I would suggest that most of us probably subconsciously do that. We seem to have given the primacy of place to Paul's letters.

And that becomes kind of a grid through which we read the rest of the New Testament. Therefore, what happens when we come to a book like James is number one, James will either be completely rejected or at least neglected as Martin Luther did. When you stand it up against Paul, James either gets rejected or at least neglected and kind of relegated to the periphery of the New Testament canon.

Or we reinterpret James, we kind of rescue James from James. And we want to make him sound like Paul. So, we reinterpret or read James in a way that he sounds just like Paul's message that you're saved solely by God's grace and through faith and not based on any human works.

Another way of putting this, New Testament students often call this establishing a canon within the canon. So, within the larger canon of New Testament scripture, there's one set of works that kind of emerges as the measuring stick for all the other books within the canon, kind of an emerging canon, a measuring stick that has a central place in the canon by which all the other books should be read and interpreted. And those are usually Paul's letters.

And again, a lot of that goes back to the legacy of Martin Luther, in which we learn a lot of good things from Martin Luther. But one of the things that has been passed down, I think, to us often is that we're taught to read the New Testament through the lens of Paul's letters. And so again, either James is ignored or rejected at worst, or else James is reconfigured and reinterpreted in light of Paul's letters, such as Romans and Galatians.

However, a couple of things. Number one, as I said, there were a number of early New Testament lists, that is, lists of New Testament books, that actually intriguingly put James before Paul's letters. And while I think that simply suggests that the early church was not interested in ordering the books in terms of importance or how that should affect the way we necessarily read them.

But it would be interesting to ask, though, if sequentially, and this is impossible because we've so been influenced, I think, by this way of thinking about the New Testament. But it would be interesting to see what would happen if we came to James first, and then we read Paul's letters later. Would that make a difference in the way we interpret Paul? Would we read Paul instead in light of James, as opposed to vice versa? But I doubt that the early church was interested in ordering the books in a way that gave the primacy of place and focus to any particular book.

The reason Paul's letters usually follow Acts is most likely because most of the book of Acts, all the way to the end, is dominated by the Apostle Paul. So, it's natural that his books would come next. But that does not mean that they're more important or that they should provide a lens through which to read the rest of the New Testament.

But I am convinced, though, that when it comes to the letter of James, and thinking in terms of James and Paul, is that, first of all, it is legitimate to try to reconcile them and put them together. After all, the church did include both of them in its scriptures, so that it is necessary, and at the end of the day it is necessary, to ask, how do these two books relate? And to kind of put the pieces of the puzzle together. I think that's required as part of canonical scripture, that the church allowed these as the theological witnesses to God's revelation, that the church would include books like James and Paul's epistles so that at the end of the day, we do need to ask how they relate to each other, and how we can fit them together.

At the same time, though, before we do that, I'm convinced that we need to allow each of the authors to have their own voice. That is, we can't make James sound just like Paul, nor vice versa. But we need to allow them to have their own voice and their own distinctive flavor before we then put them together and ask how they might complement each other, how they might cohere together within this complete canon of writings that the church confesses as its scripture.

So that's what I want to do. I want to ask the question, first of all, perhaps, what seemed to be unique about these authors? What were they emphasizing? Why did they write the way they did, before we ask the question of how do we put these together? Do James and Paul conflict with each other? Are they diametrically opposed to one another? Are they saying the same thing? Are they saying similar things, but with different emphases? Or how are we to put them together? We'll talk a little bit about that. Again, the section that I have primarily in mind is James chapter 2, starting with verse 14, which is the most extended section on James' teaching related to faith and works, although this is not the only place he says it.

He says something about works and faith all the way back in chapter 1, in the very first verses, and mentions it elsewhere. But this is the most extended teaching, where James says, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith, but you do not have works? Can that faith save you? If a brother or sister is lacking clothes and daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm, and eat your fill, and yet you do not supply their needs, what is the good of that faith? So, faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, you have faith and I have works, show me your faith apart from your works, and I, by my works, will show you faith.

If you believe that God is one, then you do well. But even the demons believe that, and they shudder. Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is dead? Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by those works.

Thus, the scripture was fulfilled that said, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. A text that Paul quotes as well. Now James quotes it to demonstrate that Abraham was justified by his works.

And he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And I'll stop there.

And it's that last verse that has gotten most of the attention, because it seems, at least formally and at a verbal level, to conflict with what Paul said in Romans and Galatians, that you're justified not by works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. So, several, in Galatians, in Romans, Paul makes the statement, that a person is justified in Galatians. He said, we know that we are justified not by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

So, one can't help but wonder what leads James to formulate in such a way as to say, well, no, you're justified by works and not by faith alone. The first thing to clear up is I doubt that James was responding to Paul or vice versa. I doubt that James and Paul were writing in light of each other.

And some have suggested maybe James was responding to an overreaction by Paul. Some have overreacted to Paul's writings, and now James responds to that. Some have said James outright disagrees with Paul.

But I really doubt that there's good evidence that James and Paul were aware of each other, and one of them is writing to respond to the other. So, what is up? What's going on? The first thing I think we need to do as we look at James chapter two is understand, and I'm focusing again specifically on the last verse I just read, which seems to be the most blatantly in conflict with Paul's statement, where James says, you're justified not by faith alone, but by works, as opposed to Paul saying, no, you're justified by faith and not by works, faith in Jesus Christ and not by works. First of all, it's important to understand that certain components of those statements might be used differently by the separate authors.

But before we do that, first of all, it seems to me that the first way to handle the difference between James and Paul is to understand that James and Paul are both addressing very different issues or problems. If you remember back to our discussion, particularly of Galatians, Paul was embroiled in a debate with a group that had been labeled Judaizers, those who were suggesting that in order to become God's true people, Gentiles had to submit to the law of Moses. Yes, faith in Christ was necessary, but one also had to submit to the Mosaic law.

Romans even talks about the Jews boasting in their pedigree in the fact that they are Jewish children of Abraham by birth, the fact that they possess the law, that the tendency was for them to boast in that and their standing and status as a sign that they were truly God's people. So, the problem, the problem that Paul was addressing was primarily both legalism and nationalism. Nationalism is using the law to distinguish Jew and Gentile, but by relying on that law and forcing that on the Gentiles, they were also guilty of legalism, that is relying on the performance of works of the law as a way of being declared righteous or vindicated or being justified.

James is addressing a very, very different issue. Again, part of the problem is we usually, when we start reading this text, we start with verse, we usually start with verse 18 in James chapter two. But actually, the main theme in chapter two is not faith and works.

The main theme is that theme of poverty and wealth. Again, in verse 14, before James ever starts talking about faith and works, here's how he introduces it. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but you do not have works, can that faith save you? If a brother or sister lacks food and daily, clothes and daily food, and one of you says, go in peace and be warm and be filled, but you do nothing to supply their needs, what good is that faith? So that faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

So, James' whole discussion of faith and works comes within the context of the failure of some of his readers to help those who are in dire need. So, he says, if you see a brother and sister who is in dire need, they don't have any clothes, they don't have any food, and you just say, go in peace and be warm and be filled, and you don't bother to do anything about it, that's the problem James is addressing. Almost, in some senses, almost just the opposite of Paul's problem.

Paul is addressing the problem of those who are relying on their Jewish heritage and possession of the law, and even forcing that in Gentiles. James is addressing just the opposite problem. Those who are excusing their need to show deeds of love and charity to those in dire need, and kind of sweeping that all under the rug of the fact that they have faith.

And James now is going to respond to that. So, I think that the first clue, is the fact that James and Paul are addressing two very separate issues or problems. We can't just put them together and start asking, how do we reconcile these? How do we make James sound more like Paul? But instead, we have to start with the fact that these two authors are addressing completely different issues.

And we don't know exactly what James would have said to Paul's situation, or how he would have addressed James' situation, necessarily. But again, we do know that Paul is addressing issues of legalism and nationalism in relationship to the Mosaic Law. James is addressing indifference, a failure to show deeds of love and charity, and simply showing indifference to someone who is in dire need.

The other thing to realize in these two statements, the statement by Paul that you're saved by grace through faith, you're saved by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of the law, and James' statement that you're not saved by faith alone, but you are saved by works, is James and Paul, in those two statements, are using faith in a agree on what they think true faith is. But in these statements, when Paul says, you're only saved by faith, and when James says, you're not saved by faith alone, they're using faith in slightly different ways. For Paul, when Paul says, one is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, I think he uses the word faith primarily in its sense of trust and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, a wholehearted trust and commitment in Jesus Christ.

Whereas James, when James says, you're not justified by faith alone, I think the context makes clear that he's referring primarily just to an intellectual assent to correct belief. The reason for that is, James basically tells us in verse 19, chapter 2, verse 19, you believe that God is one, which is a reflection of the Jewish Shema, hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. So, he says, you believe that God is one, that's good, you do well, that's what you should believe.

But then he goes on and says, but even the demons believe this, and they shudder at the prospect. So, I think what James is saying is that the mere profession of faith in the one true God is not enough. And one who only profess has a profession, or can utter a correct profession, that Jesus Christ is one, has this, while intellectually that's correct, has a faith that's no different than the demons who confess, who understand the same thing.

Now, that does not mean that there is no intellectual component to faith. James is not saying this is wrong or unnecessary, he's just saying that's not enough, that that's only part of the picture. And I think what James is going to go on and demonstrate is that, yes, there is, as I think throughout church history has been demonstrated through a number of thinkers, there is an intellectual component to faith, definitely.

I mean, faith is not believing in something that is not true, or we can't prove is true, that's not faith, that's being gullible. But faith is trusting, faith is trusting in God and His promises. And so, James says that to simply have a faith that believes and confesses that God is one is, yes, that's good and that's true, but that's insufficient faith.

That's only part of the picture. And what James is going to go on and suggest, though, as we'll see in just a moment, is that that is only the starting point. Actually, I think James understands three components of faith, but he sees them as related to each other and interacting.

One of them, as we said, is already intellectual, a belief in God, that God is one. But second, similar to Paul's, we said what Paul means by faith, is James understands faith as a, especially in light of the Old Testament, as a commitment and as a trust in someone who is trustworthy. Yet the third component, so we have intellectual assent to a correct belief in who God is, but second, a commitment to that, a trust and wholehearted commitment to that.

But third, the third component is faithfulness, that trust, and commitment actually issues in an ongoing faithfulness that demonstrates itself even in the midst of testing. In other words, James says that true trust and commitment will eventually end up or eventually become true faithfulness. That is the one who trusts and commits then lives faithfully to the promises of and to the commands of the one that they have faith in.

So those three ideas, intellectual belief and assent to who God is, a wholehearted trust and commitment, but an ongoing faithfulness, especially in the light of testing that faith. And we'll see, that's exactly why James uses Abraham as an example. He's an example of all three of those components of faith.

Again, I don't want to say types of faith, that's not what James is saying, that three, you can't have faith without having all three, that's James' point, that just one of those is not true faith. Well, what we'll talk a little bit about later is actually, I'm not convinced that James and Paul really understand faith any differently. They might emphasize, the way they put those three elements together, but what they emphasize might be different.

But for example, certainly, Paul is interested in correctly, in the intellectual element of faith, understanding true belief in Jesus Christ, in God the creator. And as we've seen, Paul is certainly interested in wholehearted commitment and trust in the person of Jesus Christ and in God's promises. Yet certainly, we'll see Paul is also interested in ongoing faithfulness, which is part of that, which is exemplified in obedience.

And again, I resist seeing them as three, I don't want to talk about them as three separate things. They're all essential parts or essential aspects of the one true faith. And James' problem is, he's addressing readers that are satisfied with just that first element.

Maybe even the second element too, is just a trust or commitment, but especially one that doesn't go much beyond an intellectual ascent to, yes, God is one. But when it comes to the other aspects of a complete commitment that manifests itself in ongoing faithfulness, even when tested, is where his readers seem to lack. If you describe kind of like, then maybe he's saying that you actually don't have the desire, and so he's not, you don't really have that truth.

So like, faith should equal salvation plus the works that follow. But there, when he's looking at this and saying, it doesn't even seem like you have true faith. Right.

Or at least not what we're referring to when we say. Yeah, you're right. He's, you're exactly right.

He's, James is not saying you have inadequate faith. He's saying you don't have faith at all. I mean, how more clear can he be when he says you're, if you don't have works, your faith is dead? He doesn't say it's as if dead, or it's sick, or it just needs to be fanned a little bit.

He said, your faith is dead. So, you're exactly right. It's not that he's saying, well, you got part of faith right.

You just need to kind of work it out a little bit. He's basically saying, no, if you don't have the whole thing, your faith is dead. It's useless.



Works. So again, Paul and James, to repeat, are addressing different situations. Paul addresses Judaizers who are trying to force Gentiles to submit to the law of Moses, emphasizing the law as a boundary marker, as a true identifying factor belonging to the people of God.

So, Paul's addressing issues of legalism and nationalism. James is addressing a problem of indifference. Those that claim to have faith, but do not bother to do anything about someone who is in dire need.

And so, James says, how can that be real faith? Again, they're both using faith differently. Paul, when he says you're justified by faith and not by works, he's emphasizing a complete and total trust and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. When James says you're not justified by faith alone, I think he's referring especially to the mere assent to the correct belief, that is, God is one, and somehow thinking that that is sufficient.

Now, works. When Paul says you're not justified by works of the law, he's primarily, again, referring to the Mosaic law specifically as used by the Judaizers as a sign, as a boundary marker of those who belong to the people of God. The law is something that is relied upon and even boast in their ability to keep it.

Whereas for James, I'm not sure that he would have necessarily excluded the Old Testament law or parts of it, but when James talks about works in chapter 2, what's he primarily focusing on based on what I just read? What works? When James says you're not justified by faith but by works, what works particularly in chapter 2 does James have in mind? Yeah, caring for the poor. Deeds of love and charity, which were commanded by the Mosaic law. That's where James got it, I'm sure, and the teaching of Jesus as well.

But yeah, when James talks about works, he's primarily focusing not on the Old Testament law as a boundary marker or boasting in one's possession of the law and keeping it, but he's focusing on deeds of love and charity to those in dire need, to the poor. And so, when he says you're not justified, to kind of paraphrase James, you're not justified by faith alone, that is simply by assenting to correct belief in God, but you're justified by works, that is by showing compassion and love and charity to those who are in dire need. And to turn your back on that, how can you claim to have true faith when you see that situation and do nothing about it and turn your back on that? Finally, the word justify.

This is a little trickier. I'm not sure exactly what the difference might be between Paul and James, despite some of the reading I've done on it. Paul does seem to emphasize the initial entrance into a relationship with God that is being vindicated and being justified, whereas James, at the very least, James seems to reflect an Old Testament

notion where good deeds are also considered as part of the facts to be considered when declaring someone vindicated or righteous.

So, James seems to include then both what Paul includes, yes, we're justified by faith, but also including the works that follow from that or the works that exemplify that. For example, look at the example he uses from Abraham. He says, do you want to be shown that faith apart from works is barren? Was not our ancestor, and that's interesting if he's addressing, as we understood chapter 1 verse 1, if James is addressing those who are literally Jews who are dispersed and now separated from their homeland, from Jerusalem.

Now he says, was not our Abraham, our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? Now what text does that come from? See if you remember what you learned in the Old Testament Survey. Can you at least tell me the book? Genesis. Does anyone remember roughly where that takes place? Or what's the story that lies behind this really brief reference in James? It happens in chapter 22, and this is going to be important.

Chapter 22 is the record of where Abraham is commanded by God to take Isaac up the mountain and to sacrifice him, and of course, he is stopped. In fact, even Genesis 22 begins with a narrative comment that makes it clear that God's intention is to test Abraham and to test his faith. So, James is certainly correct in using this example, but it's interesting.

James starts with Genesis 22 and says, was not Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? Then he says, you see that faith was active along with works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. Thus, the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him or reckoned to him as righteousness, which comes from chapter 15, five chapters earlier. So basically James seems to be aware of that distinction between the initial declaration based on Abraham's trust in God, but then the testing of that trust, the testing of that faith that also issues in justification.

So, I think basically James is taking the entire picture, both the initial entrance into a relationship with God and the ongoing testing of that and demonstration of its validity. So, James can say, this verse is very interesting I think, in verse 22, you see that faith was working along with works and was brought to completion by works. In other words, it's as if James is saying faith by itself in a sense is incomplete until it is brought to perfection or completion through works.

And that's why he can say faith alone, that is this simple assent to correct belief about who God is, that God is one, is not enough. It must be brought to perfection and completion. It must be shown to be valid through the works that one performs.

Otherwise, he says it's dead, it's useless, it's not able to save you. So again, James then has this understanding of faith as both the initial, yes, the initial commitment and trust, but that's simply part of that faith is to be tested and shown and perfected through one's good works. It's validated through one's good work.

It's brought to maturity and perfection. It's interesting that he introduces his quote from Genesis 15. He says the scripture was fulfilled, Abraham believed God, that's interesting, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

He says that was fulfilled when Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar. Why? Because of that work, that act of obedience is perfecting and showing to be valid his genuine act of commitment and trust in God himself and his promises. Without the latter, the former simply is dead, it's non-existent.

I like the way one commentary put it, it said the only true faith is faithful faith. I thought that's a pretty accurate summary of what James is saying. The only true faith that is genuine that James says saves is one that is faithful, one that validates itself and perfects itself through the ongoing obedience and faithfulness of the one who claims to have faith and true trust and commitment in God himself.

So, when we ask then, about the relationship more clearly between James and Paul, I guess I would understand it like this. I would see James and Paul as, I think within the canon, again without having James and Paul here to stage a debate and tell us exactly what they think, at least within the New Testament canon, I find them as highly complementary of each other and not at odds with each other or not in contradiction at all. So now we're moving on to the stage, how do we reconcile these two voices together? In fact, as we've already seen, Paul clearly thinks that faith is not just intellectual.

Paul clearly thinks that it's not enough just to claim to have faith in Jesus Christ. And furthermore, Paul is equally clear that true faith is always accompanied by and associated with works. Go back to a text like Ephesians chapter 2. We all know the first part, you're saved by grace through faith and it's not of yourself, it's the gift of God, it's not of works so that no one might boast.

But then he goes on and says, using new creation and new covenant language, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. The one who has faith participates in a new creation that necessarily entails works. Furthermore, if you remember, all the blessings of salvation that Paul articulates are tied to the New Covenant.

Part of the New Covenant is that God provides us with a new heart and the ability to keep. So by definition, participating in the New Covenant means obedience. It's inescapable. So, in light of the broader understanding of the New Covenant and new

creation, Paul himself would certainly see works playing a role in one's faith and would also, I think, agree with James that the two are not separate.

However, it's hard to say whether Paul would have ever said things in the same way James did or whether James would have articulated himself exactly like Paul did. Would they still have maintained a very different emphasis? I like what one person said. He said, at least if we had the Paul of the New Testament and the James of the New Testament together and they were discussing this issue, he said, I'm sure there would be a lot of smiling and shaking their head yes and a lot of agreement.

Yet, there might have also been a raised eyebrow or two and a look of exclamation, not because of disagreement, but because of how it was said and what was emphasized. So again, when we think about the role that the two play within the broader New Testament canon, one way to think about it is like this. Perhaps when we are tempted to somehow boast in our own pedigree and our own status and ability, when we are tempted to think, to take pride in our own works and our own ability to do what God asks of us, perhaps it's at that point where we need to hear the voice of Paul, that you're saved only by God's grace and through faith and it doesn't come about through good works.

However, at those points in our lives when we're tempted to think that somehow our faith is enough and perhaps for various reasons, maybe out of desire to avoid having works be part of our salvation, when we think that somehow good works are not that important or that we can follow our own agenda or somehow that we can simply rest assured on some past conversion experience, no matter what's going on in the present, then we need to hear the words of James, that you're not saved by faith alone, but only by works. So, I think the two play a complementary role. The two voices play a complementary role in the canon and they function, again, going back to the problems they were addressing.

They function to address analogous problems in our own lives. When we're tempted to rely on ourselves and our own abilities and take pride in that or, again, simply destroy ourselves and beat ourselves up because we somehow haven't done enough good works we need to hear Paul's voice. But again, when we're tempted to go in the opposite direction and think that they really don't matter for various reasons or that we can simply rest secure in some past salvation experience, then we need to hear James' voice.

Good. Any questions about that? I just want to briefly look at two other themes. I know they're not in your notes, but just a couple of the other themes very quickly from James.

Any questions on this section? I'm still not sure I've really articulated it the way I want to, but that's the best I can do right now. Good. And, you know, James I think is

important because I think we do often live at a time when we want to, and rightly so, we want to emphasize God's love and his grace.

But on the other hand, I would be so bold as to state that the New Testament holds out no hope for anyone who does not manifest some kind of a change in their life, a transformation in their life. Not that we can determine what that is or what that has to look like or how that has to progress, but the New Testament offers no assurance for someone who simply does not produce a shred of evidence that they have a true, genuine faith in the terms that James is describing, whether it's Paul or James. All right, two other themes to look at briefly, are trials and endurance.

Again, these are not in your notes, but trials and endurance or the theme of patience in the midst of trials is one of those themes that cycles throughout James a couple of times. In chapter 1, you find two parts of the chapter that once again seem to almost be at odds with each other, is James chapter 1 begins by saying, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of different kinds, consider it all joy because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. The assumption is that God is the one testing our faith, just as he did with Abraham.

So, on the one hand, James says God can bring trials into our lives to strengthen our faith and to test it, to make it stronger. Yet then he'll turn around a few verses later and he'll say in verse 13, no one, when they are tested, should say, I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one, but one is tempted by their own desire, being lured and enticed by it.

Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. The way to put those two together, I think, is this.

James says God brings trials so that our faith becomes stronger, yet God is not responsible for the temptations that come into our lives. Or when those trials become temptations to sin, James says God is not responsible. You are lured away by your own desires that then conceive and give birth to sin and then sin to death.

So, James is saying while God is responsible for the former, he's not responsible for the latter when they turn into temptations to cause us a sin. That happens when we are led away by our own desires and lusts, as James says. Also, another apparent difference in the book is in chapter one, verses nine through eleven, James seems to, again, as we said, one of the problems that James seems to be addressing, James being the leader of the Jerusalem church and writing to Jewish Christians who are scattered, and James is apparently aware of some problems that they are perhaps facing, and one of them appears to be the socio-economic disparity within the church and even between the church and those outside of the church.

In chapter one, verses nine through eleven, James seems to address wealthy Christians within his readership, Jewish Christians, that is, I'm emphasizing here the word Christians who are wealthy and who are tempted to evaluate themselves based solely on their wealth. So, in chapter one, verses nine and eleven, James says, let the believer or the Christian who is lowly boast in being raised up and let the rich, presumably those who are Christians, Jewish Christians who are wealthy, let them boast in being brought low because the rich will disappear like the flower of the field. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field, its flower falls, and its beauty perishes, it is the same way with the rich.

In the midst of a busy life, they too will wither away. So, the warning is, even for the Christians who are rich and wealthy, not to base their status and evaluate themselves on that which is just as temporary as the flower in the field. However, later on in chapter five, James seems to be addressing a different group, and that is wealthy non-Christians, perhaps landowners, who are now addressing the poor and, I'm sorry, oppressing the poor and who are doing that so they can basically hoard wealth.

And so, here's how James addresses, notice the different tone that he takes. He says, Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming upon you. That was language from the Old Testament for mourning and sorrow because of judgment.

Your riches have rotted. Remember Jesus saying in the Sermon on the Mount that we put a comparison up the last class period. Your riches have rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be evidence against you and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasures for the last days. Listen, the wages of the labors who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, now cry out and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure. You have fattened your hearts on the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one who does not resist you.

And then he tells the poor, he addresses them in the next verse, Be patient therefore until the coming of the Lord. So, in chapter five, then, James appears to be addressing a different group. Although again, that's debated.

Some have suggested the first group is non-Christians as well, but I think there's good evidence for seeing the first group. Again, in this theme that gets cycled through the book on riches and wealth, he addresses both those of his Christian readers who are wealthy and warning them against the inappropriate use of wealth,

but now addressing non-Christian wealthy who are oppressing the poor, probably members within the church, and warning them of the coming judgment, but also calling on his readers to be patient in light of the Lord's coming to set things right. Good.

So those are just two sections where you have instructions that could be seen as difficult to put together, but once again, I think when you understand what James is doing, his teaching on wealth and poverty, but also on testing and endurance and trials, when you understand what James is doing, they're not conflicting with each other at all, but just part of addressing different issues related to these major themes. Good. Any questions, again, on James? Certainly, you're not going to let me off that easy.

Yeah. Are you thinking of chapter one? Yeah, you're right. It doesn't specifically say, I guess, it doesn't specifically say God brings these trials on you, but it does suggest, especially in verse two, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of different kinds, consider it all joy, because you know the testing of your faith produces endurance.

So there seems, whether you want to say God allows these to come and uses them to test or he causes them, the main point is that the idea of testing seems to suggest that somehow God is behind this, whether he's, you know, theologians use the term of allowing it to happen or does he bring trials intentionally into our lives, but clearly James is thinking in terms of trials as actually in some way of testing the faith, those that claim to have faith. Good question. Are you a biblical studies major? That's what I thought, yeah.

Good. Right. Yeah. Yeah. The prayer of faith will heal. Yeah.

This is a good time to stop in class here. Yeah. Starting with verse 13.

Are any among you suffering? Then they should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Yeah. So, is that how are we to understand? Is that saying that if you call the elders to pray you'll be healed? Some have tried to escape that by saying this is a spiritual sickness.

In light of the connection, one of the things, we're so interested in is how James and Paul relate that we forget that James probably has a closer connection to the Gospels and to Jesus' teaching. The more you see that, I think the more evident becomes that

the healing here is physical sickness and not spiritual sickness. So, he's referring to physical sickness.

Is this then kind of a carte blanche prayer that will solve all ills and problems? On the one hand, I don't want to water this down and you don't want to qualify James 5 with all kinds of things. If this and this and this and this and to endlessly qualify it so it loses all, maybe we should expect more from God in terms of his healing. However, this is not the first time that James has addressed the issue of asking and prayer.

For example, in James chapter 3, oh I'm sorry, James chapter 4, says, conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something but you do not have it, so you commit murder and you covet something and you cannot obtain it, so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have because you do not ask. So maybe we should say one reason we don't have is because we don't bother to ask.

But then he goes on and says, you ask but you do not receive because you ask wrongly with the wrong motives, that is, to spend on your pleasure. So, I think at the very least James would expect that we understand chapter 5 in light of that. Yes, sometimes we don't have because we don't bother to ask, but sometimes perhaps we ask with the wrong motives.

But then interestingly, at the end of chapter 4, notice he says to, he says, come now you who say, again now he's addressing the theme of wealth and riches, you who say, today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a country and spend a year there and do business and make money. He says, yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord will, we will live and do this or do that. As it is you boast in your arrogance, all such boasting is evil. So, I think James would intend his readers to understand those instructions in chapter 5 in light of his whole teaching on asking and praying.

That one asks, yes, one asks in faith, you don't have because you don't ask, but also sometimes you don't have because you ask with the wrong motives. Or he also condemns those who boast and instead of saying, as he says, if the Lord wills, we will do this or that. And so instead of taking, again, without watering chapter 5 down, the prayer for healing, those who call the elders to pray and you'll be healed, without watering that down or taking the power out of that, certainly James means for us to understand that in light of his whole teaching in starting back in chapters 3 and 4 on asking God and what it means to have trust in and faith in God, even in the midst of these trials back in chapter 1.



All right, have a great Easter and I'll see you a week from today.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture 30 on James and Paul.