

## **Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 30, James and Paul Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 30, James and Paul, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Mathewson's lecture explores the relationship between the teachings of James and Paul in the New Testament.** The lecture focuses on James chapter 2, particularly concerning faith and works, and seeks to reconcile apparent conflicts with Pauline theology. **Mathewson argues that James and Paul addressed different issues**, with Paul confronting legalism and nationalism while James challenged indifference to the needs of the poor. **He suggests they use the term "faith" differently**, with Paul emphasizing trust in Christ and James critiquing mere intellectual assent. **The lecture also touches on other themes in James**, such as trials, endurance, wealth, and poverty, emphasizing the importance of understanding the context of James's writings. **Ultimately, Mathewson proposes that James and Paul complement each other within the New Testament canon.**

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 30 – Double click icon  
to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson\_NTLit\_S  
ession30.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 30, James and Paul**

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Dave Mathewson's New Testament Literature lecture on James and Paul.

#### **Briefing Document: James and Paul - Faith, Works, and Interpretation**

##### **Main Themes and Ideas:**

This lecture focuses on interpreting the book of James, particularly its relationship to Paul's teachings, specifically regarding faith and works. Dr. Mathewson argues for a nuanced understanding that avoids forcing James into a Pauline framework, emphasizing that each author addresses distinct issues. He also touches upon other key themes in James such as testing and endurance, wealth and poverty, and wisdom and speech.

##### **Key Points and Arguments:**

#### **1. The Problem of Reading James Through a Pauline Lens:**

- Dr. Mathewson points out that James is often read in a "post-Pauline context," meaning interpretations are influenced by Martin Luther's emphasis on "justification being solely by God's grace through faith and not dependent on any works." This creates a "measuring stick" that can lead to misinterpretations.
- This can lead to either rejecting/neglecting James (as Luther did initially) or reinterpreting James to "sound just like Paul."
- He refers to this as establishing a "canon within the canon," where Paul's letters become the primary interpretive framework for the rest of the New Testament.
- Mathewson suggests it would be interesting to read James first and then Paul, to see if that changes our interpretation of Paul.

#### **1. Importance of Allowing Each Author Their Own Voice:**

- Mathewson stresses the need to "allow each of the authors to have their own voice" before attempting to reconcile them. We can't "make James sound just like Paul, nor vice versa."
- The goal should be to understand each author's unique emphasis and perspective before considering how they might "complement each other."

## 1. James 2:14-26 – Faith and Works in Context:

- This passage is the core of the discussion. It contains the controversial verse: "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." (James 2:24)
- Mathewson emphasizes that James and Paul are addressing different problems. Paul is grappling with legalism and nationalism related to the Mosaic Law (specifically Judaizers), while James addresses indifference to the needs of the poor within his community. James's concern is the failure to show "deeds of love and charity to those in dire need."
- "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."
- James and Paul use "faith" differently. Paul uses it primarily as "trust and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ," while James refers to "primarily just an intellectual assent to correct belief," as even demons believe God is one. He is not saying the intellectual component is unnecessary, just that it's not enough.
- James sees faith as having three interconnected components: intellectual belief, commitment/trust, and faithfulness (demonstrated through action/works). One must have all three for it to be true faith.
- Similarly, the "works" Paul discusses are different from James. Paul is primarily talking about works of the Mosaic Law, and James is talking about acts of love and charity toward those in need.
- Regarding "justify," Paul seems to emphasize the *initial* entrance into a relationship with God, whereas James includes both this and the *ongoing* demonstration of faith through works. James sees faith as "incomplete until it is brought to perfection or completion through works."

## 1. Abraham as an Example:

- James uses Abraham's offering of Isaac as an example of justification by works. He cites Genesis 22, where Abraham's faith is tested. James connects this to Genesis 15, where Abraham's belief is credited to him as righteousness, arguing that Genesis 22 "fulfilled" Genesis 15. He sees the act of obedience (offering Isaac) as validating Abraham's earlier act of commitment and trust.
- "The scripture was fulfilled that said, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness...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.”

#### 1. **Reconciling James and Paul:**

- Mathewson believes James and Paul are "highly complementary of each other and not at odds with each other."
- Paul recognizes the importance of good works that accompany true faith. “We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.” He also ties blessings of salvation to the New Covenant, where God provides a new heart and the ability to keep. Therefore, obedience is inescapable.
- He suggests that Paul's voice is needed when we are tempted to boast in our works, while James's voice is needed when we are tempted to think works are unimportant.
- "Perhaps when we are tempted to somehow boast in our own pedigree and our own status and ability...perhaps it's at that point where we need to hear the voice of Paul...However, at those points in our lives when we're tempted to think that somehow our faith is enough...then we need to hear the words of James."

#### 1. **Trials and Endurance:**

- God brings trials to strengthen our faith, but God is not responsible for the temptations that come into our lives.
- “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.”

#### 1. **Wealth and Poverty:**

- James addresses both wealthy Christians (warning them against basing their status on wealth) and wealthy non-Christians who oppress the poor (warning them of coming judgment).

#### 1. **Prayer and Healing**

- The prayer of faith will heal. We should ask in faith, but not with the wrong motives. “You ask but you do not receive because you ask wrongly with the wrong motives, that is, to spend on your pleasure.”

**Key Quotes:**

- "James, the book of James is often read in a post-Pauline context."
- "We need to allow each of the authors to have their own voice."
- "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."
- "The only true faith is faithful faith."
- "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works."

**Implications:**

This lecture encourages a more careful and contextualized reading of James, avoiding the common pitfall of imposing Pauline theology on it. It calls for recognizing the distinct challenges addressed by each author and appreciating the complementary nature of their messages regarding faith and its outworking in practical Christian living. This reading prevents readers from using faith as an excuse for inaction and indifference, but emphasizes that without commitment and faithfulness (proven by acts), the starting point of intellectual belief is useless.

## 4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 30, James and Paul

### James and Paul: A Study Guide

#### Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. According to Mathewson, why has the book of James been traditionally read in a post-Pauline context?
2. What does Mathewson mean by "establishing a canon within the canon," and how does it relate to the interpretation of James?
3. What is the primary issue or problem that Paul is addressing in his letters, particularly Galatians and Romans?
4. What is the primary issue or problem that James is addressing in his letter, specifically in James 2:14-17?
5. How does Paul primarily use the word "faith" in his writings, particularly when he says that one is justified by faith in Jesus Christ?
6. How does James primarily use the word "faith" in his writings, particularly when he says that one is not justified by faith alone?
7. What type of "works" does Paul refer to when he states that one is justified by faith and not by works?
8. What type of "works" does James refer to when he states that one is justified by works and not by faith alone?
9. According to Mathewson, how are trials understood within the letter of James?
10. How does James's tone differ when addressing wealthy Christians versus wealthy non-Christians in his letter?

#### Quiz: Answer Key

1. The book of James has been traditionally read in a post-Pauline context because of Martin Luther's emphasis on justification by grace through faith alone, which led to Paul's letters becoming a measuring stick for interpreting other New Testament books.

2. "Establishing a canon within the canon" refers to the tendency to elevate Paul's letters as the central or most authoritative part of the New Testament, using them as a lens through which to interpret other books like James.
3. Paul is primarily addressing legalism and nationalism, specifically the insistence by Judaizers that Gentiles must adhere to the Mosaic Law in addition to faith in Christ to be considered God's people.
4. James is primarily addressing indifference to the needs of the poor and the failure of some readers to show deeds of love and charity, often excusing this lack of action by claiming to have faith.
5. Paul uses "faith" primarily in the sense of a wholehearted trust and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ.
6. James uses "faith" primarily in the sense of a mere intellectual assent to correct beliefs, such as the belief that God is one, without any corresponding actions or works.
7. Paul refers to "works of the law," specifically the Mosaic Law, as a means of earning salvation or as a boundary marker for belonging to the people of God.
8. James refers to "works" as deeds of love, compassion, and charity toward those in dire need, especially the poor.
9. In the letter of James, God brings trials so that our faith becomes stronger, yet God is not responsible for the temptations that come into our lives, James says God is not responsible when those trials become temptations to cause us to sin.
10. James uses a warning tone for wealthy Christians, saying that 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. He uses a mourning and sorrowful tone to describe the judgement coming to non-Christian wealthy oppressors, and calling on his readers to be patient in light of the Lord's coming to set things right.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the historical and theological reasons why Paul's letters have often been given primacy in interpreting the New Testament. Analyze how this impacts the reading and understanding of the book of James.
2. Compare and contrast Paul's and James's understanding of the role of "faith" in salvation. How do their different contexts and audiences shape their perspectives?
3. Explore the relationship between faith and works as presented by James. How does James use the example of Abraham to support his argument?
4. Analyze how the themes of wealth and poverty are addressed in the book of James. What warnings and instructions are given to both the rich and the poor?
5. Synthesize the ideas presented in the lecture on James and Paul. How are we to understand the ways that the two compliment each other?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Justification:** Being declared righteous or vindicated in the sight of God.
- **Legalism:** Relying on the performance of works of the law as a way of being declared righteous or vindicated or being justified.
- **Nationalism:** Using the law to distinguish Jew and Gentile.
- **Canon within the Canon:** The idea that certain books or sets of writings within the broader canon of Scripture are given a higher level of authority or serve as a lens through which to interpret other books.
- **Judaizers:** Individuals who insisted that Gentile Christians must also adhere to the Mosaic Law to be considered true followers of Christ.
- **Mosaic Law:** The Law of Moses, the commandments and statutes given to Israel through Moses, recorded in the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch).
- **Faith (Paul):** Wholehearted trust and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Faith (James):** Primarily just to an intellectual assent to correct belief.
- **Works (Paul):** Mosaic law specifically as used by the Judaizers as a sign, as a boundary marker of those who belong to the people of God.
- **Works (James):** Deeds of love and charity to those in dire need, to the poor.
- **Endurance:** Steadfastness and patience in the face of trials and testing.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 30, James and Paul, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: James and Paul

#### 1. Why is the book of James often read in light of Paul's letters?

Many readers approach James after having already grappled with Paul's epistles, particularly Romans and Galatians. This is often due to the influence of Martin Luther, who emphasized justification by grace through faith, apart from works. As a result, Paul's writings have sometimes been elevated to a central position within the New Testament, serving as a lens through which other books, like James, are interpreted. This can lead to either rejection or reinterpretation of James to align with Pauline theology.

#### 2. What are the main themes that James cycles through in his letter?

James focuses on three main themes, often revisiting them from slightly different angles: testing and endurance (how believers persevere through trials), wealth and poverty (how believers should treat the rich and poor), and wisdom and speech (the importance of wise conduct and careful speech).

#### 3. What are the key differences in the problems James and Paul address in their writings?

Paul primarily addresses legalism and nationalism, particularly the insistence by some (Judaizers) that Gentile converts must adhere to the Mosaic Law to be truly part of God's people. He emphasizes that salvation is not earned through works of the law. James, on the other hand, tackles the issue of indifference and a lack of practical love and charity among believers. He criticizes those who claim to have faith but fail to demonstrate it through acts of compassion towards those in need.

#### 4. How do James and Paul use the term "faith" differently?

Paul generally uses "faith" to denote a complete trust and commitment to Jesus Christ, including intellectual understanding and assent to the truth of the gospel. James appears to use "faith" more narrowly, primarily referring to a mere intellectual agreement with correct doctrine, such as believing that God is one. James argues that this kind of intellectual assent alone is insufficient and doesn't distinguish believers from demons, who also acknowledge God's existence.

### **5. How do James and Paul use the term "works" differently?**

When Paul speaks of "works," he's primarily referring to the works of the Mosaic Law, specifically as they were being used by the Judaizers as a requirement for salvation and a sign of belonging to God's people. James, when he talks about "works", has in mind deeds of love and charity, especially towards the poor and needy, as commanded by the Mosaic law and the teaching of Jesus.

### **6. How does James use the example of Abraham in relation to faith and works?**

James cites Abraham's offering of Isaac (Genesis 22) as an example of how faith is made complete or perfected by works. He argues that Abraham's act of obedience demonstrated the genuineness of his faith, fulfilling the scripture that says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15). James sees Abraham's story as encompassing both the initial trust in God and the subsequent testing of that trust through his actions.

### **7. How can the teachings of James and Paul be reconciled?**

James and Paul can be seen as complementary voices within the New Testament canon. While their emphases differ, both value intellectual and heartfelt faith that manifests itself in ongoing faithfulness and actions. Paul's teachings serve as a reminder that we cannot boast in our own abilities. In contrast, James' teachings highlight the need for active and tangible love in addition to belief. In essence, true faith, as seen in both Paul and James, is not just intellectual assent but involves a changed life that produces good works.

### **8. According to James, what is the relationship between trials/testing and temptation?**

James indicates that God can bring trials into our lives to strengthen our faith and lead to endurance. However, God is not the source of temptation to sin. When trials become temptations, it is because individuals are lured away by their own desires, which then lead to sin. In this view, trials sent by God can strengthen faith, while temptations stemming from personal desires can lead to sin and death.