

HHBC



James 2: 18-20

*Faith and Works
Expanded*

James 2: 14-26



- 14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that **faith** save him?
- 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,
- 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?
- 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is **dead**, being by itself.
- 18 **But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."**
- 19 **You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.**
- 20 **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?**
- 21 Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?
- 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;
- 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.
- 24 You see that a man is **justified** by **works** and not by **faith** alone.
- 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also **justified** by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?
- 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.



Background & Review: James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What use is it/ (**does it profit**) , my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

1. **Verse 14:** is better in the King James: ‘what does it **profit**?’

- James’ concern is profit/ gain / advantage / benefit **man-ward** or **towards another believer in Christ** [Merryman]

2. Faith-produced-good-works is designed for Divine good toward others- **for their benefit**; hence James’ example of providing basic survival needs for the wanting believer needing clothes and food.

3. Observation: the illustration of the poor brother/sister in Vs. 14 is related to ‘Love your neighbor **as yourself**’ in vs. 8. Providing for your personal needs: food, water, clothing, shelter, hygiene, etc. is ‘loving yourself’ or providing a careful level of self-care. The bar is fairly low here, but critical and basic.

4. ‘Can that faith **save** him’:

Save him from what?

This is Phase 2 salvation; not saving **from** the eternal penalty of sin by death in eternity



Background in: James 2:14-17

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4. Can that faith *save* him': contin....

- Merryman: says James indicates there is a reciprocity between Word-produced-works and deliverance of the soul from the consequences of sin [sin's hang-ups]. Being doers of the Word brings deliverance for the soul.
- This is Phase 2 saving / deliverance from the power and and *looming hazard* of sin in a believer's life
- In the greater context: James is saying in 1:21 '*receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls*'. And persevering under temptation to sin in chapter 1; do not be carried away by the lust that gives birth to sin: e.g. having a quick tongue, filthiness, wickedness, showing partiality, etc. [all in Chap. 1]

5. What kind of '*faith*' is James referring to?

- This audience has already been saved by grace- Phase 1 past Salvation '*Justification*' - by believing in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. [Phase 2 = saving from the power of sin '*Sanctification*' / Phase 3 = saving from the presence of sin '*Glorification*']



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5. What kind of 'faith' is James referring to? *Contin...*

- This is faith in the Phase 2 of salvation: salvation from the power/ influence of sin
- Faith remains and continues in the Christian life: from faith to ever-increasing expanses of faith (Rom 1:17) as God reveals ever widening aspects of His righteousness
- So this is the day by day living faith that we maintain. '*The righteous man shall live by faith*' (Rom 1:17)
- Phase II faith: sanctifying faith; living the Word implanted; separating us from sin, the Old Man, the world, the flesh, the devil
- Faith is: the substance/reality of the Things of God: believing God's Things that He has done and will do: saved us; baptized us into Christ's death, burial, resurrection. Our reliance/ dependence on Christ: Who exists now as our Righteousness, Sanctification & Redemption (1 Cor 1:30)
- There is an impossible about of believing to do because God is infinite and has done an unfathomable amount of Things
- But we are to go on in faith, growing '*in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*' II Pet. 3:18



Background James 2:17

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

1. *Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*

- Here: dead = separation. Faith is separated from works
- Just as: death physically is separation of body from the soul/spirit
- Divine design: faith was not designed to be separate from works- *production of Divine good in life* [Merryman: see below]. This is simply not God's intent
- Hence: profitless or useless to mankind [Ibid.]
- James' example: in vs. 16: sending away the ill-clothed, malnourished brother or sister with an encouraging word, and not addressing the vital need, is opposed to the law-principle to *'love your neighbor as yourself'*
- This is profitless, **useless** to that brother/sister

The agreement of Paul to James' words in his epistle:

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to **be ready for every good deed**, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 **He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, [PHASE 1 SALVATION]** 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God **will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. [TITUS 3]**

[RON MERRYMAN; UNDERSTANDING JAMES 2:14-26; MERRYMAN MINISTRIES; HERMANTOWN, MN]



James 2:18

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

1. Setting the Scene of Verse 18:

- Actors: (1) a believer, a 'someone' in conversation with another believer, (2) a second person: a 'you' – 2 actors in this scene
- Who is ***not in this scene?*** Nor in any of the action going on in verses 14 – 20?
- God: He is not the One who is being shown any works of faith to prove salvation (*as the Roman Catholics and Reformed Theologians take this passage*)
- It is one man/woman's word against another's.
- Critical word in this passage: '***say***' - It is one man saying one thing and another man saying his piece [JAS 2- DBY; MY BRETHREN; J.N. DARBY] in a rhetorical conversation, not involving God or eternal salvation from the penalty of sin.
- Contrast this to: Romans 3: God is doing all the talking there and asking all the questions and making all the correct observations.
- God = able to see faith and discern the hidden things of the heart. [1 Sam. 16:7]
- Man **/** able to see another's faith and certainly not the things of another man's hidden heart
- Faith: needs to take on something substantive to be perceived by man; ***hence:***
- It clothes itself in a righteous work, a Godly action, and then is made manifest



James 2:19

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

1. What???! Demons believe? Can this be this scripture be true? What are you talking about, James?
2. Perhaps Martin Luther was right after all?: *“James is an epistle of straw and destitute of evangelical character”* [Merryman; ibid]
3. ‘You believe that God is one’: the person is saying to the other in the indicative mood: *‘You assert the reality of the fact that you believe there is one true God, and no others’*
 - James refers to: (Deut. 6:4: *The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.*)
 - That is beautiful; truly right and excellent of you . . . *Congratulations-*
 - But, do you know the demons also have faith in the Things of God as well? So much so, they shudder at their knowledge of it.
 - Luke 8:28-33: *“What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? **I beg You, do not torment me.**”* said Legion to the Lord Jesus.... ***“They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.”*** Sounds like fear and trembling from the group of demons here- and ultimate respect, does it not?
 - Both the *‘you’* actor in this scene and the demons believe in the present tense, active voice, indicative mood!
4. **THE POINT** of Verse 19: the demons believe, too, but their faith is separated / dead / devoid of good, Word-Life-generated good works profiting mankind, which is God’s design [Merryman; ibid]



James 2:20

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

1. 'But are you willing to recognize' . . .

- Are you *thelō* to *ginōskō*: (with the flavor of the greek added): *are you now desirous/wanting to come to be acquainted with; come to know- the fact that faith divorced of works is without value in relation to God's design?*
- Uselessness = barren of anything good. Constable: like being alive as a human being but having a dead, non-working organ in your body. Barren of productivity- e.g.: In business this is non-profitable.

2. James punctuates this with: **“you foolish fellow”** - foolish is *kenos* – devoid of truth; empty-handed or perhaps in today's usage: empty-headed

3. THAT: conclusion “faith without works is useless” - my ‘Wuest-like’ amplification: ‘Having faith in the present, apart from (*chōris*) showable things; acts; undertakings done in the present is existing in a state of valuelessness/ unprofitability man-ward’

- The above amplification borrows from Merryman's commentary- the valuable, good, benefit toward other believers/ man-ward in its aim or goal
- Strong's dictionary: ‘faith without works is: *laziness; shunning the labor one ought to perform; leisurely*. Do you agree with his scholarly classification? (He gets the usage from Homer's *Illiad*)

JUSTIFICATION - FAITH - WORKS COMPARED & CONTRASTED:

PAUL in Rom 3:

Justification by means of faith: In Rom. 3 is **occupied with the Root of faith:**

- That which is 'before God'
- Justification before God
- Since God searches the heart; knows every thought; therefore: does not need to be shown your faith
- Works = Law-works

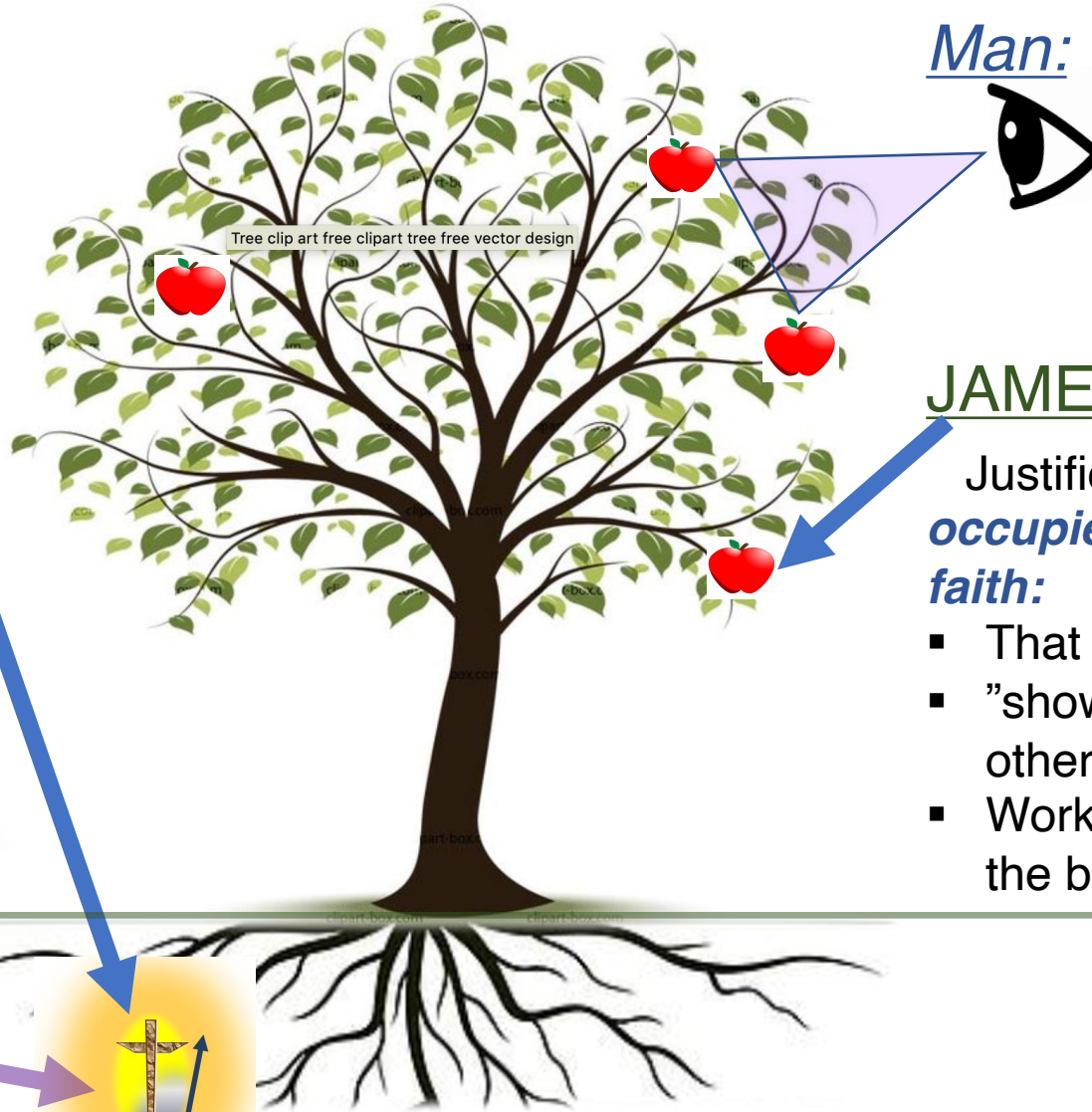
Man:



Your Faith in:



Justification by God's grace by means of faith in Christ's work of redemption



Man:



JAMES in James 2:

Justification by works is **occupied with the Fruit of faith:**

- That which is 'before men'
- "show me:" believers say to other believers
- Works = faith-works done in the body