

“SAVING FAITH”

(James 2:14-26)



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INTRODUCTION

- James 2:14-26

“¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action ...



Letter Opening of James

INTRODUCTION

“... is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered ...



Letter Opening of James

INTRODUCTION

“... Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered ...



Letter Opening of James

INTRODUCTION

“... righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (NIV)



Letter Opening of James

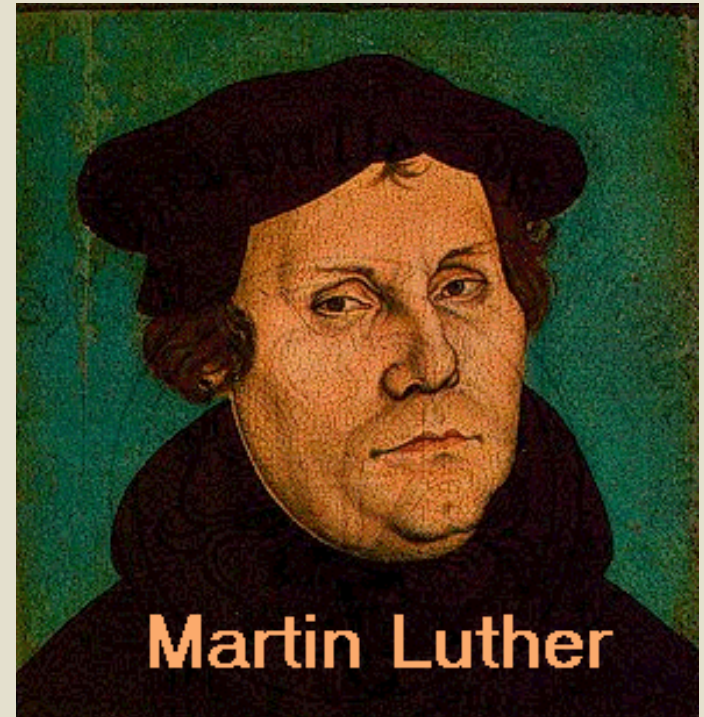
INTRODUCTION

- Problem of James' Argument
- Issue: Does James contradict Paul on the relationship of faith and works?
- Paul: *“For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law”* (Rom 3:28)
- James: *“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”* (Jas 2:24)



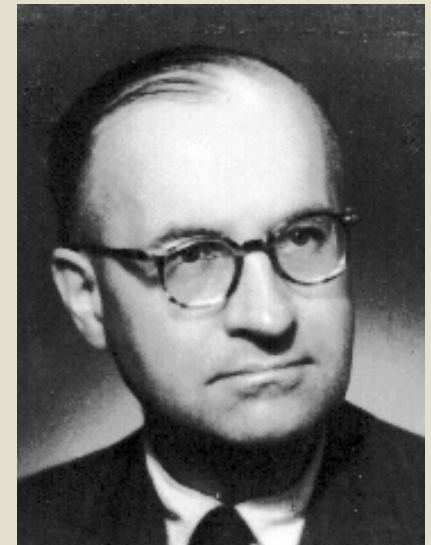
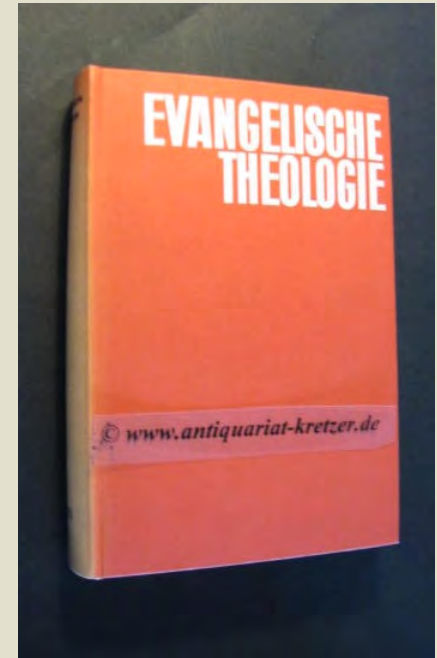
INTRODUCTION

- Problematic Answers: Example #1
- Martin Luther believed that James does, in fact, contradict Paul and he rejected canonical status of James
- *“It [letter of James] is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works”*
- Luther believed it impossible to reconcile James with Paul, claiming that if anyone could, *“I’ll put my professor’s hat on him and let him call me a fool!”*



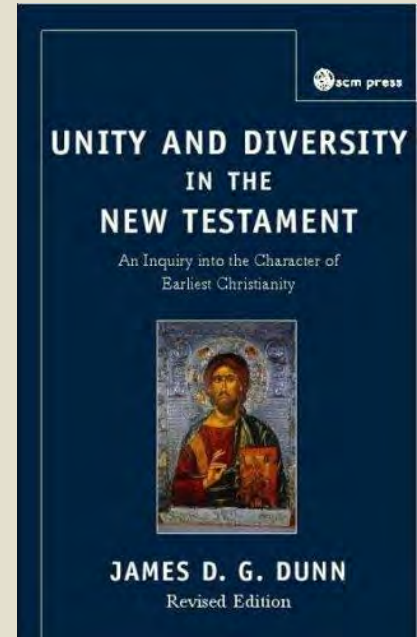
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- Problematic Answers: Example #2
- Some modern scholars echo Luther on the impossibility of reconciling James with Paul on subject of faith and works
- Josef B. Soucek (1902-1972): “The statements of James cannot be brought into harmony with the authentic Paul and what we confront is not only a tension but an antithesis” (“Zu den Problemen des Jakobusbriefes,” *Evangelische Theologie* 18 [1958] 467)



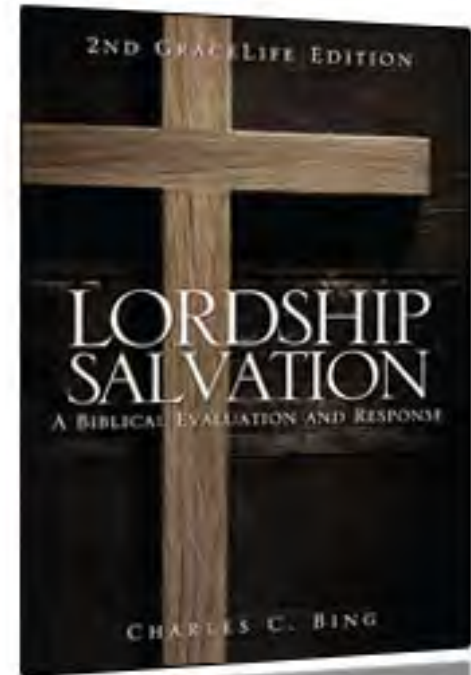
INTRODUCTION

- Problematic Answers: Example #3
- Other modern scholars see in James 2:14-26 evidence of a split within early church
- James D. G. Dunn: “It is obvious then that what is reflected here is a controversy within Christianity—between that stream of Jewish Christianity which was represented by James at Jerusalem on the one hand, and the Gentile churches or Hellenistic Jewish Christians who had been decisively influenced by Paul’s teaching on the other” (*Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977] 251-252)



INTRODUCTION

- Problematic Answers: Example #4
- “Lordship Salvation Debate” within the Evangelical wing of the church
- Issue: Is Jesus our **Savior** or our **Lord**?
- James 2:14-26 played a key role in this debate



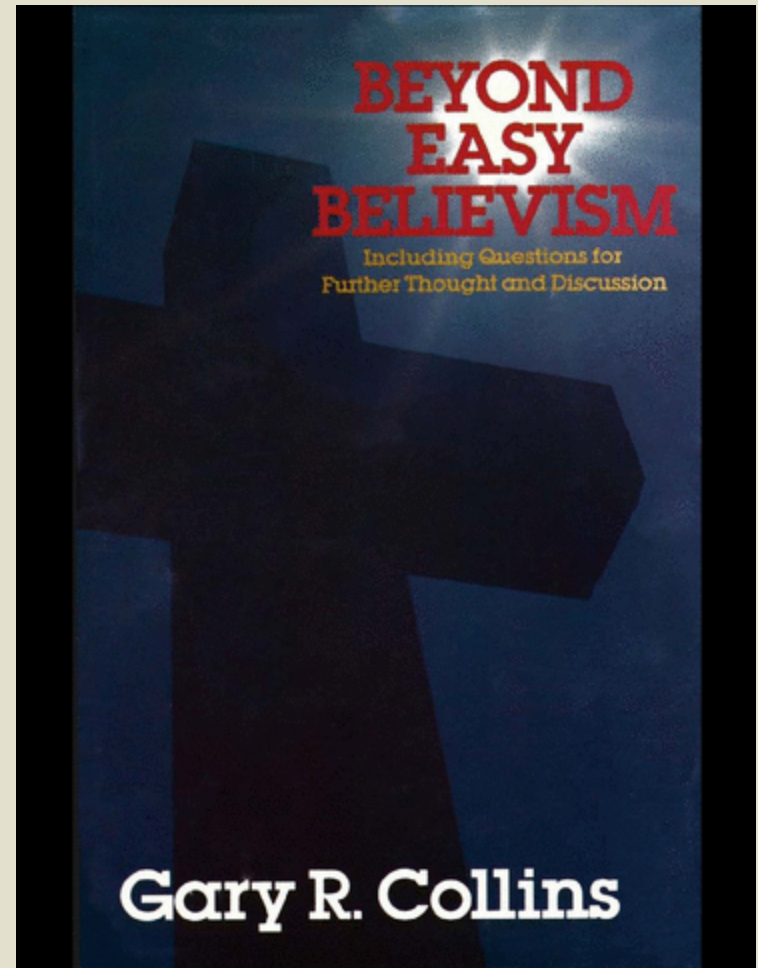
INTRODUCTION

- Problematic Answers: Example #4
- Position #1: Jesus is our Savior!
 - To be saved one must simply and only believe in Jesus
 - Emphasis on free nature of grace obtained through faith
 - Charge against “Lordship” proponents: they are guilty of legalism, works-righteousness



INTRODUCTION

- Problematic Answers: Example #4
- Position #2: Jesus is our Lord!
 - To be saved one must not only believe in Jesus but also submit one's life to the lordship of Christ
 - Emphasis on transforming character of grace which shows itself in good works or holy living
 - Charge against "Savior" proponents: they are guilty of cheap grace, easy believism



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 14a: “What good is it?”
 - Greek phrase τί τὸ ὄφελος (*ti to ophelos*) literally means “What [is] the benefit?”
 - A fixed expression of that day that **always expected a negative answer** (1 Cor 15:32; Sir 20:30; 41:14; Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain* 86; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.4.16; 1.6.33; 3.7.30; 3.24.51)
 - Not a real question with an unknown answer but an assertion that faith without works is worth nothing!



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

• Verse 14b: “Can such faith save him?”

- Instead of referring to faith generically as “faith”, James uses the definite article “*the* faith”
- James is thus not speaking about faith in general or in the abstract but the specific kind of faith described in the first half of the verse, namely, to the kind of faith where someone claims to have faith but no works
- Some translations are misleading when they translate verse 14b as “Can faith save you?” (KJV; NRSV)

孤独の時間次元（時間）で動作します：それは慢性的なことや感情的な結合性の破れ（愛する人の喪失の観点から）の瞬間に、時折発生します。男は他の人々と適切なリンクを有するにもかかわらず、孤独の短い、瞬間的な状態を、発生する可能性があります。大規模な都市の成長の観測が示すように単独で人工と対人相互作用の浅はかさを必要と条件を行い、対人関係、連絡先在、ランダム不完全で不連続となる。単独では、あなたの人生のパートナーを見つけることができない若者があります。それは人の前に開いて、成功する能力がなく、一人で住んでいる若い世代にこのような良好な接触を持っていない、他の人との関係が強いにもかかわらず、それは（距離で愛など）を同じまま高齢者、内向的なことができる彼女の貴重な連絡先、彼のパートナーによって評価されていないため、極端なケースでは、孤独、うつ病につながるこ**HE**できます。孤独の可能性を高める心理的要因がいくつかあります。社会との接触の回避が起動さ、信頼性が不足している（他し、その能力に）リードを低い自尊心、これは孤独を、そのうちのされ、その結果を意味 - そのような要因は、スパイラル的な効果を起動すると、拒絶反応を恐れて他者との接触を避けることが低自尊心であり、低自尊心で固定。孤独の出現を支持する因子は、コミュニケーションスキルの貧しい人々の開発です。対人能力の低水準と人々は社会的引きこもりと抑制することを**Lost in Translation** 会的リスクの回避、別の人と**Lost in Translation** おり、人工的に相互作用を、多くの通信行為を正式に制限を助長している。意味は、自己イメージの構造から成る、認知的要因を持っている可能性があります。孤独が解除されない場合は、人格の崩壊につながるプロセスを向上します。成長疎外、恥、罪悪感、自信の欠如という形で社会的障壁。試行の失敗は、堅強と順番に大きい分離につながる不安の持続的な上昇のラチエット対人の原因に障壁を克服するために、この条件の持続性は、慢性的な孤独感を引き起こす可能性があります。精神的、心身障害に孤独感が増加感受性の永続的なセンス、スタンが痛み、不安や痛みを減らすことを目的とした慢性的な孤独の防衛メカニズムを実行します。これらは、他の人との関係の交換を含む拒否、抑制、抑圧のメカニズムを、中毒の様々な形態（例えば、病気の恩恵を享受するセカンド）が含まれます。これらのメカニズムは社会的疎外を補強されている。孤独感、防衛機構のメカニズムと呼ばれるからのように、非現実的な世界にして、孤独な男のエスケープに失敗し始める発生した時点で、融合幻想 - 現実の人たちとの想像力の融合、生活や実際の空想で、既存の。時には孤独からの脱出は、統合失調症の分離に向けて可能性が **SHE**。孤独の時間次元（時間）で動作します：それは慢性的なことや感情的な結合性の破れ（愛する人の喪失の観点から）の瞬間に、時折発生します。男は他の人々と適切なリンクを有するにもかかわらず、孤独の短い、瞬間的な状態を、発生する可能性があります。大規模な都市の成長の観測が示すように単独で人工と対人相互作用の浅はかさを必要と条件を行い、対人関係、連絡先在、ランダム不完全で不連続となる。単独では、あなたの人生のパートナーを見つけることができない若者があります。それは人の前に開いて、成功する能力がなく、一人で住んでいる若い世代にこのような良好な接触を持っていない、他の人との関係が強いにもかかわらず、それは（距離で愛など）を同じまま高齢者、内向的なことができる彼女の貴重な連絡先、彼のパートナーによって評価されていないため、極端なケースでは、孤独、うつ病につながるこ**HE**できます。孤独の可能性を高める心理的要因がいくつかあります。社会との接触の回避が起動さ、信頼性が不足している（他し、その能力に）リードを低い自尊心、これは孤独を、そのうちのされ、その結果を意味 - そのような要因は、スパイラル的な効果を起動すると、拒絶反応を恐れて他者との接触を避けることが低自尊心であり、低自尊心で固定。孤独の出現を支持する因子は、コ

I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

• Verse 14b: “Can such faith save him?”

- NIV interprets this correctly by translating it with the adjective “*such* faith”—thereby pointing the reader back to the specific kind of faith described in the immediately preceding clause (“that faith”: NASB; NJB; ESV; “faith like that”: NCV; “that kind of faith”: NLB)
- Yet the NIV (and all other translations) lose something else in translation: What kind of question is verse 14b?

孤独の時間次元（時間）で動作します：それは慢性的なことや感情的な結合性の破れ（愛する人の喪失の観点から）の瞬間に、時折発生します。男は他の人々と適切なリンクを有するにもかかわらず、孤独の短い、瞬間的な状態を、発生する可能性があります。大規模な都市の成長の観測が示すように単独で人工と対人相互作用の浅はかさを必要と条件を行い、対人関係、連絡先在、ランダム不完全で不連続となる。単独では、あなたの人生のパートナーを見つけることができない若者があります。それは人の前に開いて、成功する能力がなく、一人で住んでいる若い世代にこのような良好な接触を持っていない、他の人との関係が強いにもかかわらず、それは（距離で愛など）を同じまま高齢者、内向的なことができる彼女の貴重な連絡先、彼のパートナーによって評価されていないため、極端なケースでは、孤独、うつ病につながるこ**HE**できます。孤独の可能性を高める心理的要因がいくつかあります。社会との接触の回避が起動さ、信頼性が不足している（他し、その能力に）リードを低い自尊心、これは孤独を、そのうちのされ、その結果を意味 - そのような要因は、スパイラル的な効果を起動すると、拒絶反応を恐れて他者との接触を避けることが低自尊心であり、低自尊心で固定。孤独の出現を支持する因子は、コミュニケーションスキルの貧しい人々の開発です。対人能力の低水準と人々は社会的リスクの回避、別の人と**Lost in Translation** おり、人工的に相互作用を、多くの通信行為を正式に制限を助長している。意味は、自己イメージの構造から成る、認知的要因を持っている可能性があります。孤独が解除されない場合は、人格の崩壊につながるプロセスを向上します。成長疎外、恥、罪悪感、自信の欠如という形で社会的障壁。試行の失敗は、堅強と順番に大きい分離につながる不安の持続的な上昇のラチェット対人の原因に障壁を克服するために、この条件の持続性は、慢性的な孤独感を引き起こす可能性があります。精神的、心身障害に孤独感が増加感受性の永続的なセンス、スタンが痛み、不安や痛みを減らすことを目的とした慢性的な孤独の防衛メカニズムを実行します。これらは、他の人との関係の交換を含む拒否、抑制、抑圧のメカニズムを、中毒の様々な形態（例えば、病気の恩恵を享受するセカンド）が含まれます。これらのメカニズムは社会的疎外を補強されている。孤独感とは、防衛機構のメカニズムと呼ばれるからのように、非現実的な世界にして、孤独な男のエスケープに失敗し始める発生した時点です。融合幻想 - 現実の人たちとの想像力の融合、生活や実際の空想で、既存の。時には孤独からの脱出は、統合失調症の分離に向けて可能性が **SHE**。孤独の時間次元（時間）で動作します：それは慢性的なことや感情的な結合性の破れ（愛する人の喪失の観点から）の瞬間に、時折発生します。男は他の人々と適切なリンクを有するにもかかわらず、孤独の短い、瞬間的な状態を、発生する可能性があります。大規模な都市の成長の観測が示すように単独で人工と対人相互作用の浅はかさを必要と条件を行い、対人関係、連絡先在、ランダム不完全で不連続となる。単独では、あなたの人生のパートナーを見つけることができない若者があります。それは人の前に開いて、成功する能力がなく、一人で住んでいる若い世代にこのような良好な接触を持っていない、他の人との関係が強いにもかかわらず、それは（距離で愛など）を同じまま高齢者、内向的なことができる彼女の貴重な連絡先、彼のパートナーによって評価されていないため、極端なケースでは、孤独、うつ病につながるこ**HE**できます。孤独の可能性を高める心理的要因がいくつかあります。社会との接触の回避が起動さ、信頼性が不足している（他し、その能力に）リードを低い自尊心、これは孤独を、そのうちのされ、その結果を意味 - そのような要因は、スパイラル的な効果を起動すると、拒絶反応を恐れて他者との接触を避けることが低自尊心であり、低自尊心で固定。孤独の出現を支持する因子は、コ

I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 14b: “Can such faith save him?”
 - Three ways to ask a question in Greek:
 - A *neutral* question where speaker does not know the answer
 - A “*loaded*” question where the speaker asserts the answer
 - “Yes!”: question is introduced with the negative οὐ, *ou*
 - “No!”: question is introduced with negative μὴ, *mê*



What kind of question is it?

I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 14b: “Can such faith save him?”
 - Verse 14b is a loaded question where the James asserts the answer to be “No!”
 - Best translation: “*Such faith is not able to save him, is it?*”
 - James, as with the opening question “What good is it?,” is not raising a real question but rather asserting something



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

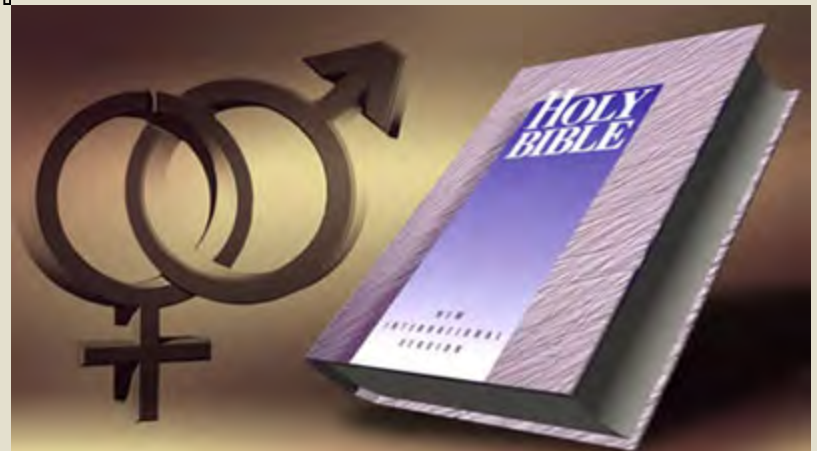
- Verse 15: “Suppose a brother or sister ...”
 - Greek literally reads: “**If** a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food ...”
 - 3RD CLASS CONDITION: some scholars view this type of condition as describing a *hypothetical* situation (thus NIV “Suppose ...”)
 - Better to view 3rd class condition as describing a *general* or *common* situation
 - James is thus dealing not with a rare problem but a wide-spread, common problem among the Jewish churches



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

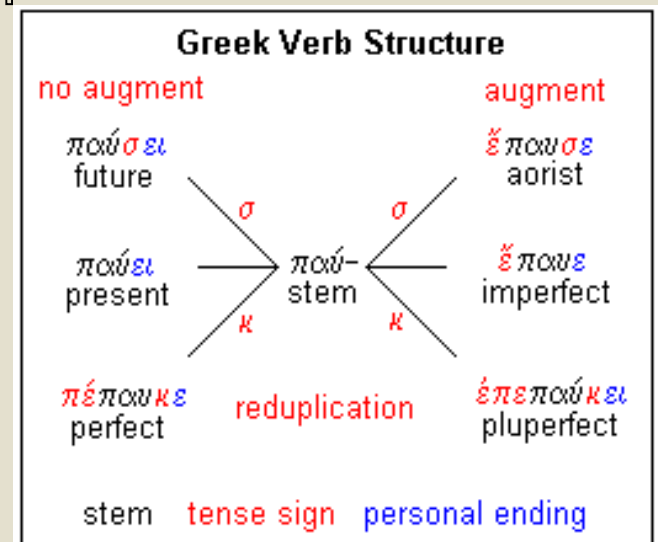
- Verse 15: “Suppose a brother or sister ...”
 - James does not use his standard gender-inclusive “brother” but intentionally has fuller phrase “brother or sister”
 - This fact can be lost in most gender-inclusive translations that regularly render the simple “brother” as “brother or sister”
 - James highlights the plight of a needy “sister” likely because women were often overlooked in a patriarchal society, especially when they lost the provisional and protective help of either a father or husband

Gender-Inclusive Bible
Translations



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 15: “... lacking daily food”
 - Greek participle “lacking” (λειπόμενοι, *leipomenoi*) is given in the **present tense**
 - This emphasizes that the poverty described in this verse is an ongoing or enduring situation
 - Grammar thus stresses the seriousness of the historical context where the church is neglecting the significant and ongoing needs of fellow brothers or sisters



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 16: “Keep warm and well fed!”

θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε

- Middle or Passive voice?
- Passive voice
 - Subject receives the action
 - “Be warm and be well fed!”
 - Unspoken agent of the action of being warmed and well fed is not stated—either God (so-called “divine passive”) or another person
 - Speaker is blind to the fact that he or she is in a position to help the poor believer be warm or be well fed



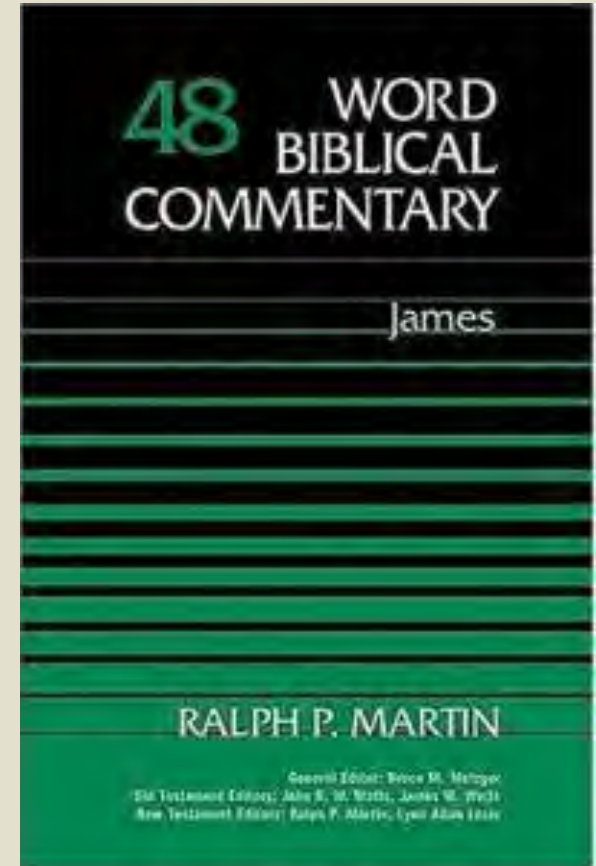
I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 16: “Keep warm and well fed!”
(θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε)
 - Middle voice:
 - Subject does the action (as also in active voice), often with reflexive emphasis:
 - “Warm yourselves and feed yourselves!”
 - Insult to poor believers is even greater here, since they are told to take care of their needs themselves with no outside help from others



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 16: “Keep warm and well fed
(θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε)
- Ralph P. Martin:
“Probably the middle is better here for both verbs, though either voice points to the fact that some professed believers are failing to meet the needs of other church members” (page 85)



Waco, Texas: Word 1988

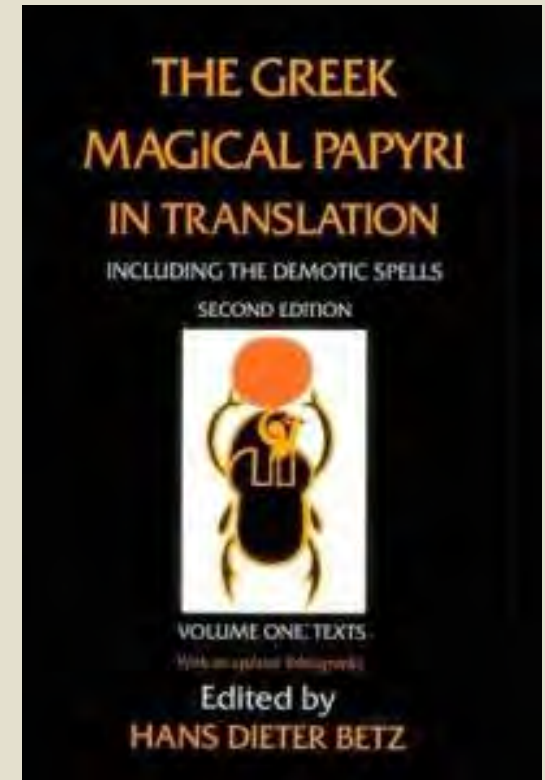
I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 19: “... and they (the demons) shudder”
 - Greek verb φρίσσω (*phrissô*) is a *hapax legomenon*—word occurring only one time in NT
 - Verb often used with hair of either people (“to have one’s hairs stand on end”) and animals (“to bristle”) in context of fear (LSJ 1955)
 - Strong verb meaning more than slight shuddering; refers to uncontrollable, uncontainable, violent shaking from extreme fear and terror



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 19: “... and they (the demons) shudder”
 - Cognate noun φρικῆ, (*phrikê*) is where we get English word “fright”
 - Verb occurs frequently in magical papyri of demons reaction to exorcism spells
 - Demons’ faith in the existence and oneness of God elicits response of terror
 - See also response of demons to Jesus in Mark 1:23-28 (“the evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek”) and 5:1-20



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 20b: “... is useless”
 - Full verse reads: “You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without works is **useless**?”
 - Greek word for “useless” (ἀργή, *argê*) is a compound word made up of two parts (α + ἔργον) meaning “without work”
 - Occurs immediately after noun “works”
 - James thus makes a clever pun or word-play that in English might be rendered: “Faith without works *does not work!*”



Pun: A play on words, either on different senses of the same word or on the similar sense or sound of different words

I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

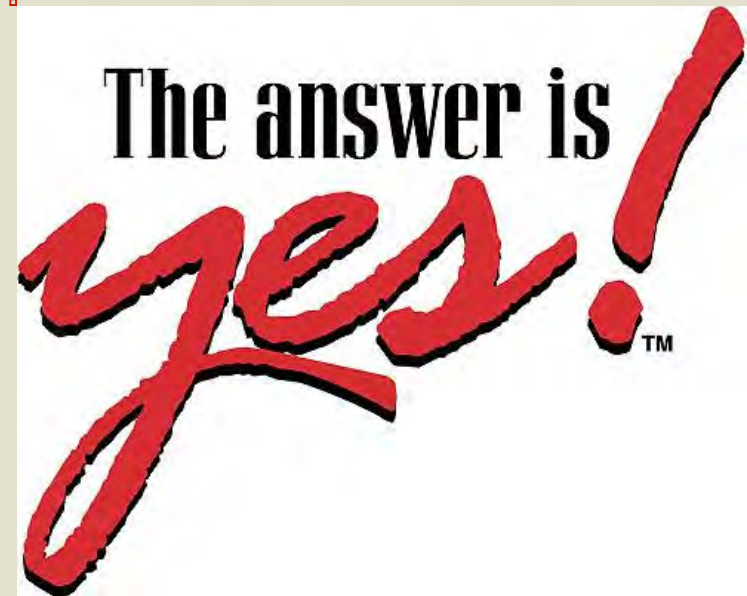
- Verse 20b: “... is useless”
 - Rhetorical function of the pun
 - 1st function: Makes the reader favorably disposed to the author and what the author is saying
 - 2nd function: Draws attention to the statement being made, namely, that the kind of faith that is not accompanied by works is *useless* (“Faith without works does not work!”)



Pun: A play on words, either on different senses of the same word or on the similar sense or sound of different words

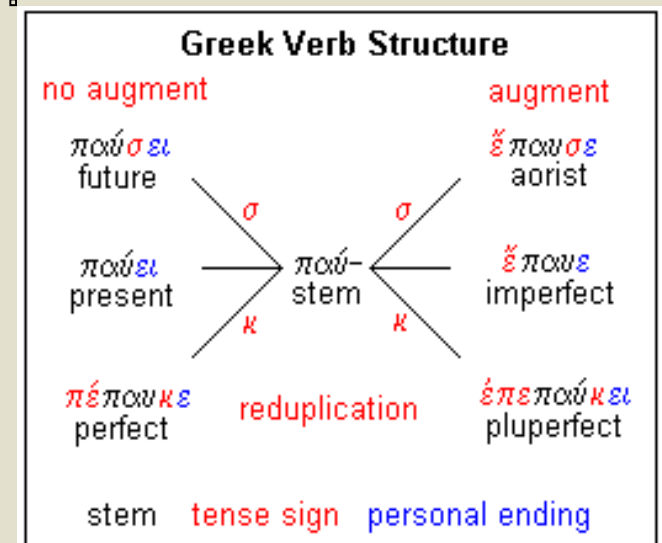
I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 21: What kind of question is it?
 - Here, as in v 14b, we meet not a neutral question but a loaded question
 - This time, however, the expected answer to the question is “Yes!”
 - “Yes—our father Abraham was indeed considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar!”



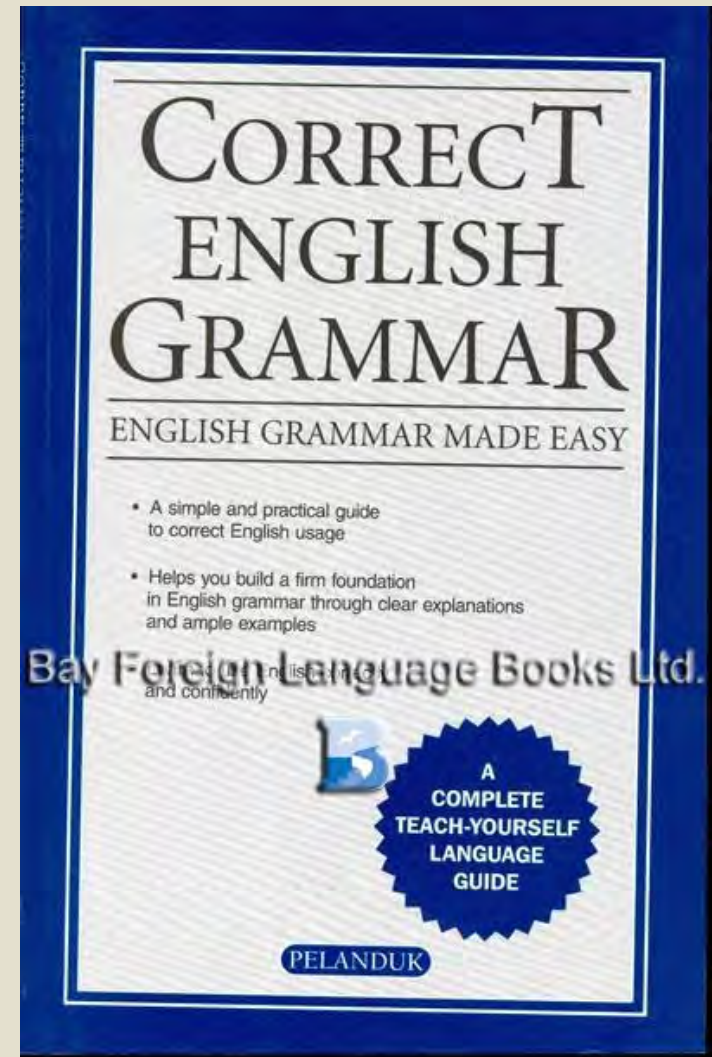
I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 22: “...his actions were working”
 - Note 1st the plural “actionsῶ” (*ergois*)
 - Note 2nd the unique form of the verb “were working” (*synêrgei*) which uses the rarer **imperfect** tense that highlights the *ongoing and continuous nature of the action*
- James does not have in view only the one act of Abraham offering up Isaac but the actionsῶ (plural!) which throughout Abraham’s life were part of his faith



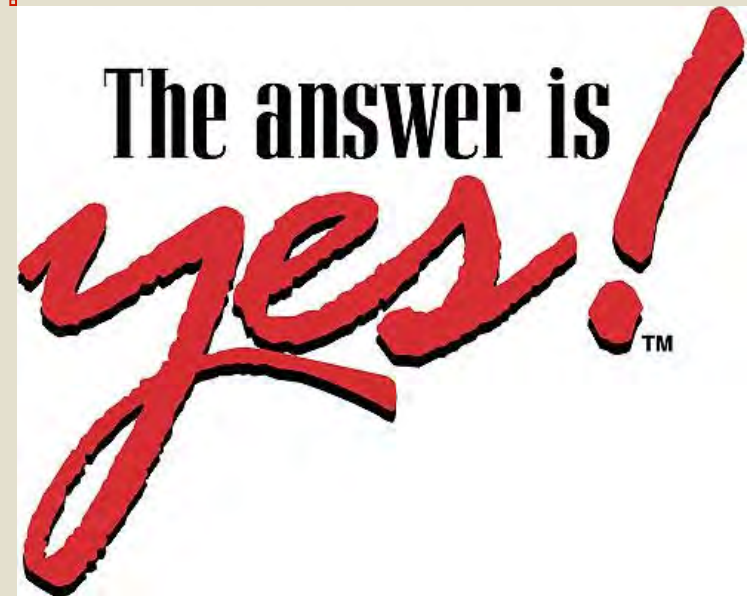
I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- Verse 24: Significance of word order
 - Word order in verse 24: “*You see that **out of works** is justified a person and not out of faith alone*”
 - Prepositional phrase “out of works” is pushed by James to the front of the sentence for emphasis (see also questions of vv 21, 25), thereby stressing his argument that “works” or “deeds” are the means by which believers prove that they have true, saving faith in contrast to “faith alone”—that is, a false, non-saving faith that is devoid of works



I. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

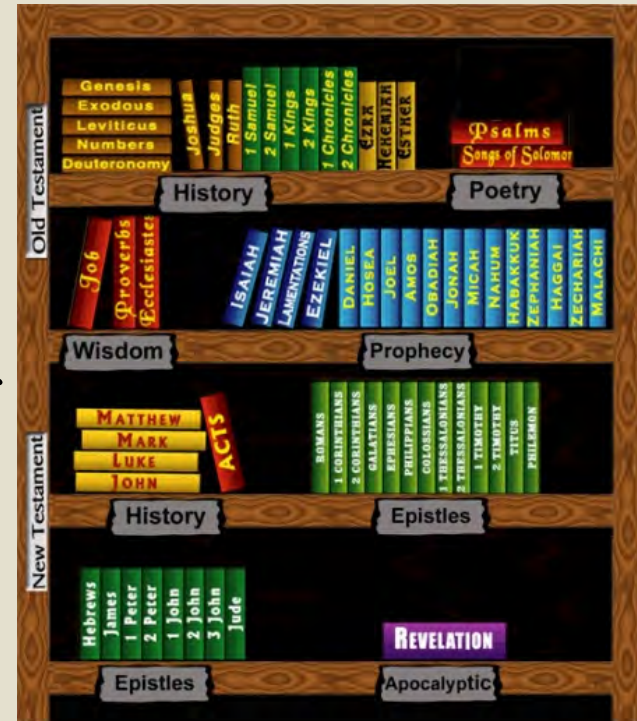
- Verse 25: What kind of question is it?
 - Here again we meet not a neutral question but a loaded question
 - This time, as with question about Abraham in verse 21, the expected answer to the question is “Yes!”
 - “Yes—in the same way Rahab the prostitute was indeed considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction!”



II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

1. What type of literature is James 2:14-26?

- James 2:14-26 clearly is part of a *letter* or an *epistle*
- Thus, knowledge of epistolary formulas or fixed expressions typically used in ancient letters important for proper interpretation of this passage
- However, there are other non-epistolary, broader literary devices used as well: e.g., inclusio, chiasmus, word-pair, etc.



II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Clear that the start of a new passage actually occurs not at 2:14 but earlier at 2:1
- Several verbal, thematic and literary links between opening half of chapter two (2:1-13) and its closing half (2:14-26)
- This proves that the two sections of 2:1-13 and 2:14-26 are closely connected together

Where does
the new
passage
START?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Links between 2:1-13 & 2:14-26:

- Both open with vocative “my brothers” (vv 1, 14)
- Both have “faith” as key word in opening (vv 1, 14)(this key word hidden in NIV)
- Both deal with poor people who are in “shabby” or “poor” clothing (vv 2, 15)
- Both conclude the description of the discrimination or neglect of the poor (vv 2, 15) with a rhetorical question (vv 4, 16)
- Both have the expression “You do well” (v 8: *kalôs poiete*; v 19: *kalôs poieis*)
- Both have the passive verb “called” (vv 7, 23)

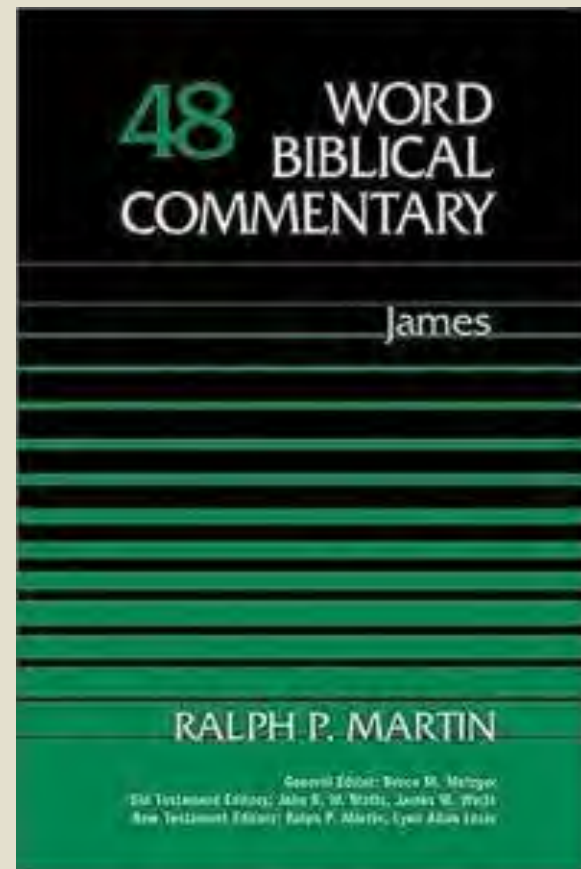
Where does
the new
passage
START?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Ralph Martin:

“We still have to consider how 2:14-26 fits into the preceding section [of 2:1-13]. The links between the two paragraphs are too strong to be overlooked ... These parallels argue for a smooth and connected flow in the author’s writing ... and the same situation lies in the background of the two units” (pages 78-9)



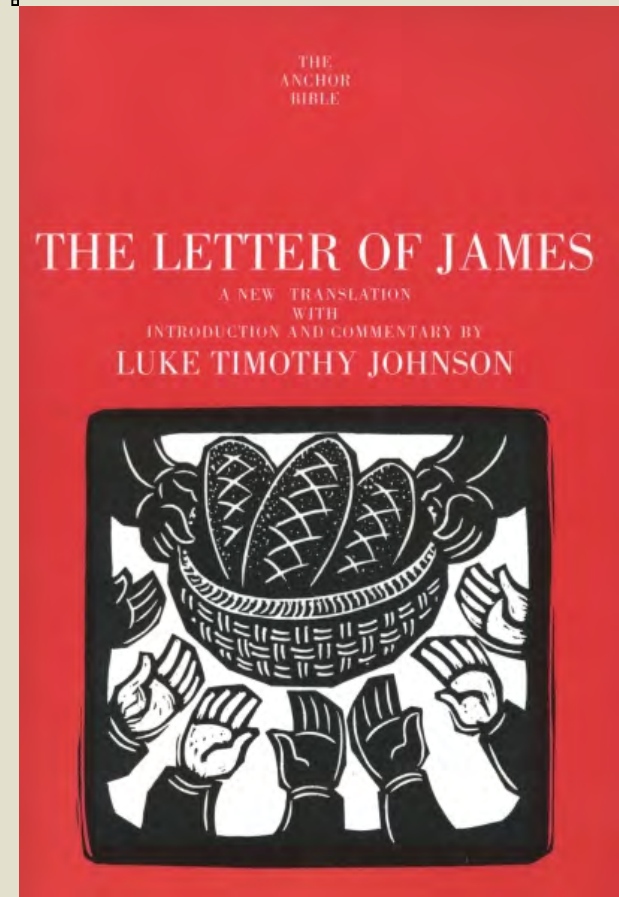
Waco, Texas: Word 1988

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Luke Timothy Johnson:

“The position taken here is that in chapter two James develops a single argument ... In this sense, the final part of the discussion in 2:14-26 only provides the broadest formal framework for the specifics argued in 2:1-13. Likewise, the point of the discussion in 2:14-26 is not to be found by way of engagement with a Pauline position, but rather by the specific points argued in 2:1-13” (page 219)



New York: Doubleday
1995

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Yet evidence for shift in argument at 2:14:
 - Vocative “my brothers”: common epistolary device in not only James (1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 3:1; 4:11; 5:7, 12, 19) but other letters of that day to mark transition; indicates either major or minor break in argument
 - Asyndeton: there is no word (e.g., γὰρ, δὲ , ἀλλὰ, καὶ) connecting 2:14 to the preceding material, thereby suggesting the start of a new section

Where does
the new
passage
START?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for start of new passage at 2:14:

- Yet evidence for shift in argument at 2:14:
 - Word pair “faith/works”: occurs 10x in vv 14-26, giving these verses “lexical coherence”; although “faith” occurs two times in preceding section (2:1-13), word pair “faith/works” occurs nowhere in surrounding material, either in the preceding (2:1-13) or following (3:1ff) verses

Where does
the new
passage
START?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2. Evidence for end of new passage at 2:26:

- Ending signaled by last use of word pair “faith/works” in v 26
- Use of vocative “my brothers” at 3:1 to signal start of new topic
- Shift in topic at 3:1 away from faith and works to new topic of controlling the tongue
- CONCLUSION: Compelling evidence for 2:14-26 as a legitimate preaching/teaching unit

A blue circle containing the text "Where does the new passage END?". The text is white and centered within the circle. The circle is positioned on the right side of the slide, overlapping the list of evidence.

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

3. Structure (“Mapquest) of 2:14-26:

- Literary analysis also involves question of the internal structure of a given biblical passage
- James (like the other biblical authors) is a gifted writer who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thinks carefully not just about the words that he will write but also the structure that his argument will follow
- James thinks not just about “*what*” he says (the CONTENT) but also “*how*” he will say it (the FORM in which that content is given)



How does James get from the opening in verse 14 to the conclusion in verse 26?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

3. Structure (“Mapquest) of 2:14-26:

- Passage consists of two rather clearly defined units and a concluding simile:

I. Non-saving Faith (vv 14-19)

- Two *negative* examples of a “workless” faith that does not save

II. Saving Faith (vv 20-25)

- Two *positive* examples (Abraham & Rahab) of a “working” faith that does save

Conclusion (v 26)



How does James get from the opening in verse 14 to the conclusion in verse 26?

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

3. Structure (“Mapquest) of 2:14-26:

I. Non-Saving Faith (vv 14-19)

- Opens with vocative “My brothers” (v 14)
- Two *negative* examples: 1st example involves faith of person with pious cliché to poor believer in need (vv 15-17); 2nd example involves faith of demons (vv 18-19)
- *Inclusio*: Boundaries of 1st example marked by *inclusio* “What good is it?” (vv 14, 16)

II. Saving Faith (vv 20-25)

- Opens with vocative “O foolish man” (v 20)
- Disclosure formula: an epistolary formula which employs verb of “knowing” and functions as a transitional device (v 20 “Do you want to know ...”)
- Two *positive* examples: 1st example involves faith of Abraham (vv 21-24); 2nd example involves faith of Rahab (v 25)

Conclusion (v 26)

- Simile: *Just as* body/spirit ... *so also* faith/works: The two must not be separated!

II. LITERARY ANALYSIS

3. Structure (“Mapquest) of 2:14-26:

I. Non-Saving Faith (vv 14-19)

Intro: Opening question presenting thesis: faith & works must not be separated (v 14)

1. Negative Example of a false, non-saving faith (vv 15-17)
2. Negative Example of demons’ faith (v 19)

II. Saving Faith (vv 20-25)

Intro: Opening question restating thesis: faith & works must not be separated (v 20)

1. Positive Example of Abraham’s faith (vv 21-24)
2. Positive Example of Rahab’s faith (v 25)

Conclusion (v 26)

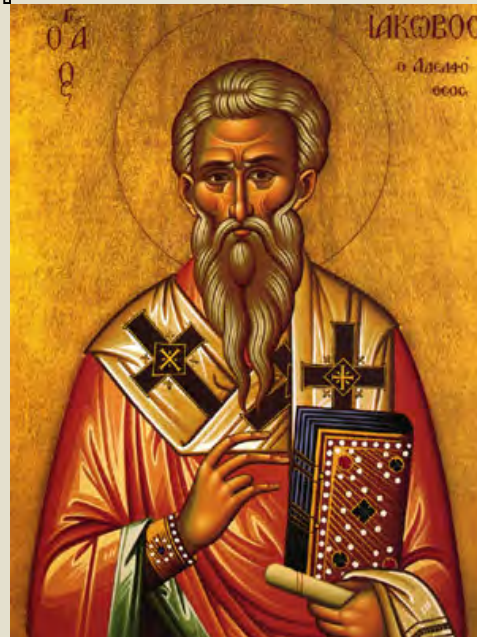
Simile: *Just as* body/spirit ... *so also* faith/works: The two must not be separated!

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

1. Problem addressed in 2:14-26:

- Issue: What is the trouble in the text?
- James is not writing an abstract theological discourse on faith and works but addressing a very specific and real situation: What is that situation?

James,
Brother of Jesus,
Head of
Jerusalem Church



What is the
TROUBLE
in the text?

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?:

- The conditional (“if”) clauses that open not only 2:14-26 (vv 14, 15-16) but also 2:1-13 (v 2) have led many scholars to conclude that the situation being addressed in James 2 is hypothetical and does not address a real situation
- The NIV thus translates 2:15 not “If a brother or sister...” but “**Suppose** a brother or sister...” (so also 2:2)

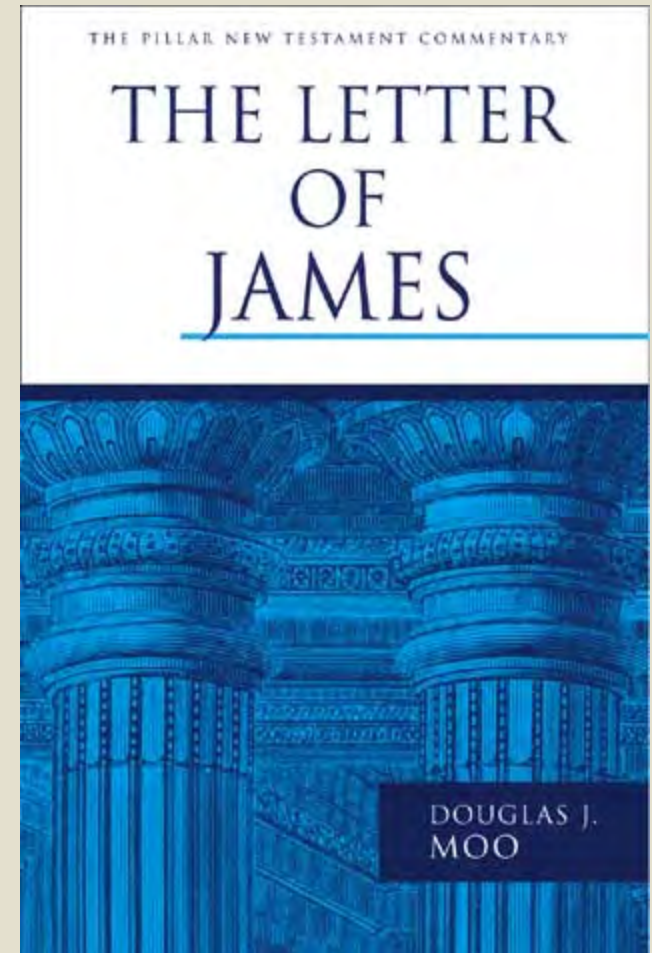


III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?

- Douglas Moo:

“How realistic is this incident? ...the Greek construction James uses to describe the incident (*ean* with the subjunctive mood) suggests (though it does not require) that James is giving a hypothetical example. And the hypothetical nature of the situation is underscored by the indefiniteness of *brother or sister*” (page 124)

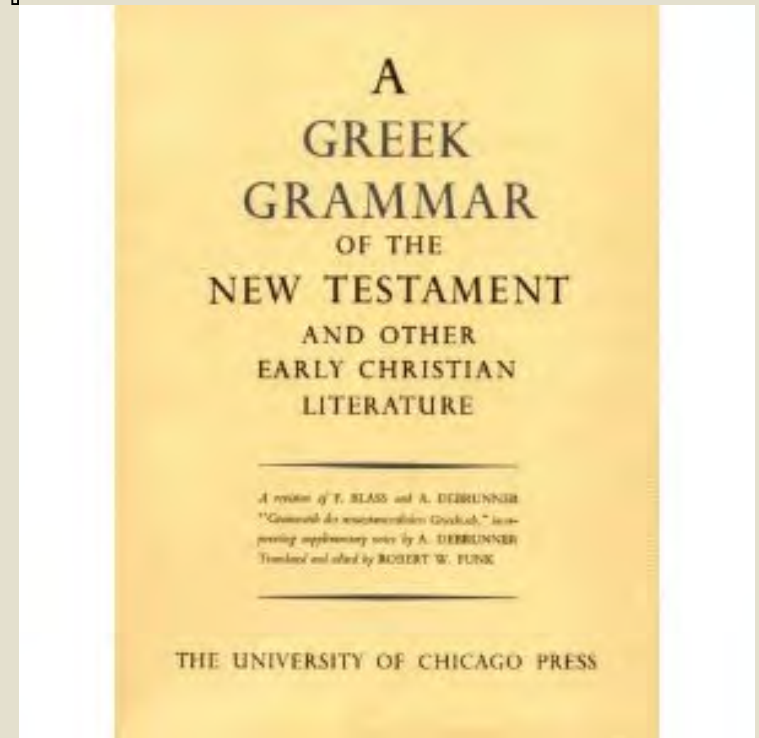


Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?

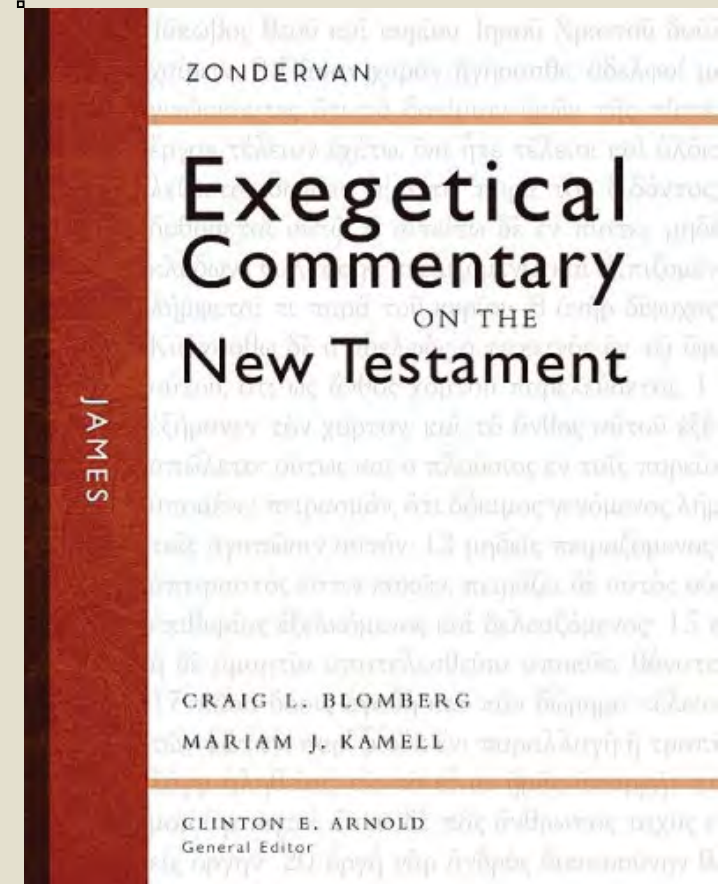
- Response #1: Grammatical argument
- Better to view 3rd class condition as describing a *general* or *common* situation



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?:

- Response #2: Contextual argument
- Emphasis expressed through addition of “or sister” and present tense of participle “lacking”
- Blomberg & Kamell: “James could be presenting a hypothetical objection for the sake of his argument, but it seems likely that some in his congregation were making precisely this inquiry. Why else would vv. 14-26 rebut the viability of a lifeless orthodoxy so strenuously?” (page 129)

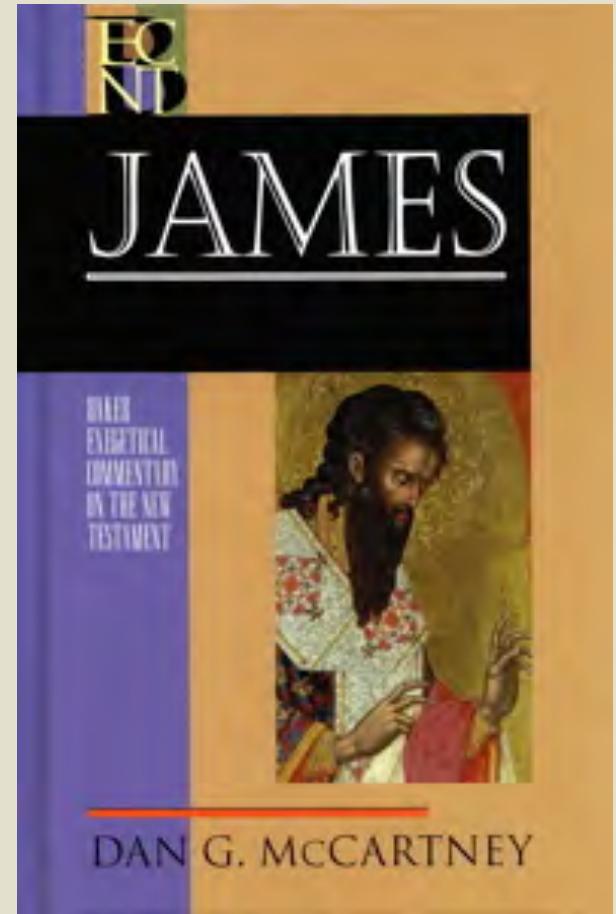


Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2008

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?

- Response #3: “from you” in v 16
- Dan McCartney: “Two little words make it clear that this situation is not simply a parabolic analogy. James says, ‘If someone *from among you* [ἐξ ὑμῶν, *ex hymôn*] says’ (2:16). If he were only making a comparison, he simply would have said, ‘If someone says,’ not specifying ‘from among you’” (page 156)



Grand Rapids: Baker 2009

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

2. Real or Hypothetical Situation?:

- Response #4: Rhetorical argument
- Duane Watson:

“Even if [the situation] is hypothetical, historical information can still be gleaned from the example because it was selected to address a specific rhetorical situation” (“James 2 and Greco-Roman Argumentation,” *New Testament Studies* 39 [1993] 98)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3. Discrimination against the Poor:

- On a general level, the historical situation is clear: the church is showing favoritism to the rich and discriminating against (2:1-13) and neglecting (2:14-26) the poor
- 2:15: Church fails to help out “a brother or sister who is without clothes and daily food”
- 2:2-4: Problem made clearer by previous verses in chapter 2 which explicitly refer to church showing special attention to the rich and discriminating against the poor



“...a brother or sister who is without clothes and daily food” (v 15)

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3. Discrimination against the Poor:

- On a specific level, the historical situation is less clear
- Option #1: **Worship context**
- Verse 2: “If a man comes into your meeting (*synagôgê*) ...”
- Synagogue: one of the activities that took place at a synagogue is worship



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3. Discrimination against the Poor:

- Option #2: **Judicial context**
- Verse 2: “If a man comes into your meeting (*synagôgê*) ...”
- Synagogue: another one of the activities that took place at a synagogue is the adjudication of legal matters
- Note verse 6: “Is it not the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?”



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3. Discrimination against the Poor:

- Conclusion: Although the specific historical context remains uncertain (a worship or juridical context?), the general context is clear: the Jewish Christian church's favoritism of the rich and discrimination and neglect of the poor
- Serious problem in light of the law's summary to love not only God but also one's neighbor (cited by James in verse 8: "*If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scriptures, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' ...*")



“...a brother or sister who is without clothes and daily food” (v 15)

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3. Discrimination against the Poor:

- Significance:
 - James' discussion of faith and works in 2:14-26 needs to be heard in this particular historical context
 - To a church community which is discriminating against and neglecting its poor members, James emphasizes “works”—not as a means to obtain righteousness but as a natural and essential element of true, saving faith
 - James in 2:14-26 is not contrasting faith versus works but two kinds of faith: a false faith versus a true faith



“...a brother or sister who is without clothes and daily food” (v 15)

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

4. Explanation of 1st negative example:

- 1st example (vv 15-16): Instead of giving a fellow believer in need clothes and food, the church gives only empty words: “Go in peace! Keep warm and well fed!”
- 1st command: “Go in peace!” (Greek: *hypagete en eirênê*) is a common Hebrew expression of farewell: *leku leshalom*
- Thus words are an empty pious cliché (NAB: “Good-bye and good luck!”)

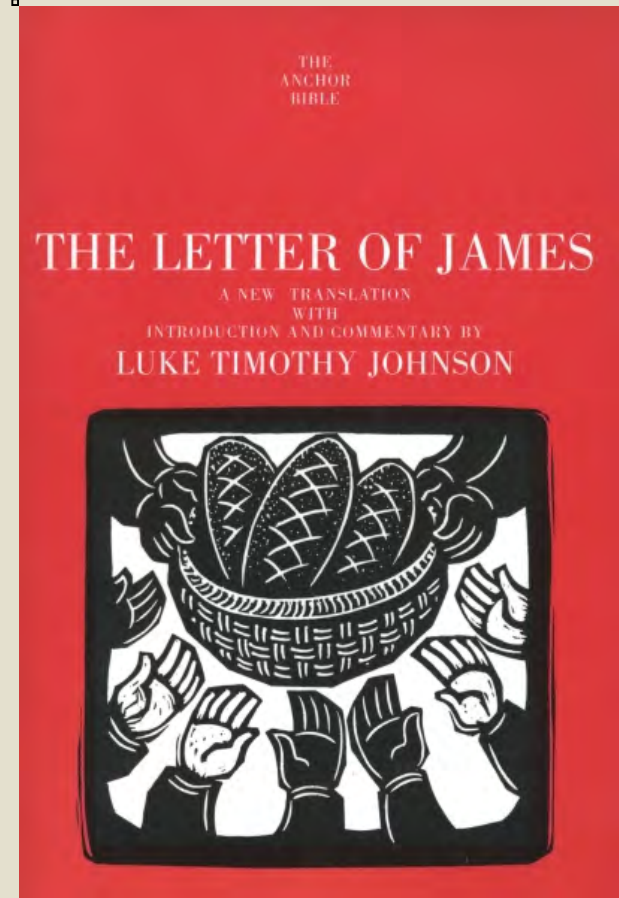


Cliché: An expression which has been overused to the point of losing its original meaning or intent

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

4. Explanation of 1st negative example:

- 2nd Command: “Keep warm and well fed!”
 - These two commands correspond to the two needs identified in previous verse
 - Need #1: “naked”
 - Pious cliché: “Keep warm!”
 - Need #2: “lacking daily food”
 - Pious cliché: “Keep well fed!”
- Luke Timothy Johnson: “The exhortations correspond to the conditions of nakedness and hunger, revealing that the speaker *knows* the needs but refuses to meet them” (page 239)



New York: Doubleday
1995

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

4. Explanation of 1st negative example:

- Application:

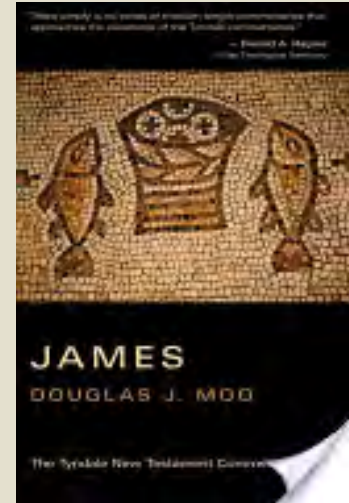
- The kind of faith that sees someone in need and then only utters a pious cliché is a faith that is “all talk and no action”
- False or non-saving nature of this kind of faith is indicated by the apodosis: “What is the profit” (v 16b)—a rhetorical question that always expects a negative answer
- James spells this out in v 17: “*In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*”



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

4. Explanation of 1st negative example:

- Contrast in 1st example is not faith versus works but rather a false, non-saving faith (with no works) versus a true, saving faith (with works)
- Douglas Moo: “It is absolutely vital to understand that the main point of this argument, expressed three times (in vv. 17, 20 and 26), is not that works must be *added* to faith but that genuine faith *includes* works. That is its very nature” (*James* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985] 99)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

5. Explanation of 2nd negative example:

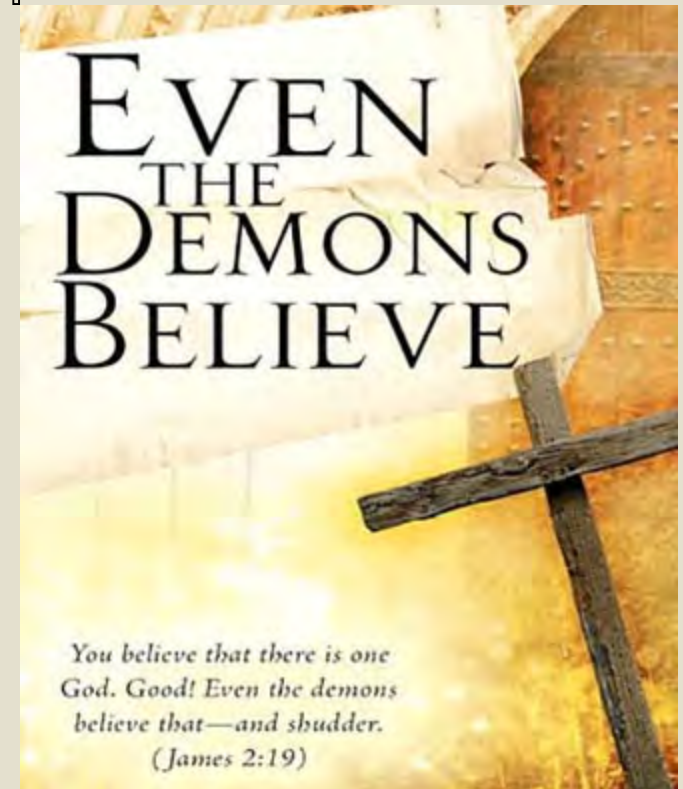
- 2nd example (v 19): The false or non-saving faith of the demons is defined as believing that “God is one”
- Phrase “God is one” is clear reference to the “Shema”: “*Here, O Israel: The Lord, our God, the Lord is one*”
- Most important monotheistic confession of Jews (Deut 6:4; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91; 4.201; 5.112; *Ep. Arist.* 132; *Sib. Or.* 3.629)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

5. Explanation of 2nd negative example:

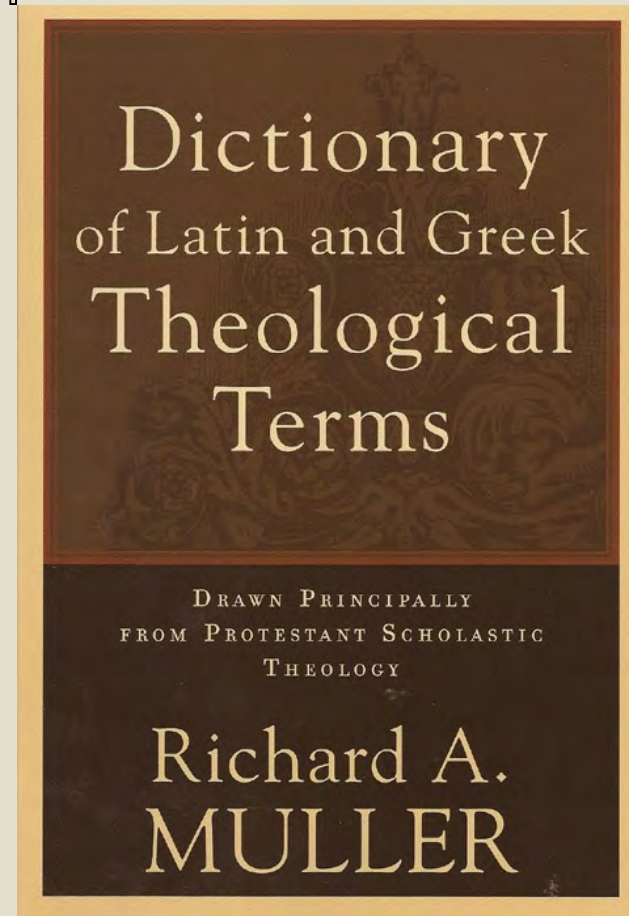
- Application:
 - True, saving faith involves more than just knowing about God
 - The demons know about God's existence and oneness (“Even the demons believe that ...”) but their faith is clearly insufficient (“... and they shudder”)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

5. Explanation of 2nd negative example:

- Reformers: Distinguished 3 aspects of faith:
 - Knowledge (*notitia*): intellectual understanding of something
 - Belief (*assensus*): belief that this something is true
 - Trust (*fiducia*): commit yourself personally to this true thing



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

5. Explanation of 2nd negative example:

- Reformers: Distinguished 3 aspects of faith:
- Example of Marriage:
 - It is one thing to intellectually understand the concept of marriage (*notitia*) and also to believe in it as a valid human institution (*assensus*); it is quite another thing to walk down the aisle and say, “I do!” (*fiducia*)
 - It is one thing to intellectually understand God’s existence (*notitia*) and also to believe God’s existence (*assensus*); it is quite another thing to personally commit yourself to God (*fiducia*)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

6. Explanation of 1st positive example:

- 1st example (vv 21-24): James illustrates true, saving faith by reminding his readers of the “binding of Isaac” story
- Story would have been well-known to his Jewish readers and there is no need for him to spell out all of the details of Abraham’s life, including the offering of his son, Isaac, on the altar
- If the modern audience is not familiar with these details, the preacher must spell it out for them, since James assumes the knowledge of these things



Abraham & Isaac.
Rembrandt (1634)

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

6. Explanation of 1st positive example:

- Explanation (v 22): James explains this example by stating: *“You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did”*
- Plural “actions” and imperfect tense (“were working”) are significant: James is not thinking of just this one action of offering up Isaac but the actions (plural!) throughout Abraham’s life that testified to his true, saving faith

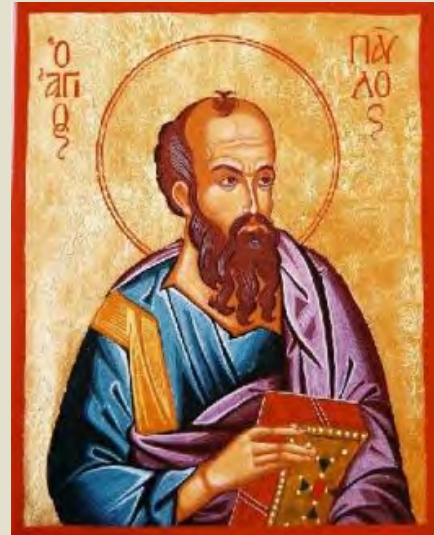
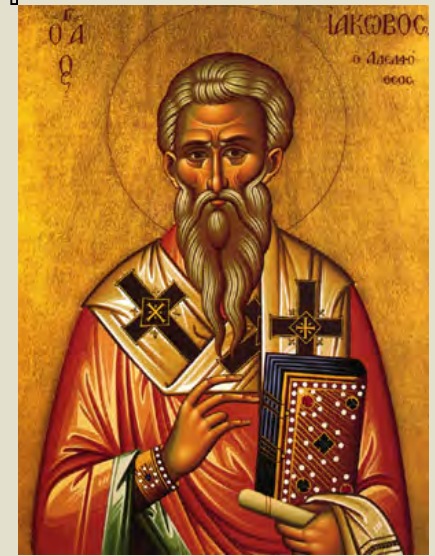


Abraham & Isaac.
Rembrandt (1634)

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

6. Explanation of 1st positive example:

- Conclusion (v 24): James concludes this positive example of true, saving faith by stating, “*You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone*”
- James here sounds contradictory to Paul
- Key, however, is the last word in the sentence: “alone” (*monon*)
- Faith *alone* for James is a false faith that has no works



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

7. Explanation of 2nd positive example:

- 2nd Example (v 25): James illustrates true, saving faith by reminding his readers of Rahab story (Joshua 2)
- As with “binding of Isaac” story, the “Rahab” story would also have been well-known to his Jewish readers and there is no need for James to spell out all of the details
- Also no need to repeat explanation given already to the “binding of Isaac” story (vv 22-24)



Rahab hides two spies on her roof
under stalks of flax

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Issue: Why does James pair the example of Abraham with that of Rahab? Out of all the OT “heroes of faith” (Heb 11), why these two?
- Option #1: **Hospitality**
- Many commentators believe that Abraham and Rahab were paired because of their reputation for hospitality—Abraham to the three visitors (Genesis 18); Rahab to the two spies (Joshua 2)



Abraham (and Sarah) extend hospitality to the three visitors

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Duane Watson:

“The examples of Abraham, father of the faith, and Rahab, a harlot, are a strange combination, but one found in the tradition because both exemplified hospitality” (“James 2 and Greco-Roman Argumentation,” *New Testament Studies* 39 [1993] 116)

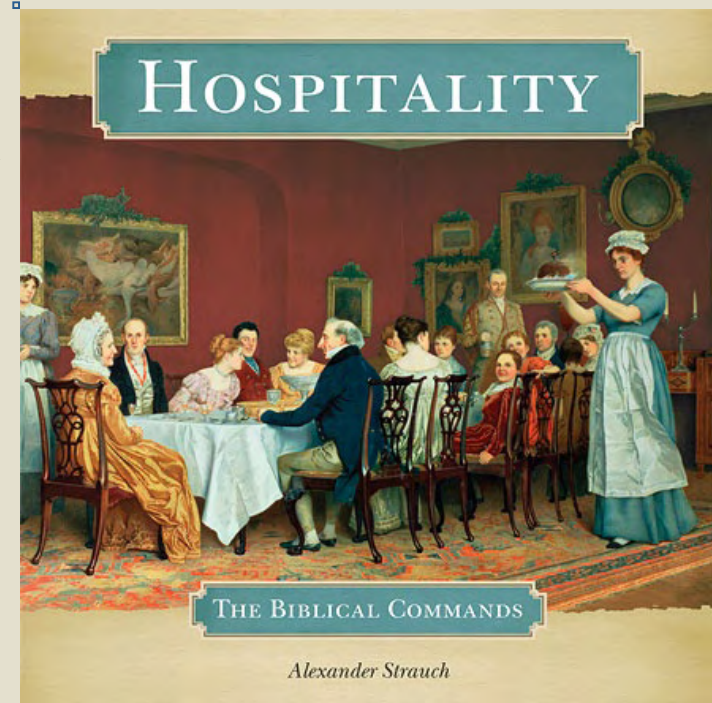


III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Evaluation:

- Strength: Fits the context well—need for church to provide clothes and food to needy members (vv 15-16)
- Further support: Abraham (but not joined with Rahab!) highly praised in Rabbinic tradition for hospitality
- 1st (major) weakness: James does not cite story of three visitors (Gen 18) but story of Abraham offering up Isaac (Gen 22)

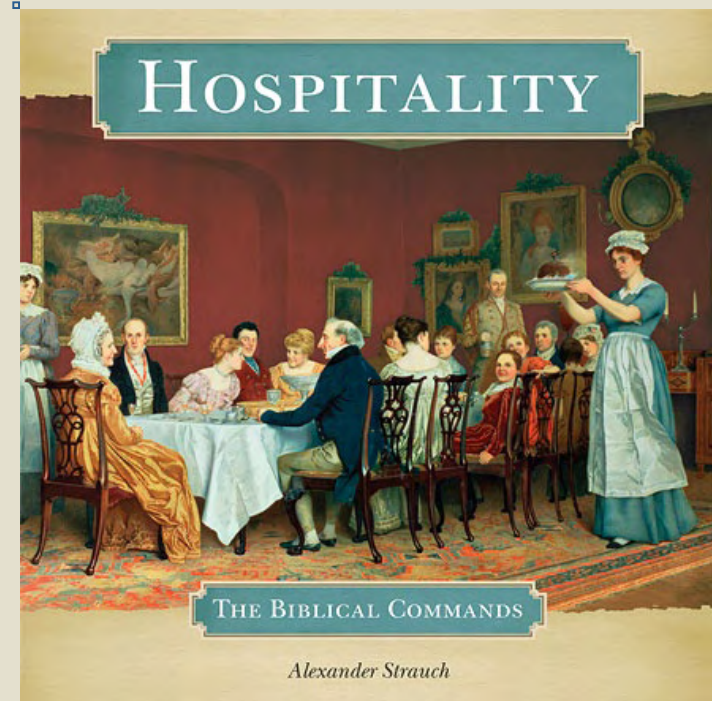


III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Evaluation:

- 2nd (major) weakness: Rahab is justified not just by her providing lodging for the spies but also by her “sending them out by another way”
- 3rd (minor) weakness: Pairing of Abraham and Rahab *not* very common in Jewish or Christian tradition (only 1 Clem 10 and 12 which date after James)



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

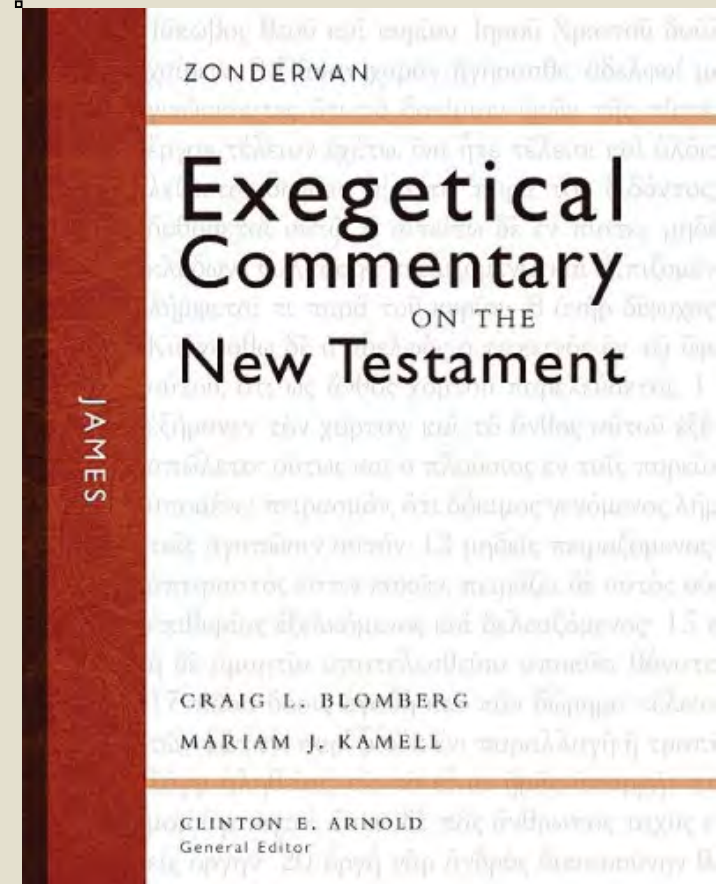
- Option #2: **Extremes (Merismus)**
- I propose that James has paired Abraham and Rahab because they serve as two extremes: Abraham is the father and hero of the Jewish nation, whereas Rahab is a Gentile, a woman, and a prostitute
- Literary device in Hebrew poetry: Merismus —the use of two parts (usually the extremes) to describe the whole:
 - “morning and night” = whole day
 - “heaven and earth” = everywhere
 - “root and fruit” = everything



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Option #2: **Extremes (Merismus)**
- Blomberg & Kamell: “The two exemplars of James’ principle of works completing or vindicating one’s faith—Abraham and Rahab—contrast with each other in several respects, creating a powerful merismus, a figure of speech ‘which makes equal the most extreme members of a whole and therefore all the other members who fall in between’” (page 125)



Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2008

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8. Why pairing of Abraham & Rahab?:

- Application:
 - The call for demonstrating true, saving faith is the same for all of God's people—whether you are a *patriarch* or a *prostitute*
 - Makes no difference whether you are the great hero of the Jewish faith, Abraham, or the Gentile, female, prostitute Rahab
 - All believers are called upon to demonstrate the kind of true faith that manifests itself clearly in works of kindness and obedience



III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

9. Simile involving “body” & “spirit”:

- Verse 26: “Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without deeds is dead”
- The “spirit” here is the life principle that causes the “body” to come to life (Gen 2:7; Ps 30:6; Ezek 37:10; Luke 8:55; 23:46)
- No spirit = dead body
- No works = dead faith
- Conclusion: Faith and works cannot be separated!

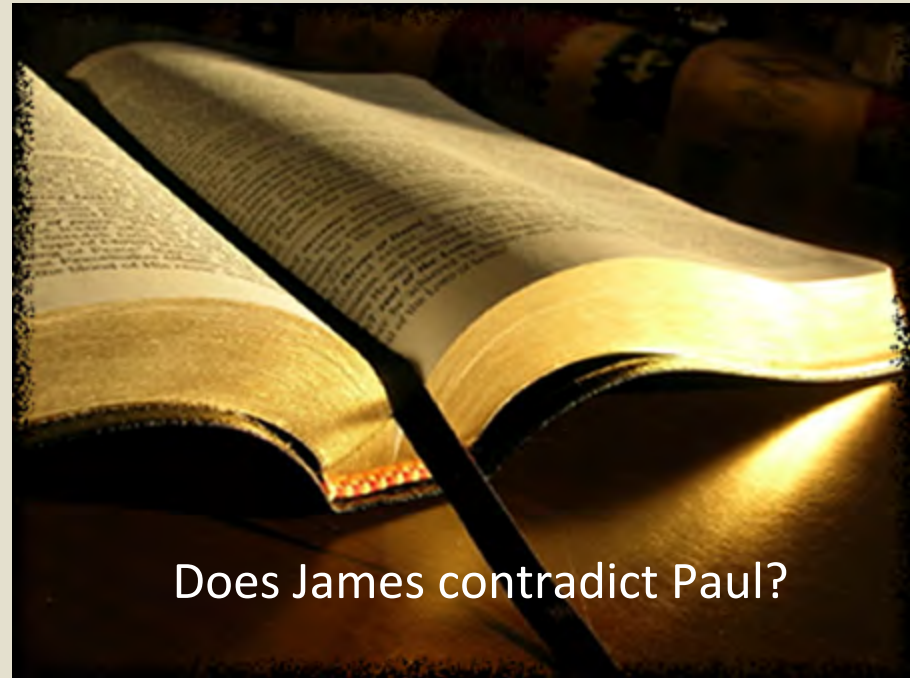


“Faith without deeds is dead”
(James 2:26)

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

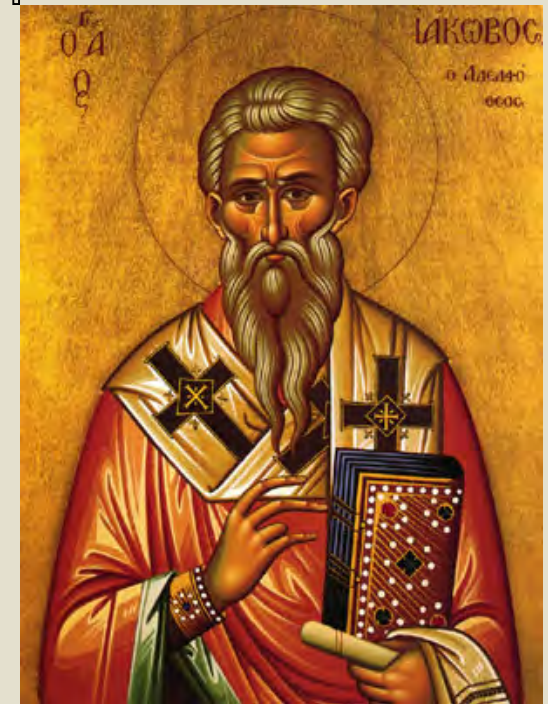
- Problem of James' Argument Revisited

- Issue: Does James contradict Paul on the relationship of faith and works?
- Response: No! The apparent problem stems from fact that both James and Paul use the language/vocabulary of "faith" to address quite different specific situations



IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

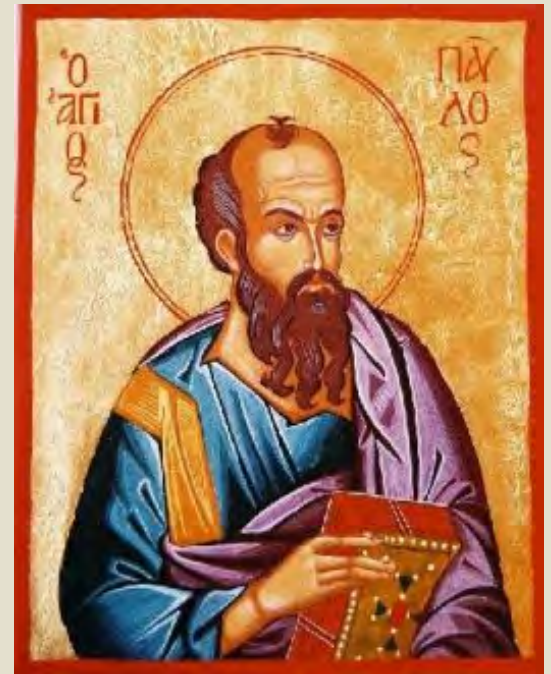
- Problem of James' Argument Revisited
- Context: James is facing a serious problem in the Jewish Christian churches of Jerusalem and surrounding area—the discrimination against the poor in either worship or matters of judgment (2:1-13) and the neglect of the poor (2:15-16)
- Claim: James exhibits a positive view of “works”—not as a means to obtain righteousness but instead as a natural and essential element of true, saving faith; James is not contrasting works versus faith but a false faith versus a true faith



Apostle James

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

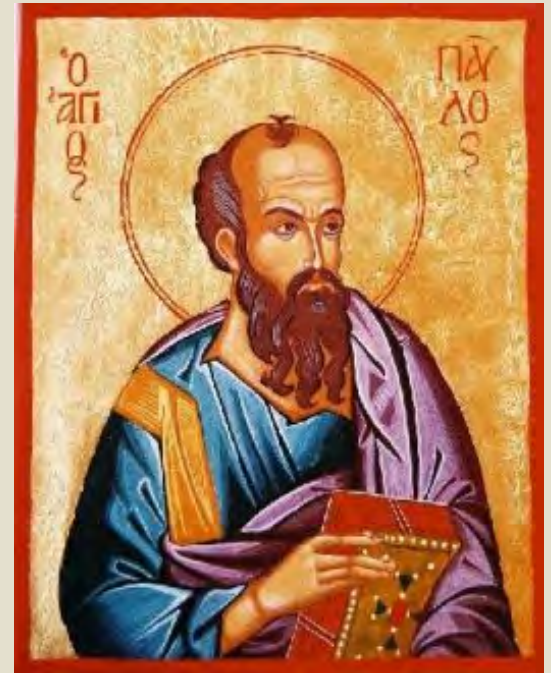
- Problem of James' Argument Revisited
- Context: Paul in a few letters (Galatians, Romans) is facing a serious problem of legalism or works-righteousness—some who claimed special status before God based on their works of the law
- Claim: Paul in this context exhibits a negative view of “works”, stressing instead that one is justified by faith, i.e., by belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ; in a different context, however, Paul agrees with James by speaking positively about “works” as acts of obedience in response to the gift of grace



Apostle Paul

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

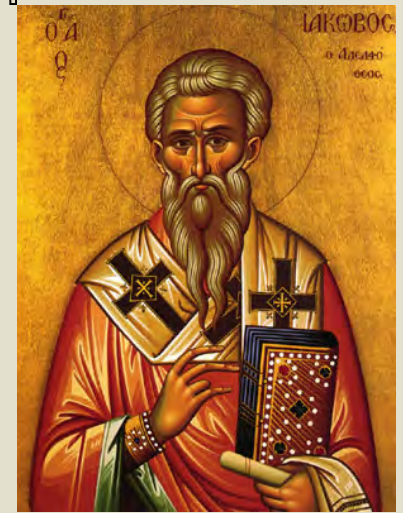
- Problem of James' Argument Revisited
- Paul's positive statements about "works":
 - Romans 8:4 *"in order that the righteous requirement of the law may be fully filled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but the spirit"*
 - Galatians 5:6 *"faith working through love"*
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:2 *"work of faith"* = "work produced by faith" (NIV)



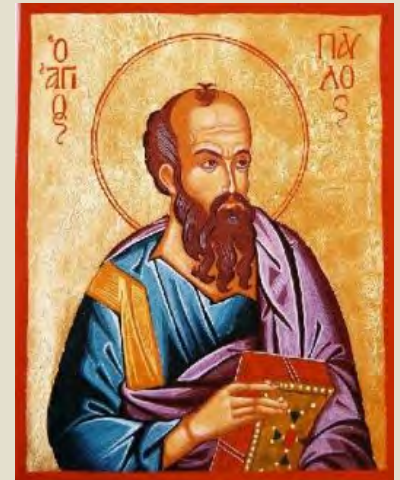
Apostle Paul

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- Problem of James' Argument Revisited
- James, in his specific historical context, stresses the necessity of “**post-conversion works**”—works of love for one’s neighbor, namely, care for those in need and not showing favoritism, all done as a natural response to God’s gift of righteousness
- Paul, in his specific historical context, strongly denies “**pre-conversion works**”—works of the law such as circumcision, following food laws and the Jewish religious calendar, all done in order to obtain God’s righteousness



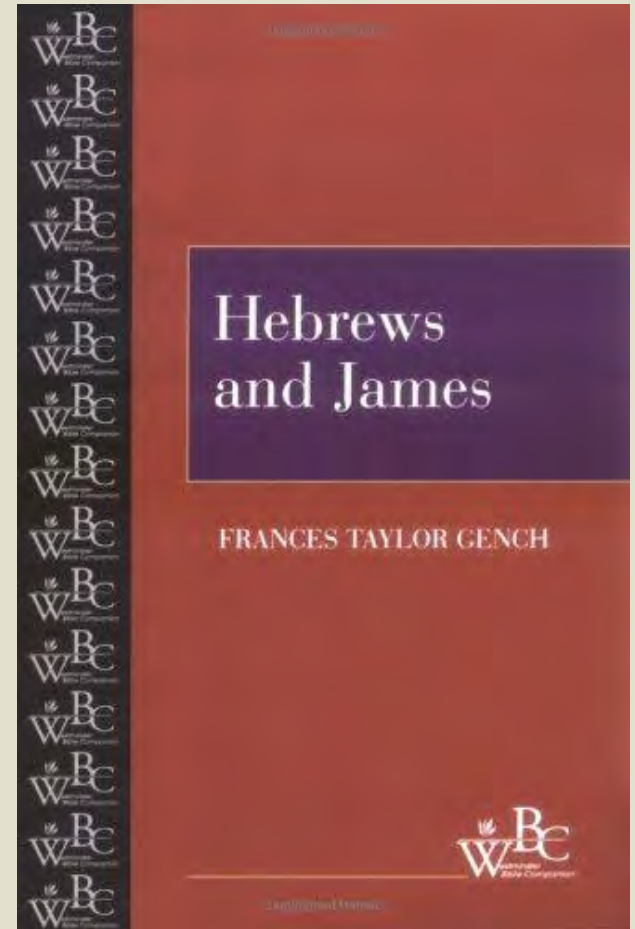
Apostle James



Apostle Paul

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- Problem of James' Argument Revisited
- Frances Gench's medical metaphor:
“Paul is dealing with obstetrics, with how new life begins; James, however, is dealing with pediatrics and geriatrics, with how Christian life grows and matures and ages” (page 106)



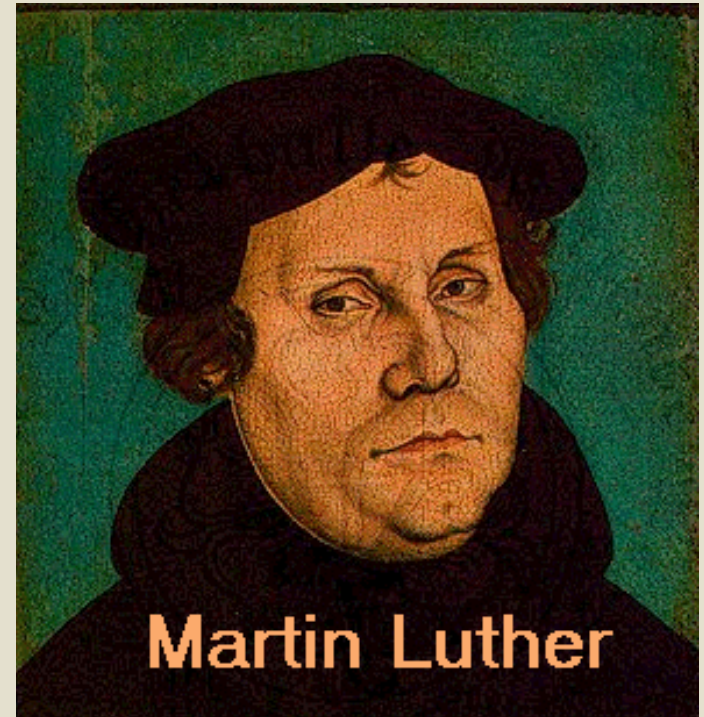
Louisville, KY: Westminster/
John Knox 1996

IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- Problem of James' Argument Revisited

- Luther's comments about faith in the preface to his Romans commentary captures, somewhat ironically, the key message of James 2:14-26:

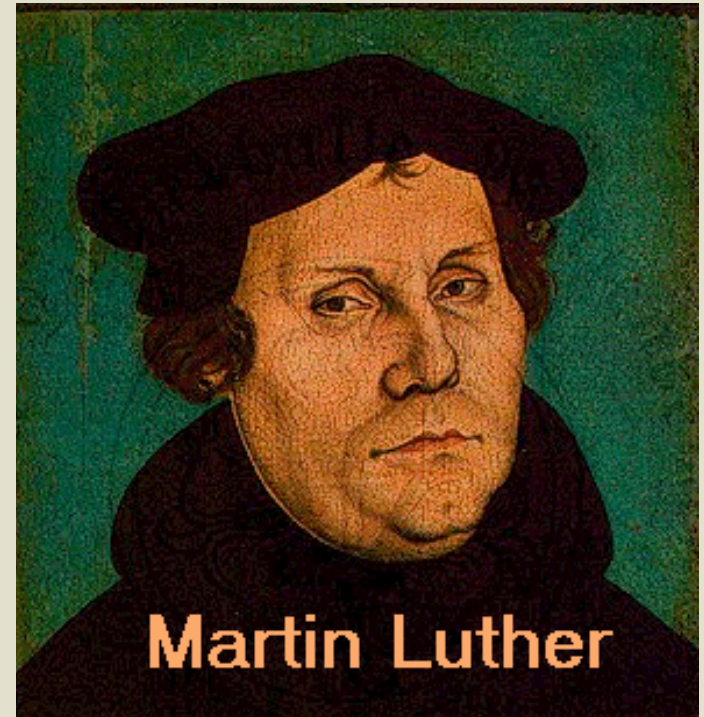
“Oh, it is a living, busy, active thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do ...



IV. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- Problem of James' Argument Revisited

“... such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about the faith and good works”



Saving Faith

James 2:14-26

Sermon outline

I. The Historical Context of James' Argument

II. The Interpretation of James' Argument

1. Two Negative Arguments (vv 15-19)

a. Illustration of false, non-saving faith (vv 15-17)

b. Illustration of demons' faith (vv 18-19)

2. Two Positive Arguments (vv 20-25)

a. Example of Abraham's faith (vv 20-24)

b. Example of Rahab's faith (v 25)

Conclusion