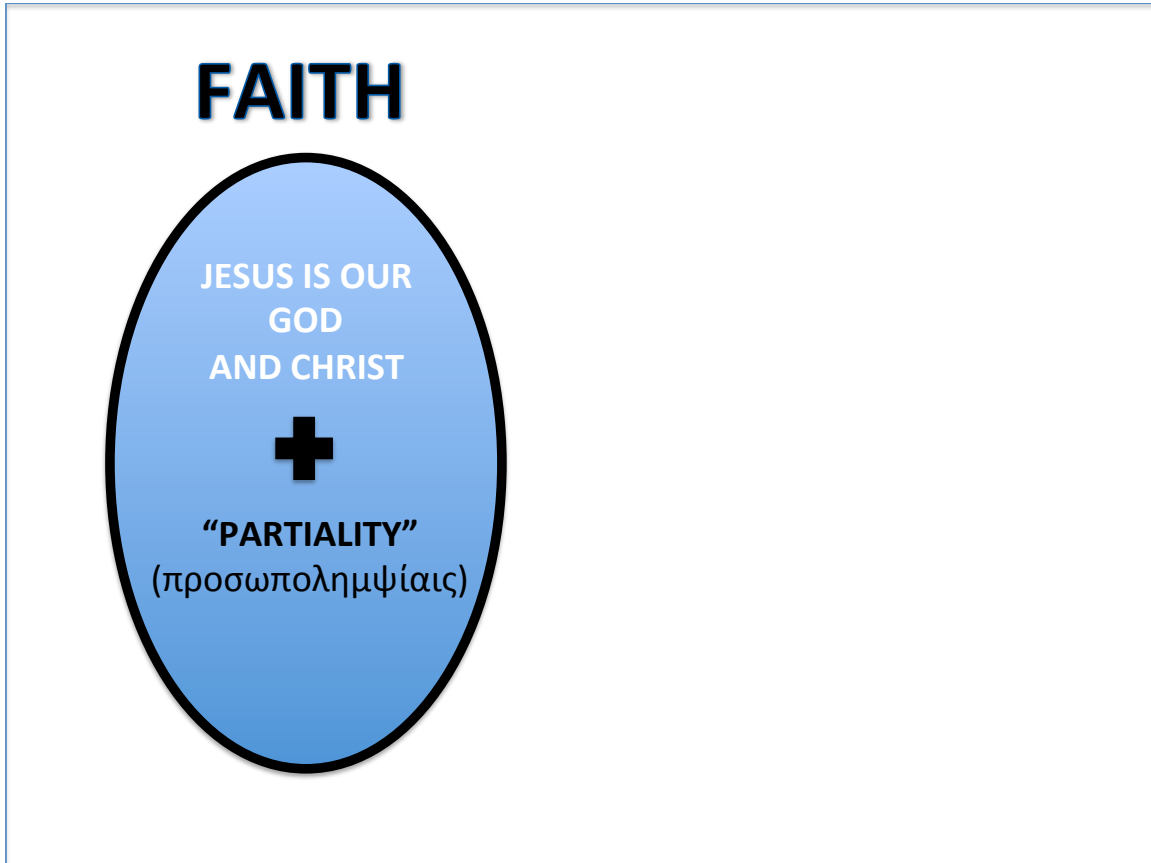


JAMES 2:1--26

**ILLUSTRATION (2:1-3): FORGETTING THE TRUTH THE BELIEVER
LEARNED AT ONE'S SALVATION, BECOMES UNGODLY
(Deut. 1:17: partiality in judgment of great or small)**



- C. The Word of God, experienced at salvation, indicates that God is merciful (in Jesus Christ) and that believers should impartially act mercifully (be a doer)¹ as opposed to self-centered arrogance based on human wisdom that should not take place in the assembly (2:1-13).

¹ Again the “doer” here is not urging actions as opposed to no actions, but is urging actions based on belief (doer) in the revelation as opposed to actions based on human wisdom. In other words, this rich man is entering into the assembly and the believer must react. What does he do? On what basis does he respond? He responds by belittling the poor man and elevating the rich man. This is the response of one who is a “hearer” only (i.e., he identifies with God, but does not appropriate His character).

Note: Before continuing on a review of the concepts of James is in order. First of all the issue is that of the wisdom of God, or His character. This character has been imputed to the believer (the seed implanted) and is the Word of God. The believer, however, can operate from that character (hearer and doer) or can operate from his former character based on human wisdom (hearer only). Trials or temptations to do evil, e.g., react from human wisdom come regularly and the question is not whether a believer will respond, but how he will respond, from one of two alternatives. The character of God is the humility of sacrificial mercy while the character of man is selfish arrogance.

Note that God gives without reproach, while this illustration in 2:1-4 and 2:15-16 shows that these brothers evaluate others and honor dishonor on the basis of their standing in the world's eyes.

Now in the illustration to follow, note the issue is whether one is rated on his results or not. The one who evaluates thinks that riches are a reward given by God and that poverty is an indication of lack of spirituality.

1. If one judges that a person has a high (or low) position with God² based on the world's perception of high (or low) position he has not perceived God's Word which he knew at salvation (2:1-8).
 - a) Believers are not to judge others based on self-centered human perceptions³ but on the same basis they perceived God at salvation (His word) (2:1)

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

Ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης.

This reference is to the character of God revealed in Deuteronomy 10:17-20 where God is not partial. Other passages throughout Deuteronomy regard the error of judging the rich or the poor with some bias.

² Note that this is taking place in the synagogue. In other words these readers are honoring men in their place of worship (before God). Thus this is indicating their perception of godliness.

³ Refer to Deut. 1:17 where this is specifically warned against.

The point here is that the faith that one had at salvation, that is the mercy of God's character exhibited through Jesus Christ, has now become tainted with personal bias, or human wisdom, which serves self. In other words, one's self-perception becomes the standard instead of God's character.

The "glorious" is a stark contrast to the personal favoritism of oneself which glorifies the person, not Christ.

- b) Illustration: A rich man entering the synagogue is honored while the poor man is demeaned (2:2-3).

For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and in bright clothing, and also a poor man comes in in filthy clothes,² and you look on the one who the wearer of the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place (lit.: "goodly" as an adverb)," and you say to the poor man, "You stand there, or sit down under my footstool,"

² εἰς γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῆτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθῆτι, ³ ἐπιβλέψητε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἶπητε· σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἶπητε· σὺ στήθι ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου,

The contrasting situation is clear. The rich man is assessed as being "good" or godly. The poor man is given a position of disregard, even contempt, as he is under the footstool of the person showing that he is lower than the assessor.

- c) Conclusion: Believers have judged⁴ with self-elevating judgment⁵ based on human wisdom (perception) (2:4).

have you not made distinctions⁶ among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

⁴ They have made distinctions between themselves, when in fact they were all receivers of God's mercy (no distinction other than that they were depraved).

⁵ The word here for "evil" is πονηρᾶ

⁶ This is the word for "judging" and is the same word used for "doubting" in James 1:6.

οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ
 διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

Again, they are judging others based on human perception, i.e., their own perception of good and evil. The “evil motives” is describing the character or the motivation. It is sourced in the evil, self-centered, arrogant, character.

Probably one of the most direct references in the Old Testament is Leviticus 19:15 where one is not to judge the poor or the rich with any bias.

¹⁵ *'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. (Leviticus 19:15)*

- d) God's Word reveals that the ones who were to receive the benefits of son-ship⁷ in the fulfillment of the rule of creation (the kingdom) have always been those who were denounced based on the world's values (2:5).

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor to (i.e., in the eyes of) the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν;

The poor in the world's eyes are all those who do not have honor through the eyes of human wisdom. This might seem difficult since it seems to imply that the actual physically poor are the ones who have been chosen to be heirs and might exclude the rich. However, recall that there is no compromise between the character of God and the character of man (human values). Either one has one or one has the other. One cannot have both. So this is a self-perception issue. If one perceives oneself as rich in the eyes of the world, he is not rich toward God, and vice-

⁷ cf. 1:18 where He brought believers forth to represent God.

versa. The word here is rich “to” (or toward) the world, not poor “of” the world. Thus, James is not saying that the poor of the world have gotten the Gospel and not the rich, but those who are of poverty with respect to the world, that is they do not see their goods as valuable. However, as Jesus said, it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom because of his reliance on riches.

This is the same as in 1 Corinthians 1 where God chose the foolish to confound the wise in the eyes of the world. So one must believe in what is foolish to the world to be wise in God’s eyes.

Note here that these are heirs in the kingdom. Heirs are sons and thus those who are exceedingly rich in God’s eyes in the kingdom consider themselves poor here. This is similar to 1:12 where once one has persevered through the trial and endured he receives a crown of life given to those who love His appearing. Here is the same thing. Those who value the presence of the character of God in Christ are those who are sons and do not consider that a poor man is unspiritual.

- e) Their own experience shows that the man, rich in the world's values, opposes God's Word and persecutes those (the readers) who stand up for the revelation (2:6-7).
 - 1) He personally oppresses the believer and justifies that oppression by having the believer judged by the world's wisdom (courts) (2:6)

But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

ὕμεῖς δὲ ἠτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν. οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια;

The word here is “dishonored” or “shamed.” Thus, the reader has shamed the one that God considers “rich.”

Here is a contrast. Those who are rich (e.g., use the world’s evaluation, wisdom) drag those who are poor with respect to them (believers who do not

value riches) in front of judges who judge with worldly wisdom.

- 2) He openly blasphemes⁸ the Word of God, Jesus Christ.⁹ (2:7)

*Do they not blaspheme the fair (lit. "good")
Name by which you have been called?*

οὐκ αὐτοῖς βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ
ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

While the Name is used in 2:1 for their identification (hearers only), they admire the world's courts and their human wisdom judgment. They are double-minded. James is trying to tell them that those who have worldly wisdom use it from lust and reject the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ as the source since they elevate themselves as source. Thus they have no problem blaspheming Christ. This is a contradiction. If the world holds some truth from their human wisdom, then it cannot be sourced from God. These people need to make up their mind whom they will serve.

2. The Old Testament Law, explained fully by the One who is to enforce it (The King), is to be completed in the believer by expressing (being a doer) Godly desires impartially (2:8-13).
- a) Mercy is to be shown to those poor in the world's eyes as indicated by God's Word ("loving your neighbor as yourself") (2:8-11)
- 1) If one loves his neighbor as God does, he is Godly, but if one values one (rich or poor) based on the world's values he has gone against God's Word and as such has shown himself as to be judged by God (since he doesn't agree with God's character he will be judged by it (2:8-9).

⁸ Note here that this person is not a believer in Christ and thus rejects the revelation of God.

⁹ The "fair" name is probably better translated the "good" or "godly" Name. Refer to its use in 4:17 as an opposite of "sin".

- (a) The Scripture advocated a love for brother that equaled the love of oneself¹⁰ (2:8).

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε·

This verse is at the center of James' purpose as in 1:2-4. He states that one, differently than assessing their neighbor as evil, should follow the Law of the King expressed in the Law and in Jesus' words, to "love one's neighbor as themselves."

The "fulfill" here is actually the same word as used in 1:2-4 (*teliete*), which should be translated as a verbal use, "completed" or "perfected." Thus they should believe that mercy is triumphant and not judge a brother, since judgment and riches will bring death.

- (b) Partiality in judgment (bias) was restricted by Deut. 16:19, Ex. 23:3, Deut. 1:16-17, thus by judging partially he has sinned (operated against God's desires) (2:9).

But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

εἰ δὲ προσωπολημπεῖτε, ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται.

¹⁰ Note that there were *no* commandments in the Law instructing one to love oneself. It was assumed that man in his depraved state loved himself. The point of the Law was to get the person to serve his brother equally with himself under God as being loved equally.

- (c) He has clearly broken the Old Testament Law, since any imperfection left one short of the glory of God (2:10).

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ
πταισῇ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων
ἔνοχος.

- 1- To fulfill the Law required complete obedience to the character of God.
- 2- Thus he (who judged against God's Word) is himself judged to be guilty by God who is impartial.
- 3- This is illustrated by one who was an adulterer but not a murderer. According to the requirements of the Law he was a transgressor, even though he had kept part of the Law.¹¹ (2:11)

For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν· μὴ μοιχεύσης,
εἶπεν καὶ· μὴ φονεύσης· εἰ δὲ
οὐ μοιχεύεις φονεύεις δέ,
γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

¹¹ The point here is that one has decided to judge partially to elevate himself, and has thus (since the Law condemned partial judgments) identified himself as condemned under the Law. Thus, he should choose to operate by the Law by which he was saved, God's mercy to him apart from self-deeds, and thus should express that to others.

b) Thus one is to speak and act imitating God who acted on His Word and showed mercy (loosed him).¹² (2:12-13).

1) For the evaluation of God will be based on God's Word, which shows how to act like God, show mercy (2:12).

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

οὕτως λαλεῖτε καὶ οὕτως ποιεῖτε ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι.

The Law described a God who pursued giving mercy to His people. This mercy is what a man has who is a believer and thus he will be judged by what he does with the mercy given him (and whether he restricted it by judging the brother).

2) Thus he who has not shown mercy does not perceive God and is acting against God and will receive a proper evaluation, not mercy, since he is actually condemned by the Law (2:13a).

For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy;

ἢ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος·

Since one who does not perceive mercy, he does not give mercy. Thus he is going to be evaluated on his judgment of others and will stand on his own righteousness. This will fail him since

¹² The point of James here is that while they think they are self-elevated in their judgment of others, they have actually condemned themselves (a similar argument occurs in Romans 2:1ff.) since they have not judged with godly judgment and are law-breakers. Then James shows them that rather than becoming righteous through their activities, the Law points out that they are unrighteous and in need of mercy. Thus they are unmerciful, and until they perceive their error and ask for mercy, they will be given none. The point is thus made. Those who have judged others and thus elevated themselves have in fact lowered themselves. As long as they perceive themselves as in need of mercy then they are raised up in God's eyes. When they perceive themselves as elevated then they return to their former perception prior to their salvation.

he has not valued the mercy of God, but valued his own righteousness.

- 3) If one was to boast, it should be concerning God's mercy, not in judging partially (2:13b).

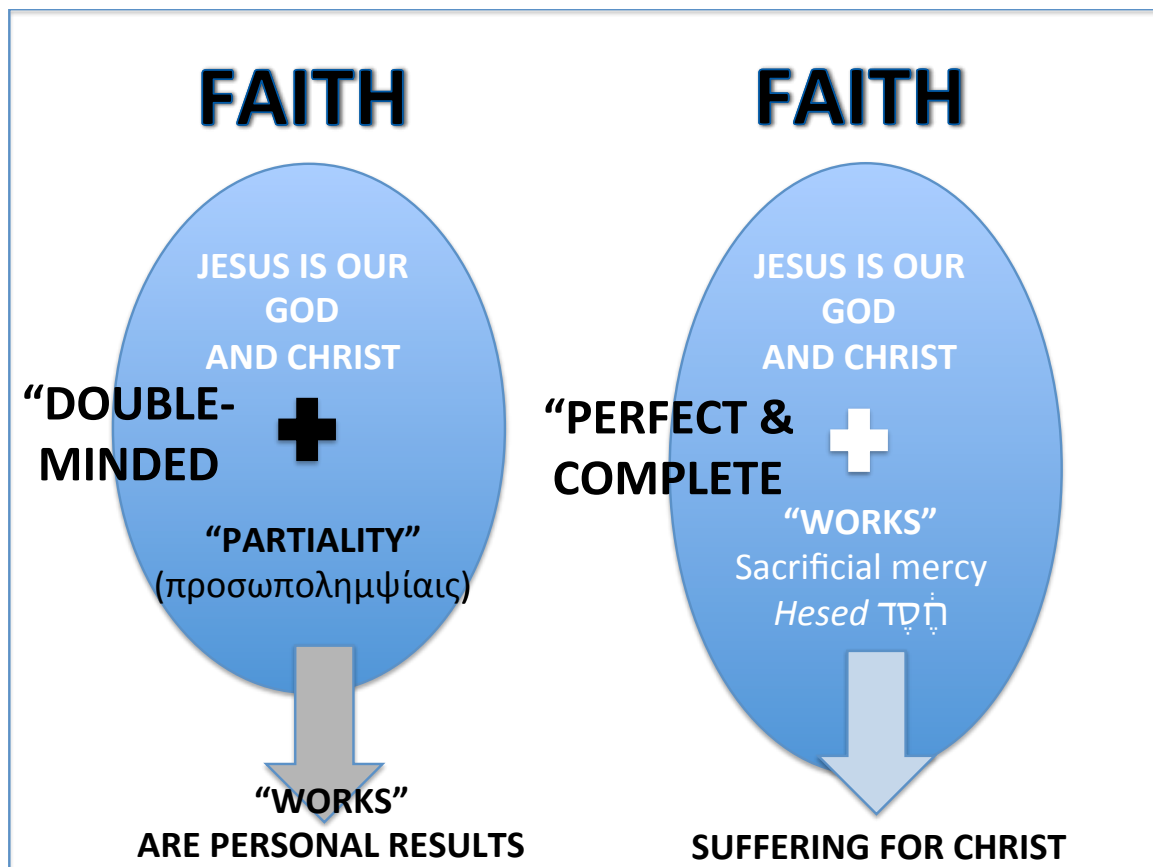
mercy triumphs (lit.: "boasts") over judgment.

κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεος κρίσεως.

It is very important to note that the word here translated "triumphs" is actually "boasts." Thus this is like a victory shout. In judgment, one's own righteousness (e.g., riches, etc.) will pass away, while the mercy expended reveals its value and will be victorious.

This has a flavor of the old phrase, "he who laughs last, laughs best." In other words, the rich man who is boasting now will pass away and those wise in the mercy of God will ultimately boast in Christ.

ONLY ACTIONS BASED ON ONE'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN JESUS FULFILL THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE¹³ (2:14-26)



- D. One states that he has faith (true identity with God) yet his response to trials shows that he acts from a wrong understanding of God, and thus is not acting in God’s will (His desires, has life)¹⁴ (2:14-26).

¹³ Refer to the Appendix for a complete discussion of this section.

¹⁴ The term here “save” should be translated “delivered”. This is a frequent term in the New Testament. It was the opposite of being under the wrath. Thus in the present tense, one was either under wrath (an enemy) or was delivered (a friend). The readers were operating on a physical evaluation, while the author is exhorting them to operate based on revelation. Thus, deliverance is being in God’s will. Paul uses the same term in Philippians to show that he is in God’s will in prison (delivered), even though he appeared to be under wrath to the Philippians. Thus the issue here is who is acting on behalf of God.

1. If one does claim to have a correct faith with God, yet has not understood (believed) the concept of *hesed*, but instead believes the pursuit of success for themselves (worldly wisdom)¹⁵ reveals relationship with God (life), then they do not understand nor have they adopted the character of God (cf. 1:3-4). (2:14-18)
 - a) If a man confesses to having belief in God but does not believe in *hesed* (as part of that belief), then he could not be in God's will (be Godly or delivered)¹⁶ (2:14).

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but it¹⁷ (i.e., the faith) has no works? Can that¹⁸ faith save¹⁹ him?

¹⁵ Both verbs, “be warmed” and “be filled” are in the middle voice implying that the subject takes part in the action of the verb. Thus it should be more likely translated “be warmed (of yourself) and be filled (of yourself).” The first verb should be “Depart,” not just “go” as in transition or a helper word. It is just about always used to designate a leaving the place one is in to go to another place. It, however, does not imply a negative necessarily. The word, “peace” is frequently a simple greeting, but seems to imply more here as in be at peace with God, or with the brother.

¹⁶ This passage is frequently used to determine if a person actually has true faith as opposed to saying they have faith. Thus, if one does not have the works it demonstrates that they do not have true (or saving) faith. The major difficulty (among others) is that of the example used here. If most (including this professor and most students) were measured by the example given then most would fail. The test is not simply to be handing out food to those who need it, but do it according to God's heart. This is the requirement of Deut. 15:7, and very few Christians fulfill that heart (if any). Thus the intent of the passage is not to show a 'self-righteousness' standard to prove one is saved, for as always, the standard is the holiness of God, and no one meets it. The purpose is to show that any deed done must reflect self-sacrifice (as God and for God) or it shows a misconstrued understanding of God, that is, wrong content of faith.

¹⁷ The pronoun used here is “it” instead of the commonly translated “he.” The verb does not have a gender for its pronoun and thus either could be a possibility. However, James is referring to the “faith” as having no works (*hesed*), not the man (although there might be a relationship). The validation of this is in the 2:17 where the same issue is present (i.e., “he” or “it”), yet the pronoun clearly refers to the faith as having no works, not the man.

¹⁸ The issue here is content of faith. The faith reflected by his response, are not that of a merciful God who desires His representatives to be merciful, but a God who is like them and does not give.

Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγη τις
ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη²⁰ μὴ δύναται ἢ πίστις σωσαὶ
αὐτόν

While many interpreters start a new section here and thus define “works” as if it has just been introduced as a major emphasis, it is not the case. In 2:13, the previous verse, James emphasized that the lack of “mercy” would bring judgment. So he would not now be adding something different as a condition, but “works” is, in fact, the same thing. Mercy is “*hesed*” from the Old Testament and so also is mercy as the works. In 2:1, James said they had “faith” but they had it with bias, not mercy. Now in 2:13 he closes of the sub-section with that statement. In 2:14, he continues, changing the noun “mercy” to “works.” The point about mercy is that it must be exercised to actually be something quantifiable, i.e., there cannot be a character of mercy without it being active. Mercy is, by definition, active. And so mercy is works. He is not talking about resultant deeds, but verbal “works” or maybe stated actively as “workings.”

- b) An example (from Deuteronomy 15:7ff.)²¹ demonstrates that commanding a man to depart and to go clothe and feed

¹⁹ The word here should be translated “delivered”, and its meaning is, when brought up to our usage, “to be in God’s will.” Thus the person here being questioned as to whether he is Godly or not, which means does his character match up with God’s.

²⁰ While most interpret the works as lacking from the man’s actions, it is most likely, and grammatically likely, that it is the faith that does not have works (i.e., *hesed*) as part of its content, as in 2:17.

²¹ This verse is a reference to Deut. 10:18 where it says God gives the needy food and clothing. Interestingly the same verse talks of executing justice for the hopeless (cf. 2:1-13). Also see the following in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 15:7: "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. 9 "Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. 10 "You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the

himself when he is in immediate need and not to help him is unlike God's character (2:15-16).

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,²² 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

15 ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς 16 εἴπη δέ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν, Ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δώτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὄφελος

The essence of the example here is to show that the “certain one of you” who instructs the man to “depart and feed and clothe himself” is not doing what God does for man in response to a trial (someone in need) when that one asks. God's wisdom includes *hesed*, which acts mercifully when confronted with a need. The previous context was that of recognizing that God gives to man without a judgment as to their worthiness, yet the antagonist was judging on the basis of poverty. Here in this example the “certain one” is now judging on the basis of poverty and instructing the poor man (who is in immediate need) to take care of himself, as the antagonist did (i.e., selfish ambition to bring success). In other words, the man's belief is that he himself is Godly (demonstrated by his prosperity) and that this man also needs to be Godly (as the antagonist is) by clothing and feeding himself. However, his faith does not recognize that he, the antagonist, is also is poor and

LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. 11 "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

²² Note here the reference to Matthew 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." The point of Matthew (Sermon on the Mount) was that the representative desired God to provide daily food for sustenance which all comes from the hand of God. Man in the covenant had the ability to be the “covenant blesser” which meant that he had been provided everything in order to give it to others for God.

needy before God and that God has given everything to him.

- c) The conclusion is that a belief that does not include merciful action toward others (*hesed*) is not a complete belief (correct in content) and thus is not fully representative of God (2:17).

17 Even so the faith²³, if it has no works, is dead, according to itself.

οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, νεκρὰ ἐστὶν καθ' ἑαυτήν,

James is concluding what he started in 2:14, that the content of faith must include *hesed* (lit.: works) or it is dead. “Dead” here means that it has no life, or character of God, present.

The pronoun before “itself” is quite interesting and difficult. It does not mean “being by” (itself) as it is normally translated. The pronoun with the accusative seems to relate back to the faith itself, rather than apart from something external. It would be more like saying that this faith is inadequate with regard to its content. Thus again he is speaking of the content of faith.

- d. An opposing person might state that James’ faith alone (that is that James is arguing that “works” or *hesed* is part of the faith, not results which come from and are thus separate from the faith) as determining one’s walk with God (even with *hesed*) is not valid, but one’s relationship with God should be judged by their visible, successful results brought about through their own efforts and control, for even demons believe. (2:18-19).

A hypothetical antagonist is now introduced who argues the opposite of James’ philosophy; that one’s walk with God (or in God’s will or life) is determined by one’s

²³ Note here that James validates 2:14 (the faith has no works) as a faith that has no works, not the man. Thus, the reason that the faith has no works is that his faith does not include merciful character that produces works (he has forgotten that God acted toward him as a hopeless individual (works of God)).

measured and visible success or results.²⁴ Note that the antagonist is defending the actions of the rich man in 2:15-16 (and also the example in 2:2.)

- 1) An opposing person might respond that 'deliverance' (being in God's will or blessed) cannot be determined by the revelation (faith only, or what one believes) but by whether one is successful (visible successful results). The results are what make the determination. (2:18). Thus the poor man in the previous example is not godly and does not thus deserve help.

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith²⁵, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

2^ο18 Ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις, Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, καὶ γὰρ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, καὶ γὰρ σοὶ δεῖξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν,

The arguer's statement begins in 2:18 and continues to the end of 2:19.²⁶ He is not saying that

²⁴ In essence what the opponent is arguing is very similar to the argument which James opposes in 1:13, that is that God is the source of a theology that promotes elevation based on worldly success (evil). What is happening is that the rich man, who is persecuting the poor believer, is justifying his actions on "results". Since he is rich, God has clearly rewarded him, and thus his works (results) justify him as being Godly and the poor man as ungodly.

²⁵ Note here that the antagonist is arguing against James' philosophy of "faith only." Thus while interpreters typically state that James is arguing for external works as the validation of true faith, the antagonist is identifying James' argument as stating that one's validation is based on the Scriptures alone when he states, "You have faith ("only" is implied), and I have works."

²⁶ This is determined by the Greek conjunctions, the normal way of blocking out changes in speaker (but not always). However, there are no conjunctions following the one (*alla*) beginning 2:18 until the one beginning 2:20 (*de*), and thus the change of speaker back to James. In addition, to place the conjunctions within 2:18 (as most English translation) is untenable since the writer would have to change the referent for the 1st person usage in the middle of the sentence without any evidence for doing so. That type of thing is impossible to justify in a normal reading. Thus if a translator or interpreter puts the ending quotation marks for the antagonist who began speaking in

James' person does not result in works, but that his godliness (or deliverance or being in the will of God) is not determined by his faith alone (content based on the Scriptures alone). By contrast, the debater states that more than that his own faith *is* validated by his results. He is saying that the results actually validate the faith or determine its effectiveness since the results are what God is after. For instance, if one has riches, then it shows he is in a state of obedience or blessing. James, on the other hand, may be suffering, and thus James is stating that only through the truth of the Scripture can one tell if they are blessed, not on the basis of one's visible success.

The point is here that the arguer is stating that James does not have "results" ("you have faith and I have works") since he does not have visible results. Thus the point is that the antagonist says that the works (results) are the validation while James is saying the faith is its own validation if it agrees with the Scriptures, regardless of the outcome. This is important since James is creating the antagonist, so the antagonist is not misunderstanding James' argument (even though he seems to be saying the same thing). He understands it, just is disagreeing with it. So in the mind of the arguer, James cannot guarantee works or "results." Thus the antagonist avers that James faith is unable to bring about results by itself thus is invalid, while his faith is based on one's self-abilities to bring about success.

- 2) The arguer continues stating that demons understand the revelation (have a correct concept of God), yet their relationship with God can only be evaluated by the fact that they shudder, or fear judgment. James ("you") on the other hand has a correct revelation also (has faith, no works or "results", compare *kaloj*, 2:8). Thus he claims it is

2:18, anywhere before the end of 2:19, they have no Greek evidence for their choice and are changing them against the Greek evidence, based solely on their feeling as to what James must be saying that conforms to their perception which is brought to these verses.

only from observation of one's results that one can truly see God's approval (2:19²⁷).

19 You believe that God is one. You do "good"; the demons also believe²⁸, and shudder.

²⁷ There is a major question by interpreters as to who is the speaker of verse 19 (but not questioned in this discussion). Traditionally it has been ascribed to the author. The problem is that an opposing person begins to speak in 2:18 (There is no known use of "But someone may well say" in Greek that is not an opposing person, Peter H. Davids, The Epistle of James, p. 124, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1982, or an article by John F. Hart, Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute, "The Faith of Demons (James 2:19)", 1995, which may be accessed on the website at "<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/jam/hart1.htm>").

The second question, however, is where does the opposing person stop his objection and James begin his retort. The difficulty is that there are no grammatical markers from verse 18 until the beginning of verse 20 which would indicate a change of speaker. Thus grammatically the opposition would begin in v. 18 ("But (*alla*) someone may well say . . .") and would continue through verse 19 ("You believe that God is one . . .") until James begins again in verse 20 ("But (*de*) are you willing to recognize . . ."). Thus the grammatical adversatives only appear at v. 18 and 20. Any other divisions must be made on the basis of contextual argument or theology. *de* is listed by Dana & Mantey in its primary usage as "(1) It is commonly used as an adversative particle, when it is translatable *but, however, yet, on the other hand*, etc." (A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, by H.E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, MacMillan: 1955).

The view presented here is that the grammatical markers are the only indicators of the change of speaker. Thus, the objector begins in verse 18 and is still speaking through verse 19. The antagonist's point is that knowing the revelation is not effective. It is only through works or results (self-righteousness) that one justifies himself, not through (only) knowing the revelation (God's revealed righteousness). He is justifying his own theology by his success, not evaluating his results by the revelation of the theology.

One may view very similar grammatical structure of an opposing person and the respondent by referring to 1 Corinthians 15:35-36 and Romans 9:19-20.

²⁸ This is a *hapax* in the New Testament. Nowhere in the Bible does it state that demons believe. It does state that demons know (Mark 1:23-24). Biblical belief is defined in Heb. 11:1 trusting in what is 'not' seen. The demons have seen and do know. Thus the first of the statements is wrong ("the demons believe") without investigating more. In addition the whole angelic theology referred to here is different than that of man. Demons have no choice. Their character and opportunities are limited to who they are. Perhaps the best way of rejecting this is to change "believe" to "trust." Can demons trust? The obvious answer is "no!"

19 σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός,
καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν
καὶ φρίσσουσιν,

While both James and the demons believe the same thing, they are only identified differently (as having life or death) by their results with God and faith cannot identify them (since the demons believe but are under fear of judgment). In other words the arguer takes Deut. 6:4 and points out that James believes that, but states that demons believe the same thing. Yet one is doing a good thing (i.e., godly), but demons are under judgment (shudder in fear of judgment). His point is that it is impossible to tell the difference without results.

- e. James' conclusion: The arguer is foolish²⁹ (not basing his argument on God's Word)³⁰ (2:20).

But are you willing to recognize (lit.: "know"), you foolish fellow, that (the) faith without works is useless?

Θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὃ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις
χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστίν;

The difficulty in the opposing person's reasoning is that he has selected the identification of God (He is One) only, but it is not complete (it does not include His character that acts toward man, i.e., *hesed*, particularly in Jesus Christ). Thus, while James and the demons know the same thing, they are not equal participants in God's action

²⁹ The word for "foolish" here is normally translated "empty handed" or "empty". Thus it is an "empty man" or in the context a man who has offered nothing to the argument. There appears to be an illusion to the fact that this man does not perceive God (he is empty regarding knowledge.). The "fool" in revelation was one who rejected the revelation, and so it is here.

³⁰ In stating "but are you willing *to know*" James is placing this man in the category of the one in 1:5, he does not have wisdom (of God), he does not *know* (cf. 1:3 where the good man endures because he *knows God's wisdom in the word.*) He is thus asking the opponent if he is willing *to know God's revelation.* And James is about to explain it.

(that of mercy), that is, James would recognize that God has given him mercy (believe) while the demons cannot (do not believe, only know), and perceive themselves accurately as under judgment. Thus, the arguer is foolish since he has done exactly what James has stated, that is, his faith has left out God's merciful activities toward man, which having received *hesed*, can act for God. Demons, not having received mercy, cannot act differently than their unmerciful character.

This arguer is consistent with the Pharisees of the Gospels, that is, they identified with the God of Israel, but did not perceive His merciful character. Thus they are able to evaluate the demons as being under judgment (God's trait of judgment), but wrongly perceive themselves as blessed.

2. Abraham was an example of one who was delivered to a complete³¹ state of his faith, based on an understanding of the revelation of Genesis 15:6 that God was a merciful provider to him (a godly doer) (2:21-24).

The illustration of Abraham fits into the point of James. Abraham, after having recognized God's gift to him in the promise of children like the stars (Genesis 15:5-6), did not act like God and assume God would provide as promised in the following chapters (Genesis 16—21). He sought to preserve himself (or work to deserve) through self-righteous, or self-provision of the seed (e.g., through Hagar (16)). It was only when Abraham recognized that God was a giving God (through the sacrifice of His Son), that Abraham then imitated God, attempting to sacrifice his son for the future of the nation. So Abraham's faith (content of his belief about God) was not complete until he learned and appropriated *hesed*, that he was created to give as God gave.

Note here some important contextual items about the story of Abraham and Isaac. Note that Abraham did not give up anything in Genesis 22 since he returned with Isaac, the same as what he had before the trek up the mountain. So the issue was not "results" as the antagonist claims as Abraham had no results (no difference was noted at the end). What Abraham had expressed was the *hesed* of God, which was noted in his action from his faith, which now include the need to act mercifully with his son toward the nation (as in Genesis 3:15).

³¹ Recall that "perfect" means reflecting or imitating God.

- a) He was shown to be Godly in his belief when he listened to the revelation and offered up his son (as God would His). (2:21).³²

21 Was not Abraham our father justified from works, offering up Isaac his son on the altar?

Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνευέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον;

At this point, one must look at the question of “justified” here as a new word within James. While that appears to be the case, it has been used in its noun form in 1:20 where it is stated that “anger does not ‘work out’ the righteousness of God.”

The word is actually indicating that one is proven, declared, or shown to be right. In other words, validation takes place based, not on their completed “work” but on their action. The question is, ‘what is being validated?’ Of course, Abraham was not justified here theologically in the sense of “declared righteous” since that, as James well knows took place in Genesis 15:6. So what was justified . . . not Abraham, but his faith. Using Abraham here as a substitute for his faith is parallel in 2:14 where the man is linked to his faith to see if it is dead. In James’ one’s life is directly linked to their content of faith, and thus it is not unnatural for James to speak of Abraham interchangeably with his faith. (See next verse commentary to clarify).

Thus Abraham is shown to have the correct content of faith since it now included his participation in *hesed*. Thus Abraham’s faith was shown to be correct, or full, because it included *hesed*. His faith is shown to be

³² The word here “justified” is stating the question as to whether he is a godly man in his actions. The antagonist is claiming his actions (riches, arrogance, anger) are justified (right) based on a worldly view (results). James is claiming that proper actions are justified (Godly) based solely on the representation of God from the Scriptures. Thus Abraham was justified (in his actions as Godly) since they reflected obedience to the revelation of God’s word. Killing one’s son is *never* viewed by the world as a success. Thus James point is that justification for one’s actions as godly are *only* based on the word of God, never on a worldly perception of success as godly.

validated (i.e., correct) because the act that he did (offer Isaac) could only have come from *hesed*.

Part of the problem is that the phrase, “when he offered” is a participle and thus the translator must make a judgment call as to how the participle relates to the main sentence. The “when” indicates the event that relates. But the “when” tends to indicate that the event was the work from which Abraham was justified. However, the event was the outcome of the work or the *hesed* as part of the faith. This will be clarified in the following sentences. Thus it should be translated as a substantival participle, acting in apposition to “works” or *hesed* (see the translation above).

- b. His continuing deeds were based on the revelation (2:22).

You see that faith worked out with his works, and from the works, the faith was perfected (or completed);

βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη,

Notice this well. The final result of this sentence is that the “faith is completed.” It is not the result that is completed, i.e., some deed, or that the faith ended up producing some deed. It is that the faith itself, now contains *hesed* and so is completed. In Abraham’s case in Genesis 15:6 he had identified (received) with God’s promise. But until Genesis 22 he had not realized *hesed* was to be possessed and operated as his own.

Thus, the last verse is not indicating that Abraham became perfect or completed, but that his faith did. Notice also the wording of the verse. Faith worked out with his works. The point is that his belief was operational because of *hesed* as a part. And thus this act could have only taken place if he had embraced *hesed*. Note again that the act is not what James is after, but the motivation that brings about the act.

[Note that if one avers that this is not the case, then these words are almost the same as the antagonist uses in 2:18, i.e., showing one’s faith from one’s results. So if someone uses the actual offering here as the work and

claims that this is what completed Abraham or proved he had a valid faith, then they are saying the same as the antagonist, that one can only tell one's effective faith by looking at the obtaining of results.]

- c) These deeds brought his perception of God (i.e., faith) to full completion³³ of his original faith (cf. 1:3-4). (2:23a).

and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,"

καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἣ λέγουσα· ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην

This is not saying that Genesis 15:6 was a prophecy that was fulfilled. It is stating that Abraham had a saving faith in 15:6 but it was not brought to full content until

³³ The point of quoting Genesis 15:6 was that God had promised a single seed through which would come the nation. In Genesis 22 Abraham becomes great because he not only believes God will do it (Gen. 15:6) but now obeys the instruction of God despite human reasoning. Abraham's problem was always trying to bring about success on his own merits justifying his human reasoning. Yet Abraham acts based on the revelation, God's command. The antagonist here is arguing that it is on one's own efforts that one brings about his success and that is godly. James has argued before (1:12) and following (5:7-9) that one may have to wait until the coming of the Lord to see visibly successful results.

The point of this quotation however is not just simply to say that Abraham finally believed God. He believed God in the first place (Gen. 15:6). And in fact, Abraham did many things to bring about God's promise. The problem was that Abraham was selfish. He saw the promise as physical prosperity (his) and not that he was to be the funnel of blessing to others. The promise of him as mediator (representative) required that he be like God, unselfish and sacrificial. Yet Abraham was not willing to do that and continued to work for himself, but not according to God's character. Finally, Abraham acts in Genesis 22, not to save himself, but to save others. The way that Isaac's symbolic-death saved others is that Abraham knew Genesis 3:15. He knew that one of his promised children would have to have substitutionary death for the sake of the world. God thus commanded that Isaac be (or imitate) the one. Abraham was willing to have Isaac go to death (and of course with him his own hopes) for the sake of others. Thus he knew God was going to resurrect Isaac (and so the Seed of the Woman) since God had promised that Isaac was the Seed. Thus when God says, "In your seed . . ." he means Isaac physically but Christ, the One like Isaac who would sacrifice Himself for the sake of the nation, Abraham's ultimate Son.

Genesis 22. Thus the righteousness (the character of God) that Abraham perceived in 15 was now enacted in 15:6 by the operation of *hesed*.

- e) God's judgments of his actions resulted in him being called a "Friend of God"³⁴ (as opposed to an enemy) because he was acting on behalf of God. (2:23b)

and he was called the friend of God.

καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.

He was judged to have righteous motivation based on the revelation in God's Word, i.e., justified). (2:23b). In other words, he had now assumed the character given to him in 15:6. An enemy would be one who operates on the self-centered character. The contrast to this verse is 4:4.

⁴ *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is **hostility** toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an **enemy of God**.*

- f) The conclusion is that a man is judged to be acting on behalf of God (justified) when he is motivated, according to God's Word.³⁵ (2:24).

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

The point here, stated another way is how a man is to be judged as righteous, or acting on God's behalf, or walking with God. The way he is judged is if he uses *hesed* as part of his faith. Faith here is used as identity with God. And it must have *hesed* as part of it.

³⁴ Isaiah 41:8 recalls Abraham's relationship with God to indicate the sureness of God's promise. The same "friend" issue is in 4:4 where the reader is seen not to be a "friend" due to his inaction on the promises of God in the revelation.

³⁵ As opposed to judging a relationship with God based on worldly evaluations.

3. Rahab³⁶ (a Gentile) was also an example of *hesed* as part of her faith (2:25).

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?

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρα ὁδοῦ ἐκβαλοῦσα;

Rahab welcomed the spies. There is the indication here, referring to 1:2, that Rahab was joyful when the spies appeared. It is clear from Joshua 2 that Rahab had believed in YHWH prior to the spies appearance since she speaks clearly of YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and did not learn anything additional from the spies. She thus exercises her *hesed* by using the opportunity that she had been given to aid Israel at the risk of her life. She was glad when the spies showed up because she could now participate with YHWH. She then lies to the king's men and delivers the spies. It is only then that she explains that she had acted in *hesed* when she invited them in and uses that exact word. Thus she had acted with no guarantee of any results but only on the fact that she was confronted with an opportunity (temptation). Then she pleads for *hesed* from them. That is, she then throws herself on the mercy of YHWH . . . and she gets it.

- (a) She had faith in the promise to Abraham (2:25a).
- (b) She knew the promise of blessing for those who blessed the nation Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). Thus she did bless the nation Israel in actions, by receiving³⁷ and sending (2:25b).

4. The conclusion is that faith in God's Word must have faith that includes *hesed*³⁸ according to God's Word or it will die. (2:26).

³⁶ Of course, Rahab was a harlot, which emphasizes her unworthiness, nor was she acting because of the works of the Law since she was not under the Law. She knew the *hesed* of God and wanted to express it herself.

³⁷ The reception of the messengers was the reception of the message of judgment (and for her, mercy). Thus she received them based on what she knew of Israel's promise, and she sent them out another way. So she saved the messengers based on her own salvation. She was "blessed".

³⁸ That these verses are regarding the works aspect of faith is clear in that there are 12 uses of "works" in the book, and only three outside of these verses.

For just as the body without breath is dead, so also the faith without works is dead.

ὡσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

It is like a body without breath. One must have breath³⁹ (live, respond to physical circumstances) or he will die (not represent God).⁴⁰ For just as the body without breath is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

This example is perfect. Note that the parallel to “works” are not events that the body (parallel to “faith) accomplishes, but the breath is the unseen motivator when added to the body allows it to operate. Thus the faith (identity with God’s promise) comes to fruition when the man appropriates *hesed* and it brings about merciful acts.

This example is an excellent parallel to what James is saying. The issue is the relationship of breath to the body. There is an allusion to Genesis 2 and the creation of Adam. Adam was simply dirt formed into a beautiful creature, but still could do nothing. Once the breath was put into Him he then became a living creature. He then had a character that could respond. Prior to that there was no evidence of character. The breath gives him life, the ability to act.

There could also be a parallel to Ezekiel 37 and the dry bones (Israel dead). The bones stand up and get flesh on them, but it is only later that the “breath” or “Spirit” of God enters them and they live, that is, that Israel gets the breath of life and is saved and representing God.

Faith is like the body. It is static in these terms. It looks good, but does not have life. The life is actually, like the breath,

³⁹ This probably refers to the creation account in Genesis 2 of God's creating Adam. He was not made to look like a man and be still, but to breathe and act for God. Thus the breath, like *hesed*, was the animating force added to the body which made it able to act. Also see Ezekiel 37 where Israel’s bones stand up and get flesh, but are not alive until the breath of life comes into them.

⁴⁰ One cannot tell the heart of man until he acts or speaks. Thus without breath one only sees the man. This is like faith. Faith only shows what man looks like, not what his heart is. That is known from speech and actions.

part of the faith. That life is the sacrificial mercy of God's character, *hesed*. It is that which describes it and the part which is life . . . or God's love. Thus, in our terms, the breath is part of the body, but is clearly the essential part for life. So also works (or *hesed*) are part of the faith, but the essential part for life.

Now note here that the works are not parallel to the deeds that this breathing body might do. The works are the essence of the life, what makes the body living. So the works here are "sacrificial mercy." They are not deeds, but the appropriation of the character of God, which is, sacrificial love for the brother. It is seen when it is confronted by temptations.

There is some question whether the *pneuma* here should be translated "Spirit" since it is the same word for "breath." Thus the body without the Spirit, or the infusion of God's character into man makes man dead with respect to God, just as faith without "works" or *hesed* is dead. While this is possible, especially in light of 4:5, the difficulty is that it is a mixture of metaphors. The first is a material example, body and breath, while the second is spiritual, faith plus works (*hesed*). If one makes Spirit with body then the first becomes a mixed physical (body) plus spiritual (Spirit). Thus it is possible, but seems to be clearer if it is the former.