James 2:18-20 Commentary

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James 2:18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: All' erei (3SFAI) tis, Su pistin echeis (2SPAI) kago erga echo. (1SPAI) **deixon (2SAAM)** moi ten pistin sou choris ton ergon, kago soi deixo (2SFAI) ek ton ergon mou ten pistin.

Amplified: But someone will say [to you then], You [say you] have faith, and I have [good] works. Now you show me your [alleged] faith apart from any [good] works [if you can], and I by [good] works [of obedience] will show you my faith. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

KJV: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

NLT: Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds." (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: If we only "have faith" a man could easily challenge us by saying, "you say that you have faith and I have merely good actions. Well, all you can do is to show me a faith without corresponding actions, but I can show you by my actions that I have faith as well." (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: But a person will say, As for you, you have faith, and I have works. Prove to me the faith you possess apart from any accompanying works, and I will prove to you my faith by my works.

Young's Literal: But say may some one, Thou hast faith, and I have works, shew me thy faith out of thy

works, and I will shew thee out of my works my faith:

BUT SOMEONE MAY WELL SAY YOU HAVE FAITH AND I HAVE WORKS: All' erei (3SFAI) tis, Su pistin echeis (2SPAI) kago erga echo. (1SPAI):

- James 2:14,22; Romans 14:23; 1Corinthians 13:2; Galatians 5:6; Hebrews 11:6,31
- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
- James 2:14-26 Dead Faith, Part 2 - John MacArthur
- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur
- Saved by Faith [Alone] in Paul Vs Not Saved by Faith Alone in James - Robert Stein
- Faith, Works, and the Christian Religion in James 2:14-26 - Mark Proctor

But - This would seem to introduce a contrast and most agree that it introduces an "imaginary person" who presents his objection to what has just been stated. James now sets out to demonstrate the vanity of believing that something is true without acting upon that belief.

At the outset, it must be conceded that the interpretation of this verse is very difficult and there is no clear consensus even among conservative scholars. In fact this has been called one of the most problematic passages in the entire New Testament!

Why? What are the problem areas? First, the question arises as who is "**someone**" who is speaking? Second, how much of what is stated belongs to this speaker? Third, who are the pronouns "you" and "I" referring to in the phrase "You have faith and I have works"?

Some such as **John MacArthur** interpret this passage reflects James himself reasoning that his humility causes him not to make a direct identification. The difficulty with this interpretation is that it is forced to all but ignore the opening "**but**" which almost always introduces contrast in Greek.

Others feel (and I tend to agree) that James is introducing an imaginary objector, which would fit well with the first word "**but**", which still begs the question of where the objector's words end and who the "you" and "I" are in the next phrase. Those who hold to this interpretation, feel the objector is arguing with James and saying "You (James) have faith and I have works (objector)", to which James replies "Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works". In this scenario, James has just presented the imaginary objector with a dilemma. How can he show that he has faith? Faith is not an objective attribute that can be touched, handled or felt. This is exactly the point that James is driving at - faith is the root but because it is otherwise "invisible", the only way to be absolutely certain that this faith is present and is the "real thing" is by its fruit (works).

The **Apologetics Study Bible** emphasizes that far from contradicting, James actually complements Paul's arguments in Romans…

> First, Paul and James addressed different situations. On the one hand, Paul refuted a Jewish legalism holding that one must observe the law's requirements in order to be saved. On the other hand, James opposed an antinomianism that was twisting faith in Christ so much that no expression of works was necessary.
>
> Second, when Paul used the word "justified," he meant "saved" or "declared righteous," whereas James meant "vindicated" or "authenticated." (**Ed**: "**shown to be** righteous in one's position before God") By "works," Paul meant "works of the law," whereas James meant works that faith produces.

Life Application Bible…

> At first glance, this verse seems to contradict Romans 3:28-note,"man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Deeper investigation, however, shows that the teachings of James and Paul are not at odds. While it is true that our good deeds can never earn salvation, true faith always results in a changed life and good deeds. Paul speaks against those who try to be saved by deeds instead of true faith; James speaks against those who confuse mere intellectual assent with true faith.

Hiebert an excellent expositor of God's Word writes…

> that in these verses James sets forth the words of an objector (v. 18a), gives his challenge in reply to the objection (vv. 18b-19), and concludes with a searching application to the objector (v. 20)…

Hiebert goes on to explain that…

> "**But**" represents the common adversative particle **alla**, usually rendered "but"; it denotes a transition to something different or contrasting." It may have an emphatic force, but its usual adversative force is in keeping with the opening formula *all' erei tis,* "**but someone will say,**" which was a common device for introducing the words of an objector (Ro 9:19-note; Ro 11:19-note; 1Co 15:35).

The third possibility is that James could simply be presenting the two representative positions, explaining that some people have **faith** while others have **deeds**, the implication being that both pictures are legitimate expressions. This possibility is counter to the general thrust of his argument about the vital relationship between a living faith and associated works.

The interested reader is referred to in depth commentaries such as that of Hiebert for more discussion of this difficult passage. It is this writer's opinion that to become to adsorbed in the arguments for the various interpretations of this verse would take one's focus off of James' main argument.

Someone may well say - Bible Background Commentary says…

> "Someone will say" was a common way to introduce the speech of an imaginary opponent, the answer to whose objection merely furthered the writer's argument.

SHOW ME YOUR FAITH WITHOUT THE WORKS AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY MY WORKS: deixon (2SAAM) moi ten pistin sou choris ton ergon, kago soi deixo (2SFAI) ek ton ergon mou ten pistin:

- Jas 2:22, 23, 24, 25; 3:13; Mt 7:17; Ro 8:1; 2Co 5:17; 7:1; 1Th 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; 1Ti 1:5; Titus 2:7,11, 12, 13, 14
- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
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- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur

Show me your faith - (Sounds like a modern slang expression "Show me the money"!) This statement clearly conveys the sense of a challenge and therefore would be most compatible with a reply by James to those who had objected to his teaching on faith and works.

A T Robertson - James introduces an imaginary objector who speaks one sentence: "Thou hast faith and I have works". Then James answers this objector. The objector can be regarded as asking a short question: "Hast thou faith?" In that case James replies: "I have works also."

Barclay - James is thinking of a possible objector who says, "Faith is a fine thing; and works are fine things. They are both perfectly genuine manifestations of real religion. But the one man does not necessarily possess both. One man will have faith and another will have works. Well, then, you carry on with your works and I will carry on with my faith; and we are both being truly religious in our own way." The objector's view is that faith and works are alternative expressions of the Christian religion. James will have none of it.

Adam Clarke - Show me thy faith without thy works—Your pretending to have faith, while you have no works of charity or mercy, is utterly vain: for as faith, which is a principle in the mind, cannot be discerned but by the effects, that is, good works; he who has no good works has, presumptively, no faith.

I will show thee my faith by my works - I will show thee my faith by my works—My works of charity and mercy will show that I have faith; and that it is the living tree, whose root is love to God and man, and whose fruit is the good works here contended for.

Show (1166) (**deiknuo**) means to show and has the sense of (1) to draw attention to, to point out, to show, to make known, to exhibit something (by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means) so that it can be apprehended by the senses, to cause to see (Mt 4:8, Lk 4:5, Mt 8:4) or (2) to show so as to prove something is true or to make clear by evidence or reasoning. Show in the sense of demonstrate or prove as in Jas 3:13). To exhibit or present to the view of others. To explain the meaning or significance of something by demonstration.

Note the concentration of **deiknuo** in the most "graphic" NT book, the Revelation, or the revealing. How interesting that in the "revealing" we repeatedly encounter the verb to show, and specifically to show what God's plan is for the rest of the ages. Note that it is the bondservants whom will be shown these heretofore previously revealed mysteries! Little wonder that many do not understand (and/or are frightened by the book of the Revelation, for they are not His bondservants, but in fact are "earth dwellers"!). Note especially that 5 of the 33 "showings" are related to heaven! God wants us to see this preview of coming attractions, that we might be motivated to live accordingly.

Deiknuo in Jas 2:18 means to make clear by evidence or reasoning. In other words, James commands (**aorist imperative** = Do this now! Don't delay! "*The tense of urgency*." - A T Robertson) the objector as a definite act to "demonstrate" or "exhibit" his faith directly. As stated earlier since **faith** is invisible, "the faith" that he claims to possess must by necessity be manifested by **works** accompanying genuine faith.

Deiknuo - 33x in 31v - **NAS** = bring(1), show(21), showed(8), shown(2), shows(1).

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and **showed** Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

Matthew 8:4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, **show** yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to **show** His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Mark 1:44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, **show** yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Mark 14:15 "And he himself will **show** you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there."

Luke 4:5 And he led Him up and **showed** Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

Luke 5:14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and **show** yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Luke 20:24 "**Show** Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's."

Luke 22:12 "And he will **show** you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there."

Luke 24:40 And when He had said this, He **showed** them His hands and His feet.

John 2:18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You **show** us as your authority for doing these things?"

John 5:20 "For the Father loves the Son, and **shows** Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

John 10:32 Jesus answered them, "I **showed** you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, **show** us the Father, and it is enough for us."

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, '**Show** us the Father '?

John 20:20 And when He had said this, He **showed** them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Acts 7:3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL **SHOW** YOU.' (Quoting from Ge 12:1 which uses **deiknuo** in the **Lxx**)

Acts 10:28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God **has shown** me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I **show** you a still more excellent way.

1 Timothy 6:15 which He will **bring** about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

Hebrews 8:5-note who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS **SHOWN** YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." (Quoting from Ex 25:40 which also uses **deiknuo** in the **Lxx**)

James 2:18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; **show** me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

James 3:13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him **show** by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Revelation 1:1-note The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to **show** to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

Revelation 4:1-note After these things (Rev 2-3 - The 7 Churches, which no further mention of the church suggesting as many believe, including myself, that it is "gone", raptured!) I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will **show** you what must take place after these things."

Revelation 17:1-note Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will **show** you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

Revelation 21:9-note Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will **show** you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

Revelation 21:10-note And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed** me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Revelation 22:1-note Then he **showed** me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Revelation 22:6-note And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to **show** to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

Revelation 22:8-note I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who **showed** me these things.

Deiknuo - ~83v in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** -

> Ge 12:1; 41:25, 28, 39; 48:11; Exod 13:21; 15:25; 25:9, 40; 26:30; 33:5, 18; Lev 13:49; Num 8:4; 13:26; 16:30; 22:41; 23:3; 24:17; Deut 1:33; 3:24; 4:5, 36; 5:24; 32:20; 34:1, 4; Josh 7:14; Judg 1:24f; 4:22; 13:23; 1 Sam 12:23; 2 Sam 15:25; 1 Kgs 13:12; 2 Kgs 6:6; 8:10, 13; 11:4; 20:13, 15; 2 Chr 23:3; Esth 1:4, 11; 4:8; Ps 4:7; 49:23; 58:11; 59:5; 70:20; 77:11; 84:8; 90:16; Eccl 2:24; 3:18; Song 2:14; Job 28:11; 33:23; 34:32; Hos 5:9; Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; Mic 4:2; Nah 3:5; Hab 1:3; Zech 1:9; 2:3; 3:1; 8:12; Isa 11:11; 30:30; 39:2; 40:14; 48:9, 17; 53:11; Jer 18:17; 24:1; 45:21; Ezek 11:25; 40:4; 43:10; Dan 10:1

Genesis 41:39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has **informed** (Hebrew = yada = to know; Lxx = deiknuo) you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

Exodus 15:25 Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD **showed** him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.

Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, **show** (command in Hebrew = raah = to see; Lxx = deiknuo in the **aorist imperative**) me Your glory!"

Deuteronomy 1:33 who goes before you on your way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to **show** you the way in which you should go.

Deuteronomy 3:24 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to **show** Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?

Deuteronomy 5:24 "You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God **has shown** us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives.

Deuteronomy 34:1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD **showed** him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan,

1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will **instruct** (Heb = yarah; Lxx = deiknuo) you in the good and right way.

Without - apart from. A T Robertson adds…

> The point lies in choris, which means not "without," but "apart from," as in Heb 11:6-note (with the ablative case), "the works that properly belong to it and should characterise it" (Hort). James challenges the objector to do this.

Without (5565) (**choris**) is used both as an adverb signifying separately or by itself (John 20:7). More often however **choris** is used as a preposition meaning apart from (eg, "**apart from** Him nothing came into being" John 1:3), without (eg, "**without sin**" He 4:15-note) or separate from (eg, "**separate from** Christ", Ep 2:12-note).

Webster says that **without** (as a preposition) is used as a function word to indicate the absence or lack of something or someone.

The **IVP Background Commentary** writes that there is…

> a common modern conception that faith is a once-for-all prayer involving no commitment of life or purpose and is efficacious even if quickly forgotten

Hiebert comments that…

> The challenge implies that "**without**" (choris, "apart from")" deeds, which his "**faith**" does not have, such a demonstration is impossible. And this inability to demonstrate his **faith** will prove that it is not true faith. **Faith** and **works** are inseparable. (James. Moody. 1992)

By - The idea could be either *emerging from* or *by means of* (cp Ro 1:17-note = "by faith", Ro 3:30-note = "by faith", 1Jn 4:6 = "by this").

I will show you my faith by (means of) **my works** - James now states he is ready and willing to demonstrate the very thing he has challenged the objector to demonstrate. In other words, James will demonstrate his works as the proof of something beyond those works. To reiterate, James' works prove that he has saving faith and without the root of such a faith there could be no fruit.

Works do not **save**, but works **show**. Works do not **redeem**, but works **reveal**. Works reveal what is in the heart. Works do not **effect** salvation but **evidence** it. And as J C Ryle said "**obedience** is the only **sound evidence** of **saving faith**".

A C Gaebelein counters those who say James is not discussing genuine faith that saves (there are some teachers in evangelical circles who hold this view, a view with which I strongly disagree.)

> There is no difficulty at all connected with this passage. The Holy Spirit through James shows that true faith which justifies before God must be evidenced by works. " (The Annotated Bible)

The excellent new **ESV Study Bible** does not waver one iota declaring flatly that…

> Faith that is not accompanied by action is useless and dead, unable to save…
>
> Although it may seem as if James is contradicting Paul's "by grace you have been saved through faith… not a result of works" (Ep 2:8, 9), in reality there is no dichotomy between faith and works, for Paul and James would agree that the basis of salvation is grace alone through faith, with works not the basis but the necessary result thereof (Ep 2:10).

Dr Charles Ryrie…

> James is not saying that we are saved by works but that a faith that does not produce good works is a dead faith. James was not refuting the Pauline doctrine of justification by true faith but a **perversion** of it. Both Paul and James define faith as a living, productive trust in Christ. Genuine faith cannot be "dead" to morality or barren to works. (The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers) (Bold added for emphasis)

A W Tozer…

> That many of our hotly defended beliefs are no more than reactions to what we consider false doctrines would not be difficult to prove. The doctrine of justification by works (itself a serious error), for instance, has driven some teachers to espouse the equally damaging error of salvation without works. To many people the thought of "works" is repugnant because of its association with the effete Judaism of the New Testament era. The upshot of the matter is that we have salvation without righteousness and right doctrine without right deeds. Grace is twisted out of its moral context and made the cause of lowered standards of conduct in the church. (This World: Playground or Battleground?)
>
> There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and which in its effect upon the Christian religion may be more destructive than Communism, Romanism and Liberalism combined. It is the glaring disparity between **theology** and **practice** among **professing Christians**.

So wide is the gulf that separates theory from practice in the church that an inquiring stranger who chances upon both would scarcely dream that there was any relation between them. An intelligent observer of our human scene who heard the Sunday morning sermon and later watched the Sunday afternoon conduct of those who had heard it would conclude that he had been

examining two distinct and contrary religions.

It appears that too many Christians want to enjoy **the thrill of feeling right** but are not willing to endure **the inconvenience of being right**. So the divorce between **theory** and **practice** becomes permanent in fact, though in word the union is declared to be eternal. Truth sits forsaken and grieves till her professed followers come home for a brief visit, but she sees them depart again when the bills become due. They protest great and undying love for her but they will not let their love cost them anything. (The Root of the Righteous)

> The truth is that **faith** and **obedience** are two sides of the same coin and are always found together in the Scriptures. As well try to pry apart the two sides of a half-dollar as to separate obedience from faith. The two sides, while they remain together and are taken as one, represent good sound currency and constitute legal tender everywhere in the United States. Separate them and they are valueless. Insistence upon honoring but one side of the faith-obedience coin has wrought frightful harm in religious circles. **Faith** has been made everything and **obedience** nothing. The result among religious persons is moral weakness, spiritual blindness and a slow but constant drift away from New Testament Christianity. (The Size of the Soul)
>
> The difference between faith as it is found in the New Testament and faith as it is found now is that faith in the New Testament actually produced something—there was a confirmation of it.
>
> Faith now is a beginning and an end. We have faith in faith—but nothing happens. They had faith in a risen Christ and something did happen. That's the difference. (The Counselor)

Larry Richards…

> It's easy for folks to get confused about which faith is meant when someone says "I believe." What James said was that there is a way to tell the difference. Faith that says, "I suppose" has no transforming power. This kind of faith produces no works. Faith that says, "I commit myself, heart and soul," is transforming faith. This kind of faith will always produce good works in the life of the man or woman who believes. What kind of faith do you and I have in Christ? A look at our lives ought to tell. (365-Day Devotional Commentary)

John Butler…

> The message of James was hard for many to accept for it seemed to contradict salvation by grace. But when one understands that James is talking about justification before men and not before God, then the matter of works is no longer contradictory to salvation by grace. Evidence of our salvation will be seen in works. Lack of good works gives ominous evidence that our salvation is only talk but not walk. (Studies of the Savior)

A T Robertson…

> It is not faith or works, but proof of real faith (live faith vs. dead faith). The mere profession of faith with no works or profession of faith shown to be alive by works. This is the alternative clearly stated. Note pistin (faith) in both cases. James is not here discussing "works" (ceremonial works) as a means of salvation as Paul in Galatians 3; Romans 4, but works as proof of faith.

Douglas Moo…

> In the ancient world, writers often used a sort of argumentative style to carry along their discussion. Paul uses it frequently in Romans, and James uses it here. He has an imaginary opponent object, "You have faith; I have deeds" (Jas 2:18). The force of this objection has been understood in a great number of ways, but the simplest interpretation is to assume that the objector is arguing for the principle "different people, different gifts": Why cannot one believer be especially gifted with faith while another has the ability to perform good deeds? James answers this objection with a challenge (Jas 2:18,19): "Give me evidence, apart from deeds, that you have faith. You can't do it, can you? But I can point to my deeds as the clear evidence of the reality of my faith. Why, faith without deeds is no better than the intellectual 'faith' of demons; they have a perfectly correct 'theology' but do not have the commitment to what they believe—their faith has affected their minds, but not their wills. So a faith without deeds is also a less than Christian faith, a bogus faith." (Baker Commentary on the Bible)

Kistemaker - In everything he does, faith is the main ingredient. Just as a motor produces power because an electrical current flows into it, so a Christian produces good deeds because true faith empowers him. (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. NT Commentary Set. Baker Book)

Warren Wiersbe - How could a person show his faith without works? Can a dead sinner perform good works? Impossible! When you trust Christ, you are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ep 2:10-note). Being a Christian involves trusting Christ and living for Christ; you receive the life, then you reveal the life. Faith that is barren is not saving faith. (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor)

Thomas Vincent - If you have a saving interest in Christ, you have obedience. Your faith shows itself in your works— James 2:18. And your love shows itself in your keeping Christ's commands— John 14:21. Such as do not obey Christ's laws—but cast His commandments behind their backs, and will not have this Lord to rule over them—have neither faith, nor love, nor life, nor likeness unto Christ; and therefore be sure that they have no interest in Him. Test your interest in Christ, the only Deliverer from future wrath—by these marks and evidences. (The Only Deliverer from the Wrath to Come)

Barnes has the following analysis of this passage…

> The word which is rendered "yea," (alla) would be better rendered by but. The apostle designs to introduce an objection, not to make an affirmation. The sense is, "someone might say," or, "to this it might be urged in reply." That is, it might perhaps be said that religion is not always manifested in the same way, or we should not suppose that, because it is not always exhibited in the same form, it does not exist. One man may manifest it in one way, and another in another, and still both have true piety. One may be distinguished for his faith, and another for his works, and both may have real religion. This objection would certainly have some plausibility, and it was important to meet it. It would seem that all religion was not to be manifested in the same way, as all virtue is not; and that it might occur that one man might be particularly eminent for one form of religion, and another for another; as one man may be distinguished for zeal, and another for meekness, and another for integrity, and another for truth, and another for his gifts in prayer, and another for his large-hearted benevolence. To this the apostle replies, that the two things referred to, faith and works, were not independent things, which could exist separately, without the one materially influencing another--as, for example, charity and chastity, zeal and meekness; but that the one was the germ or source of the other, and that the existence of the one was to be known only by its developing itself in the form of the other. A man could not show that he possessed the one unless it developed itself in the form of the other. In proof of this, he could boldly appeal to any one to show a case where faith existed without works. He was himself willing to submit to this just trial in regard to this point, and to demonstrate the existence of his own faith by his works.
>
> **Thou hast faith, and I have works.** You have one form or manifestation of religion in an eminent or prominent degree, and I have another. You are characterized particularly for one of the virtues of religion, and I am for another; as one man may be particularly eminent for meekness, and another for zeal, and another for benevolence, and each be a virtuous man. The expression here is equivalent to saying, "One may have faith, and another works."
>
> **Shew me thy faith without thy works**. That is, you who maintain that faith is enough to prove the existence of religion; that a man may be justified and saved by that alone, or where it does not develop itself in holy living; or that all that is necessary in order to be saved is merely to believe. Let the reality of any such faith as that be shown, if it can be; let any real faith be shown to exist without a life of good works, and the point will be settled. I, says the apostle, will undertake to exhibit the evidence of my faith in a different way-- in a way about which there can be no doubt, and which is the appropriate method…
>
> **And I will show thee my faith by my works**. I will furnish in this way the best and most certain proof of the existence of faith. It is implied here that true faith is adapted to lead to a holy life, and that such a life would be the appropriate evidence of the existence of faith. By their fruits the principles held by men are known. See [Mt 7:16-note]. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Puritan **Thomas Brooks**...

> Where the stock is dead, the branches must needs be barren. Alas! the barrenness of many professors plainly discovers on what stock they are growing. It is easy to pretend to faith—but "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds." James 2:18. (Human Nature in its Fourfold State)

Thomas Watson…

> Works of charity evidence grace. Charity evidences saving faith. "I will show you my faith by my works." James 2:18. Works are faith's letters of credence. We judge of the health of the body by the pulse; so Christian, judge of the health of your faith by the pulse of charity. The Word of God is the **rule** of faith, and good works are the **witnesses** of faith. Charity evidences also love. Love loves mercy; it is a noble bountiful grace. Mary loved Christ, and how liberal was her love! She bestowed on Christ her tears, kisses, and costly ointments. Love, like a full vessel, will have vent; it vents itself in acts of liberality. (The Ten Commandments)

Abraham's Faith - James argues straightforwardly that Abraham was justified by works. When was Abraham justified by works? When he offered Isaac on the altar. To understand this, we need to bear in mind that James is using the term 'justification' in a different sense, with a different nuance, than Paul does. Paul deals with the issue of how a sinner is reconciled to a just and holy God.

He uses the term 'justification' in its supreme theological sense. James, however, is asking how a person is justified before men, not before God. His question is: How do we know that a person has authentic faith? Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:16). James labors in the second chapter of his epistle to show that a person's true faith is shown outwardly by acts of obedience or works of righteousness. He says, "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18).

Now, does God need to see your works to know if you have faith or not? Of course not. James is speaking of man's sight. Paul says that in God's sight, Abraham was justified by faith (Genesis 15). However, James says that in man's sight the most telling proof that Abraham was a justified man is that he was willing to obey God even to the point of offering up his only son on the altar. - R. C. Sproul, Tabletalk, May, 1989, p. 11 (Bible.org)

Roll 'em Up - When Dave Thomas died in early 2002, he left behind more than just thousands of Wendy's restaurants. He also left a legacy of being a practical, hard-working man who was respected for his down-to-earth values.

Among the pieces of good advice that have outlived the smiling entrepreneur is his view of what Christians should be doing with their lives. Thomas, who as a youngster was influenced for Christ by his grandmother, said that believers should be "roll-up-your-shirtsleeves" Christians.

In his book Well Done, Thomas said, "Roll-up-your-shirtsleeves Christians see Christianity as faith and action. They still make the time to talk with God through prayer, study Scripture with devotion, be super-active in their church, and take their ministry to others to spread the Good Word." He went on to say they are "anonymous people who may be doing even more good than all the well-known Christians in the world."

That statement has more meat in it than a Wendy's triple burger. Thomas knew about hard work in the restaurant business, and he knew it is vital in the spiritual world too.

In James 2:17, we read that unless our faith is accompanied by works, our faith is dead. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. There's plenty to do. — Dave Branon (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Let's gladly work in serving Christ,
For faith alone is dead;
Let's labor out of love for Him
Who suffered in our stead. —D. DeHaan

A living faith is a working faith.

Lightning And Thunder - When we see lightning flash across the sky, we expect the roar of thunder to follow. If there were no lightning, there would be no thunder because one causes the other.

It's like that with faith. Just as thunder always follows lightning, good works always follow true faith.

The relationship between faith and works is explained in the New Testament writings of Paul to the Ephesians, and in a brief letter from James. At first glance, these authors seem to contradict each other. Paul insisted, "By grace you have been saved through faith, … not of works" (Eph 2:8, 9-note). But James declared, "A man is justified [declared righteous] by works, and not by faith only" (Jas 2:24).

In context though, James wasn't denying that we are saved by faith. He referred to Abraham, saying that he "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Jas 2:23). This belief occurred years before Abraham gave evidence of his faith by preparing to offer his son as a sacrifice (Jas 2:21). Nor was the apostle Paul denying the value of works, for right after stating that we are saved by faith alone he said that we are saved "for good works" (Eph. 2:10-note).

What about you? Has the "lightning" of personal faith in Christ been followed by the "thunder" of good works? — Haddon W.

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DIGGING DEEPER

Read Genesis 15:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and Genesis 22:1-14.

Why did God give righteousness to Abraham?

How did Abraham prove his faith?

We are saved by faith alone,
but faith that saves is never alone.

GENUINE FAITH - In nature, lightning and thunder present a striking illustration of the relationship between faith and works. When lightning flashes across the sky, we know that the roar of thunder will follow. Without lightning, there would be no thunder, because the one is the cause of the other. Likewise, good works always accompany saving faith, because one causes the other.

We must keep before us the clear truth that we are saved by grace and grace alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

But many believers who glibly quote this passage ignore the verse that follows: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (v. 10).

In the same manner that thunder contributes nothing to lightning, good works add nothing to our salvation. Rather, they are the "sound" of faith and will follow every genuine conversion experience. The one without the other is not the real thing.

Genuine faith is always evident by what follows—a life of good works. —R. W. De Haan (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Faith without works is presumptuous
Faith with works is precious.

Puritan writer **Thomas Watson**…

> **DOCTRINE**: Christians should above all things, endeavor after fruitfulness. The saints are called "trees of righteousness" in Isaiah 61:3. These rational trees must not only bring forth leaves—but fruit, "being filled with the fruits of righteousness." To further amplify this, there are two things to be inquired into:
>
> **QUESTION**. How does a Christian bring forth fruit?
>
> **ANSWER**. He brings forth fruit in the vine. By nature we are barren, and there is not one good blossom growing on us; but when by faith we are engrafted into Christ, then we grow and bear fruit. John 15:4: "Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me." Jesus Christ is that blessed Root which shoots up that sap of grace into His branches. The Pelagians tells us we have sufficiency of ourselves to bring forth good fruit; but how improper is this? Does not the root contribute to the branches? Is it not of Christ's precious fullness that we receive (John 1:16)? Therefore it is observable that Christ calls the spouse's grace His grace. Song 5:1: "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice." Christ does not say, "your myrrh," but "My myrrh." If the saints bear any spiritual fruit, they are indebted to Christ for it; it is His myrrh. Hosea 14:8: "From Me is your fruit found."
>
> **QUESTION**. What is that fruit which a sincere Christian brings forth?
>
> **ANSWER**. It is inward fruit, outward fruit, kindly fruit, and seasonable fruit.
>
> **1. A Christian brings forth INWARD fruit:**
>
> Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, and faith (Galatians 5:22). This fruit is sweet and mellow, growing under the Sun of righteousness. This is that ripe fruit which God delights to taste (Micah 7:1).
>
> **2. A Christian brings forth OUTWARD fruit.**
>
> He brings forth the fruit of good speech. Proverbs 15:4: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." Gracious speeches fall from the lips of a godly man, as fruit does from a tree.
>
> **A Christian brings forth the fruit of good works** (Col 1:10).

God will say at the last day, "Show me your faith by your works"(Jas 2:18).

A true saint does all the good he can, honoring the Lord with his substance; he knows he is to be in the world but a while, and therefore lives much in a little time, crowding up a great deal of work in a little time. It was Christ's speech not long before His suffering, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). How can they be said to finish their work—who never began to work?

3. A Christian brings forth KINDLY fruit.

"The godly man brings forth his fruit" (Ps 1:3), that is, he brings forth that fruit which is proper for him to bear. But what is this kindly and proper fruit? It is when we are holy in our callings and relations. In a magistrate, justice is kindly fruit (Dt 16:19); in a minister, zeal (Acts 17:16); in a parent, instruction (Dt 4:10); in a child, reverence (Ep 6:1); in a master, a good example (Ge 18:19; Ep 6:9); in a servant, obedience (1Pe 2:18); in the husband, love (Ep 5:25); in the wife, submission (Ep 5:22); in a tradesman, diligence (Ex 20:9); in a soldier, innocence (Lk 3:14).

A tree of God's planting brings forth his fruit, that which is suitable and proper. I shall never believe him to be godly, who does not bear kindly fruit. A man cannot be a sincere Christian—but a bad master. A sincere Christian—but a bad parent, does not sound well. That minister can no more be godly who lacks zeal—than that wine is good which lacks spirits; that magistrate can no more be good who lacks justice—than that pillar is good which is not upright. That child can no more be good who does not honor his parents—than a traitor can be said to be loyal. When Absalom rose up in rebellion against his father, the mule which he rode upon (as if she were weary of carrying such a burden) resigned her load up to the great, thick oak, and there left him hanging by the hair, between heaven and earth, as neither fit to ascend the one nor worthy to tread upon the other.

Let Christians be persuaded to bring forth proper and genuine fruit, and shine forth in their relations. He who is not godly in his relations goes under the just suspicion of being a hypocrite; let a man seem to be a penitent or zealous—yet if he does not bear fruit proper to his station, he is no tree of righteousness—but some wild, degenerate plant. There are some who will pray, hear sermons, discourse well; and this is good; but what does this bleating of the sheep mean? They are not good in their relationships; this reveals that they are unsound. A sincere Christian labors to fill his relationships. I do not like those Christians who, though they seem to be traveling to heaven—yet leave the duties of their relations, as a uncharted territory, which they never come near.

The excellency of a Christian is to bring forth proper fruit. Wherein does the goodness of a member in the body lie, but to discharge its proper office? The eye is to see, the ear to hear, and so on. So the excellency of a Christian is to bring forth that fruit which God has assigned to him. What is a thing good for—which does not do its proper work? What is a clock good for—which will not strike? What is a ship good for—which will not sail? What is a rose good for—which does not give forth its fragrance? What is that professor good for—who does not send forth a sweet perfume in his relationships?

The commendation of a thing, is when it puts forth its proper virtue.

Not to bring forth suitable fruit, spoils all the other fruit which we bring forth. If a man were to make a medicine and leave out the chief ingredient—the medicine would lose its virtue. If one were to draw a portrait and leave out an eye—it would spoil the picture. There are many to whom Christ will say at the day of judgment, as He did to the young man in Luke 18:22, "Yet lack you one thing. You have prayed, fasted, and heard sermons—yet lack you one thing—you have not been godly in your relationships."

Relative graces do much to beautify and set off a Christian. It is the beauty of a star to shine in its proper orb. Relative grace bespangles a Christian.

4. A sincere Christian brings forth SEASONABLE fruit.

Psalm 1:3 speaks of "he who brings forth fruit in his season." Ec 3:11 says that "everything is beautiful in his time." That may be good at one time, which at another time may be out of season. There is a great deal of skill in the right timing of a thing; duties of religion must be performed in the fit juncture of time.

Christian duties which relate to our neighbor must be observed in their season. For example, our reproving others must be seasonable. Reproof is a duty; when we see others walk irregularly, like soldiers who march out of rank and file, we ought mildly—yet gravely, to tell them of their sin (Leviticus 19:17); but let this fruit be brought forth in its season.

Do it privately. Matthew 18:15: "Go and tell him his faults between him and you alone." Do it when you see him in the best temper, not when his passions are up—that would be like pouring oil on the flame. But only reprove him when it is seasonal—when his spirit is meekened and calmed. You put the seal on the wax when it is soft and pliable. There is a time when men's spirits are more flexible and yielding; now is the fittest time to stamp a reproof upon them, and it is likeliest to take impression. When Abigail reproved Nabal, it was in the right season; not when he was in wine—but when he was in his wits, and was fit to hear a reproof (1Samuel 25:37).

Another season for reproof is in the time of affliction. Affliction tames men's spirits, and then a word of reproof spoken prudentially may work with the affliction. A bitter potion is not refused if in case of extremity of pain. Affliction opens the ear to discipline.

Also, our comforting others must be seasonable. Proverbs 15:23: "A word spoken in due season, how good is it?" When we see one fallen into sin, and like Peter weeping bitterly—now a word of comfort will do well. When the incestuous Corinthian was deeply humbled, the apostle called for oil and wine to be poured into his wounds. 2Corinthians 2:7: "You ought rather to comfort him." And the reason given was, "lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with sorrow." When the soul is wounded for sin, them bring the mollifying ointment of a promise (Jeremiah 3:1). Hang out free grace's colors; display the glory of God's attributes, His mercy and truth to the sinner.

When the spirit is broken, a word of comfort spoken in season is putting it in joint again. We bring forth seasonable fruit when we give wine to those who are of a heavy heart. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul. Job's friends pretended to comfort him—but, instead of pouring oil into the wound, they poured in vinegar.

Duties of religion that relate to God must be performed in their season. Mourning for sin is a duty. God loves a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). How powerful with God is the weeping rhetoric which a poor sinner uses? Yet there is a time when weeping may not be so seasonable; when God has given us some eminent signal deliverance, and this mercy calls aloud to us to rejoice—but we hang our harps on the willows and sit weeping. This sadness is fruit out of season.

There was a special time at the Feast of Tabernacles when God called His people to rejoicing: "Seven days shall you keep a solemn feast unto the Lord your God—and you shall surely rejoice." Now if the Israelites had sat heavy and disconsolate at the time when God called them to rejoice, it would have been very unseasonable, like mourning at a wedding. When we are called to thanksgiving, and we mingle our drink with tears, is not this to be highly unthankful for mercy? God would have His people humble—but not ungrateful. It is the devil's policy either to keep us from duty—or else to put us upon it when it is least in season.

Rejoicing is a duty (Psalm 33:1). But when God, by some special providence, calls us to weeping, then joy is unseasonable. This is that which God complained of in Isaiah 22:12, 13: "In that day the Lord Almighty called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse. But instead, you dance and play."

Occolampadius and others think it was in the time of king Ahaz, when the signs of God's anger, like a blazing star, appeared. Now to be given to mirth was very unseasonable, according to verse 14: "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you until you die." It is a concise form of an oath, as if God had said, "I swear that it shall not by any prayer or sacrifice be expiated!"

To read at home when the word is being preached or the sacrament is being celebrated, is unseasonable, nay, sinful. As Hushai said in 2Samuel 17:7, "The counsel is not good at this time." One duty is to prepare for another—but not to jostle out another; fruit must put forth seasonably. The great God who has appointed the duties of His worship has appointed also the time. If, when public ordinances are administered, any person, whether out of pride or sloth, shall stay at home, though he may have his private devotions—yet he brings forth fruit out of season, and let that man know he shall bear his sin.

Let all the trees of righteousness bring forth seasonable fruit. In prosperity, be thankful; in adversity, be patient. "To everything there is a season" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The Psalmist said, "He appointed the moon for seasons" (Psalm 104:19).

To excite you to seasonable fruit, consider that the seasonableness of a thing, puts a value and preciousness upon it. Duties of religion performed in their season, are glorious. Creatures, by the instinct of nature, observe their season. Jeremiah 8:7: "Yes the stork in the heaven knows her appointed times." And shall not Christians observe their seasons—when to mourn and when to rejoice? Consider also that duties of religion not well

timed are dangerous; mourning in a time of joy, and private duties in time of public ones—are unseasonable and will prove harmful.

James 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: su pisteueis (2SPAI) hoti eis estin (3SPAI) o theos? kalos poieis; (2SPAI) kai ta daimonia pisteuousin (3PPAI) kai phrissousin. (3PPAI)

Amplified: You believe that God is one; you do well. So do the demons believe and shudder [in terror and horror such as make a man's hair stand on end and contract the surface of his skin]! (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

KJV: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

NLT: Do you still think it's enough just to believe that there is one God? Well, even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror! (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: To the man who thinks that faith by itself is enough I feel inclined to say, "So you believe that there is one God? That's fine. So do all the devils in hell and shudder in terror!" (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: As for you, you give credence to that God is one. You are doing well. The demons also give credence and shudder.

Young's Literal: thou--thou dost believe that God is one; thou dost well, and the demons believe, and they shudder!

YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD IS ONE. YOU DO WELL: su pisteueis (2SPAI) hoti eis estin (3SPAI) o theos? kalos poieis (2SPAI)

- Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6,8; 45:6,21,22; 46:9; Zechariah 14:9; Mark 12:29; John 17:3; Romans 3:30; 1Corinthians 8:4,6; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:5,6; 1Timothy 2:5; Jude 1:4) (Jas 2:8; Jonah 4:4,9; Mark 7:9
- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
- James 2:14-26 Dead Faith, Part 2 - John MacArthur
- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur

You believe that God is one - In context James is still replying to the imaginary objector of verse 18, and now with a "direct frontal assault" on orthodox faith that is so highly valued.

Remember also that James is addressing the "twelve tribes" (James 1:1) so he is speaking directly to the well known "**Shema**" from Deuteronomy

> Hear (**shema**), O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ("Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah.") (Deuteronomy 6:4)

This is Israel's great statement testifying to a monotheistic faith, which was intended to set them apart from their polytheistic, idol worshipping neighbors. Both Jews and Christians treasured their monotheistic faith as distinguishing them from polytheistic heathenism. Furthermore, the Jewish Christians to whom James wrote probably used the "**Shema**" regularly in their worship. Clearly this statement is true and thus represents orthodoxy. James is saying that orthodoxy is not enough. Intellectual belief is not enough.

The irony of this declaration is that the Hebrew verb for **hear** carries with it the idea of heeding or obeying what is heard.

Regarding the phrase **you believe that, Hiebert** writes that…

> The verbal construction "you believe that" "indicates an **intellectual** commitment on his interlocutor's part to a creed (pisteueis hoti) rather than the distinctly Christian personal trust and commitment which would include obedience (pisteueis plus dative, **en** or **eis**)."

The point of course is that faith may be an orthodox faith and still not be saving faith. In other words, the orthodoxy of the faith one professes does not guarantee that it is a living faith. If the professed orthodox faith is unproductive of good deeds, it will fall under condemnation as useless, even as does the faith of the demons.

Vance Havner alluded to an intellectual, orthodox faith when he said…

> Nothing is more disastrous than to study faith, analyze faith, make noble resolves of faith, but never actually to make the leap of faith.

As **John Calvin** aptly stated…

> The gospel can be understood by faith alone—not by reason, nor by the perspicacity of the human understanding… (for) The seat of faith is not in the brain but in the heart.

You do well - Literally "Well you are doing!" James is not questioning the content of what the imaginary objector believes, but here even applauds such a belief. The idea is that orthodoxy is better than heresy.

A T Robertson quips…

> That is good as far as it goes, which is not far.

As **Jamieson** says…

> so far good. But unless thy faith goes farther than an assent to this truth, "the evil spirits (literally, 'demons': 'devil' is the term restricted to Satan, their head) believe" so far in common with thee, "and (so far from being saved by such a faith) shudder (so the Greek)," Mt 8:29; Lk 4:34; 2Pe 2:4; Jud 1:6; Rev 20:10. Their faith only adds to their torment at the thought of having to meet Him who is to consign them to their just doom: so thine (Heb 10:26, 27, it is not the faith of love, but of fear, that hath torment, 1Jn 4:18).

THE DEMONS ALSO BELIEVE AND SHUDDER: kai ta daimonia pisteuousin (3PPAI) kai phrissousin. (3PPAI):

- Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; 5:7; Luke 4:34; Acts 16:17; 19:15; 24:25; Jude 1:6; Revelation 20:2,3,10
- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
- James 2:14-26 Dead Faith, Part 2 - John MacArthur
- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur

As **Thomas Fuller** explained "He does not believe that does not live according to his belief."

What you believe will effect how you behave. True belief will show itself in true behavior. The demons are the prototype of a faith that claims orthodox belief but lacks concordant righteous behavior. **Good works** will validate **good words** which is in stark contrast to the false teachers who "profess to know God, but by their **deeds** they (continually) deny Him, being detestable (root word = "to stink"!) and disobedient and worthless for any **good deed**" (see **note** Titus 1:16).

The demons also believe - Or "even the demons believe that and shudder". In other words, there are no skeptics, agnostics or atheists in the foul ranks of the doomed demons! They do not doubt the fact of God's existence. They believe the "**Shema**" but they are not saved. And thus with one "blow" James cuts down the value of a perfectly orthodox belief that is not productive of good works, for the orthodox beliefs of the demons does not transform either their character nor their conduct. In short what James is implying is that **belief** may be orthodox while the **behavior** remains evil. In short, **orthodoxy** demands **orthopraxy** or it's worthless.

Demons (1140) (**daimonion**) refers in context to evil spirits (see dictionary discussion of **demons**). Demons are spiritual beings hostile to and at war with God and God's children (eg, see notes Ephesians 6:10; 11; 12) and in the NT they vexed and tormented humans. Clearly they are not saved or redeemed and they possess a fully orthodox belief. In the Gospels, they also recognize and acknowledge Jesus (Jesus "*was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was*" - Mark 1:34) but that intellectual belief did not save them.

Hiebert adds that "These malicious supernatural spirits, engaged in seeking to possess and torment men, readily confessed God's existence and omnipotence; further, they know that as such He is totally and consistently their enemy. (James. Moody. 1992)

Believe (4100) (**pisteuo** from **pistis**; **pistos**; related studies the faith, the obedience of faith) means to consider something to be true. In secular Greek literature, as well as in the New Testament, **pisteuo** (pistis, pistos) has a basic meaning of an **intellectual assent** or a belief that something is true. This kind of faith does not require any action on the part of the believer but only an intellectual acceptance. In the present passage James used this type of faith as an example of a dead faith that is possessed even by the demons. Clearly the fact that they believe and are not saved indicates that pisteuo can refer to either saving faith or non-saving (dead, "demonic") faith.

Faith alone saves to be sure, but it has to be the correct type of faith. If one is not a demon and says he has faith, how does one determine whether that faith is dead/demonic or living, genuine, saving faith? This is exactly what James is trying to drive home. Even as **context** helps determine the correct interpretation of a word in Scripture, the "**context**" of one's life helps us determine whether that person's faith is living or dead, saving or non-saving respectively. In a sense then the "**context**" of one's life is their works or deeds. Don't tell me you have faith James says. Show me. James is not saying the person's works or deeds have any merit in regard to salvation but only that they are the evidence that one has genuine, saving faith.

And shudder - Although not a "good work" the demons do manifest an emotional reaction.

Shudder (5425) (**phrisso**) ("old onomatopoetic verb" - A T Robertson) has the primary meaning of to be rough or to bristle up and then evolves to mean (as in this context) to shiver, shudder, or tremble. The picture is vivid for it is that of one's hair standing up on end! Clearly the implication is that the shivering or quaking is the result of the fear the unholy demons exhibit toward a holy God. The **present tense** indicates that bristling at the true knowledge of God is the continual fearful response of the evil spirits.

A T Robertson writes that **phrisso** is…

> Like Latin *horreo* (horror, standing of the hair on end with terror). The demons do more than believe a fact. They shudder at it.

Vincent writes that this verb occurs "Only here in New Testament. It means, originally, to be rough on the surface; to bristle. Hence, used of the fields with ears of corn; of a line of battle bristling with shields and spears; of a silver or golden vessel rough with embossed gold. Aeschylus, describing a crowd holding up their hands to vote, says, the air bristled with right hands. Hence, of a horror which makes the hair stand on end and contracts the surface of the skin, making "gooseflesh." Rev., much better, shudder. (Vincent, M. R.. Word Studies in the New Testament 1:744)

Matthew Poole writes that **phrisso "**signifies extreme fear and horror, viz. such as the thoughts of their Judge strike into them. This shows the faith the apostle speaks of in this place, not to be the faith of God's elect, which begets in believers a holy confidence in God, and frees them from slavish fears; whereas the faith here spoken of, if it have any effect upon men, it is but to fill them with horror. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

Hiebert on phrisso - This term is not strictly applicable to spirits, yet it effectively conveys the intensity of the horror that seizes the demons when confronting God. They have an intense, unquestioned belief in God's existence and power, but their faith brings them no peace or salvation. They are fully aware that doom awaits them at the hands of the infinitely perfect God (Matt. 8:29; 25:41; Luke 8:31). (Ibid)

As **Wayne Grudem** explains…

> **Knowledge** Alone Is Not Enough. Personal saving faith, in the way Scripture understands it, involves more than mere **knowledge**. Of course it is necessary that we have some knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done for
>
> "how are they to believe in Him of Whom they have never heard?" (see noteRomans 10:14).
>
> But **knowledge** about the facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for us is not enough, for people can know facts but rebel against them or dislike them. For example, Paul tells us that many people know God's laws but dislike them:
>
> "Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them" (see note Romans 1:32).
>
> Even the demons know who God is and know the facts about Jesus' life and saving works, for James says, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder" (James 2:19). But that **knowledge** certainly does not mean that the demons are saved. (Grudem, W: Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. IVP; Zondervan, 1994) (Bolding added)

James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (NASB: Lockman)

> **Greek**: theleis (2SPAI) de gnonai, (AAN) o anthrope kene, hoti e pistis choris ton ergon arge estin? (3SPAI)
>
> **Amplified**: Are you willing to be shown [proof], you foolish (unproductive, spiritually deficient) fellow, that faith apart from [good] works is inactive and ineffective and worthless? (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

Hiebert: You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

KJV: But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

NLT: Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless? (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: For, my dear short-sighted man, can't you see far enough to realise that faith without the right actions is dead and useless? (Phillips: Touchstone)

Rotherham: But art thou willing to learn, O empty man! That faith apart from works is idle?

Wuest: But, do you desire to come to know, O senseless man! that the aforementioned faith apart from works is unproductive?

Young's Literal: And dost thou wish to know, O vain man, that the faith apart from the works is dead?

BUT ARE YOU WILLING TO RECOGNIZE YOU FOOLISH FELLOW: theleis (2SPAI) de gnonai, (AAN) o anthrope kene

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- James 1:26; Job 11:11,12; Ps 94:8, 9, 10, 11; Proverbs 12:11; Jeremiah 2:5; Romans 1:21; 1Corinthians 15:35,36; Galatians 6:3; Colossians 2:8; 1Timothy 1:6; Titus 1:10
- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
- James 2:14-26 Dead Faith, Part 2 - John MacArthur
- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur

But (**de**) emphasizes usually emphasizes a contrast, which it may in this context, but it could as well also convey a continuative force (ie, more needs to be said).

Willing (2309) (**thelo**) refers to a desire that comes from one's emotions (Boulomai = desire which comes from one's reason). It represents an active decision of the will, thus implying volition and purpose.

Recognize (1097) (**ginosko**) has the basic meaning of taking in knowledge in regard to something or someone, knowledge that goes beyond the merely factual. **Ginosko** is in the aorist tense which calls for a definite act of acknowledgment by the objector.

Foolish (2756) (**kenos**) means empty or without content and literally refers to containers as empty but figuratively to things that lack effectiveness and here in James refers to a person who is vain (empty) and opposed to the truth that true saving faith produces works of righteousness.

Trench remarks that, whenever this adjective is used of persons it implies

> not merely an absence and emptiness of good, but, since the moral nature of man endures no vacuum, the presence of evil.

You foolish fellow- More literally "O foolish, vain, senseless man!" . The Greek is sparing in its use of "O" a marker of personal address (cp use in Romans 2:3-note). James now makes an appeal to the man who would object to the vital relationship between **faith** and **works**. He is calling upon those who object to concede that their position on faith and works is in error (useless).

THAT FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS USELESS: hoti e pistis choris ton ergon arge estin? (3SPAI)

- James 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries (includes multiple journal articles on faith)
- James 2:14-19 Saving Faith: Genuine or False? - Steven Cole
- James 2:14-26 Dead Faith, Part 2 - John MacArthur
- James 2:14-20: Dead Faith - John MacArthur

Without (5565) (**choris**) is used both as an adverb signifying separately or by itself (John 20:7). More often however**choris** is used as a preposition meaning apart from (eg, "**apart from** Him nothing came into being" John 1:3), without (eg, "**without sin**" He 4:15-note) or separate from (eg, "**separate from** Christ", Ep 2:12:12-note).

Webster says that **without** (as a preposition) is used as a function word to indicate the absence or lack of something or someone.

USELESS WORKS

Works (**ergon**) - It should be noted that the Bible mentions a number of different kinds of **works** including the following…

> **Galatians 2:16** nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by **the works of the Law**; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. (**Comment**: These **works** are those deeds sinners do in order to try to attain righteousness before a holy God but sees them only as "filthy rags"!)
>
> **Galatians 5:19** (note) Now the **deeds** (ergon - works) **of the flesh** (**flesh**) are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice (= as their lifestyle; having never had a moment of repentance; obviously saved persons can still commit these sins but not as their habitual practice) such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (**Comment**: These works are the product of the fallen flesh, the old sin nature, and one who habitually practices them shows by his or her works that they possess no alive, dynamic faith and thus are unregenerate and still dead in their trespasses and sins.)
>
> **Colossians 1:21** (note) And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in **evil** (poneros = evil in active opposition to good; Satan is called the "poneros" one.) **deeds**,
>
> **Hebrews 9:14** (note) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from **dead works** to serve the living God? (**Comment**: All works initiated by our old nature, no matter how well intentioned, no matter how much we or others may think they please God and no matter how philanthropic or merciful appearing they might appear -- all of these efforts are absolutely dead in the eyes of God and will be forever burned up.)

Useless - Note that the Textus Receptus (source of KJV) uses **nekros** translated **dead**. **Argos** has better manuscript support. The point is the same in either case.

Useless (692) (**argos** from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means without work, without labor, doing nothing, as one not working the ground and so living without labor. **Argos** was used to describe money that was yielding no interest or of a field lying fallow. As employed in the New Testament, argos always describes something inoperative or unserviceable. **Argos** describes that which is not working, worthless, ineffective, barren, yielding no return or not accomplishing anything. **Argos** conveys the sense of fruitlessness or lack of productivity as illustrated by a fruit tree that fails to bear fruit. **Jesus** discussed the fiery fate of such useless fruit trees declaring that…

> Every tree that does not bear **good fruit** is cut down and thrown into the fire. (see note Matthew 7:19)

James is saying that the faith without works is **non-working** regarding salvation (it does not produce salvation). If there is no good fruit in the life of the person who professes to believe in Christ, then the absence of good fruit is evidence that the presumed faith is useless faith, because it gives no evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who is the sole Source of good fruit (good works, good deeds).

Luke gives us an illustration of useless faith in Acts 8 in the person of Simon the Sorcerer…

> 9 Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;
>
> 10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."
>
> 11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.
>
> 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.
>
> 13 And even **Simon himself believed**; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.
>
> 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

15 who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (**Comment**: McGee observes that "Simon doesn't ask to be saved. He doesn't ask for prayer for his salvation. He just asks that none of those terrible things happen to him. We do not know if this man ever came to Christ.")

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

Peter's assessment of Simon in Acts 8:21, 22, 23 clearly indicates that **Simon's belief** was a **non-working, useless faith**.

Dr Charles Ryrie in his comments on Acts 8 agrees noting that…

> Peter's denunciation (Acts 8:20-23) indicates that Simon's faith was not unto salvation (James 2:14-20). (The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers)

Stanley D. Toussaint commenting on Acts 8 writes that…

> The language of this verse (Acts 8:21)… implies Simon was not a Christian. For similar terminology see Deut. 12:12; 14:27. Just as the Levites had no inheritance in the Promised Land, so also Simon had no portion in the matter of salvation. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor)

KJV Bible Commentary agrees writing that…

> In further proof of the spurious character of Simon's so-called conversion, one can see his materialistic view of God. He attempted to buy that which is God's prerogative alone to give.

Henry Morris adds that…

> Simon's "belief" was evidently only a belief in the reality of the signs and wonders performed by Philip (note Christ's rebuke of this kind of belief in John 4:48; also compare John 2:23, 24, 25). These wonders were greater than those Simon was able to perform with his sorceries (Greek mageia, from which we get our word "magic"), and he was envious. In the early Christian literature, he was called Simon Magus, and was said to be a prominent enemy of the true faith. (Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing)

Criswell commenting on Simon's belief writes that…

> Simon the sorcerer was inwardly miserable and spiritually enslaved to sin. This statement suggests that Simon the sorcerer had not been saved. It also illustrates that baptism does not save (Acts 8:13). Simon's belief was merely intellectual assent to the claims of Christ rather than a profound experience of faith in the Person and work of the risen Lord. (Criswell, W A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson)

Guzik has a good summary of Simon's **belief** noting that…

> Simon gave every outward evidence to being saved. He expressed a belief in the preaching of Philip and was baptized (Acts 8:13). We can be sure that Philip would not have baptized Simon if he didn't think he really wanted to follow Jesus. Simon also continued with Philip (Acts 8:13) and attended meetings of the church (Acts 8:18). But when Peter says, You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:21), it is a pretty clear indication that Simon's belief was superficial and his baptism just a ceremony. (Commentary on Acts)

THE MAIN THEME SUMMARIZED

James 2:20 repeats the main theme that **faith without works**…

1. … Does not 'save' (James 2:14)
2. … Does not 'profit' (James 2:16)
3. … Is 'dead' (James 2:17)
4. … Is useless (James 2:20)

Puritan **Thomas Manton** has a pithy, piercing description of **useless faith** noting that such a faith is…

> a simple and naked assent to such things as are propounded in the Word of God, and makes men more knowing but not better, not more holy or heavenly. They that have it may believe the promises, the doctrines, the precepts as well as the histories… but yet, lively saving faith it is not, for he who has that finds his heart engaged to Christ and does so believe the promises of the gospel concerning pardon of sin and life eternal that he sees after them as his happiness. And does so believe the mysteries of our redemption by Christ as that all his hope and peace and confidence is drawn from there and does so believe the threatenings, whether of temporal plagues or eternal damnation as that in comparison of them all the frightful things of the world are as nothing.
>
> [A deeper but still deceptive faith] is distinguished from temporary faith, which is an assent to scriptural or gospel truth, accompanied with a slight and insufficient touch upon the heart, called "a taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," (see notes Hebrews 6:4; 6:5; 6:6). By this kind of faith, the mind is not only enlightened, but the heart affected with some joy, and the life in some measure reformed, at least, from grosser sins, called, "[escaping] the pollutions of the world," (see note 2 Peter 2:20); but the impression is not deep enough, nor is the joy and delight rooted enough to encounter all temptations to the contrary.
>
> Therefore this sense of religion may be choked, or worn off, either by the cares of this world, or by voluptuous living, or by great and bitter persecutions and troubles for righteousness' sake.
>
> It is a common deceit: many are persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the only Son of God, and so are moved to embrace His person, and in some measure to obey His precepts, and to depend upon His promises, and fear His threatenings, and so by consequence to have their hearts loosened from the world in part, and seem to prefer Christ and their duty to Him above worldly things, as long as no temptations do assault their resolutions, or sensual objects stand not up in any considerable strength to entice them; but at length, when they find His laws so strict and spiritual, and contrary either to the bent of their affections or worldly interests, they fall off, and lose all their taste and relish of the hopes of the gospel, and so declare plainly that they were not rooted and grounded in the faith and hope thereof. (Quoted by John MacArthur in his sermon on Dead Faith) (Old English words changed to modern English)

A Faith That Works - No one can be saved by doing good works. On the other hand, the apostle James taught that faith without works is useless (James 2:20). To illustrate, he pointed out that faith alone won't feed a hungry person. Only faith that takes action will (James 2:15, 16).

How timely this message is! Right now much of our world is suffering a bellyache from not enough food, while countless others have a bellyache from too much.

Tragically, we who have enough to eat often "bellyache" about our food being too done, too tough, too sweet, too cold, or too bland. Then we complain about the dirty dishes that our food creates. A poem from one of my cookbooks turns such ingratitude on its head. Pauline Davis wrote:

Thank God for dirty dishes, they have a story to tell.
While others may be hungry, we are eating very well.
With home, health, and happiness, I shouldn't want to fuss.
By this great stack of evidence, God's been very good to us!

Oh, that we might be grateful, for gratitude is vital to a working faith. People without gratitude seldom care about having a working faith. But believers who are deeply thankful for God's blessings long to share those blessings with others.

Make sure your faith is useful, not useless. And don't neglect the needy, both spiritually and physically, around the world--and around

the corner! — Joanie Yoder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Faith always has work to do.