

TRUE FAITH IS SEEN IN ITS IMPARTIALITY TO ALL MEN

James' rebuke of partiality

2:1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

(See notes in Hiebert pp. 146-147 for reasons why James 2:1 should not be taken as a question, as some translators have it)

Verse 1 is the theme of the next product of true faith and is an example of "pure and undefiled" religion (1:27). Just as pure religion will extend itself toward the helpless (e.g. widows and orphans), it will not judge others.

James begins by calling his readers "brothers," reminding them of the union they share in Christ and that they are all members of the same spiritual family.

"Favoritism" when used in the NT always refers to a biased judgment based on external circumstances such as race, social position, wealth, etc. It takes no consideration of the person's inward qualities. In verse 9 James uses the verbal form of the same word and calls the attitude sin. Favoritism is not a characteristic found in God (Ro. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25).

Partiality is inconsistent with the believer's supreme allegiance to the Lord. To hold faith in Christ is to believe in Him as He is revealed in scriptures and the work He has done as described in the gospel. It is a faith that centers of Christ (objective genitive).

From the wording that James uses it appears that he is calling Jesus "the Glory" (Hiebert, 148-149; i.e. it is appositional to Christ - Doerksen, 52), the divine light that radiates from God and reveals His presence (TDNT, II, 237). In the OT this glory is called the Shekinah and was a cloud that filled the tabernacle and later the temple (Exo. 13:21-22; 40:34; Num. 14:10; I Ki. 8:11; II Chron. 7:2). This glory was predicted as being present in Messiah (Isa. 40:5) and though it was veiled for the most part (Jn. 17:1-5) would on occasion stream forth from Jesus (Tit. 2:13; Jn. 1:14). The manifested glory

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of Christ was as it were the glory of the Father shared with His only Son. At times it referred to His preincarnate glory (Jn. 17:5, 22, 24; Matt. 17:2), and at times it was displayed in signs and events (as with the water turning to wine [2:1-11], raising Lazarus from the dead [11:4, 40], cleansing the temple [2:23], and His death and exhalation [7:39; 12:16, 23; 13:31-32]). By whatever means God's glory was revealed, those who looked patiently at Christ could see tokens of Divine revelation made through Him which demanded recognition of the Father who sent Him (Jn. 14:7-11).

If Christ, the Glory, humbled Himself to dwell among sinful, desperate humanity, what Christian has the right to think of others in terms of inferior social status?

2:2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

James envisions a rich and a poor man arriving at a worship service. "Your assembly" is literally "your synagogue" which would be an appropriate word to use for James' Jewish readership. Early Christian literature shows that the term was at times used of Christian assemblies (Hiebert, 151).

The rich and poor were identified by their appearance. The rich man had a "gold ring." Literally, he was "gold-fingered" implying that he had more than one ring on. In the early church's culture rings were a sign of luxury. "Clement of Alexandria (c. 155- c. 220) in his *Paidagogos* felt it necessary to urge Christians to wear only one ring, and that because it was needed for purposes of sealing. The Apostolic Constitutions (c. 381) warned Christians against fine clothing and rings, since these were signs of lasciviousness" (Hiebert, 151-152). The rich also had fine clothing. "Fine" literally meant "bright" or "shining" (Acts 10:30). Whether it describes a garment that was a pure white (Rev. 15:6), embroidered, or one with jewels, this individual's wealth was immediately apparent. On the other hand, the poor man had no rings and was wearing filthy clothing.

2:3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

Verse 3 reveals the reaction of the church to both individuals. The rich man is looked upon with favor. The church sees the externals and reacts with enthusiasm. When he walks in the door, someone in the group (a leader or deacon perhaps) offers the man a good location to sit, a place that is proper for his status.

The poor man is also addressed, but his options are either to stand or "sit at my footstool." The footstool was probably not literal but simply expressed the condescending attitude the church had for the poor man. To be at one's footstool was to be in a lowly position. It probably meant something like "why don't you stand over there or sit on the floor."

2:4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

The negative "have you not" implies that they readers will have to admit that they have indeed treated people partially. In making such distinctions they have become judges, and judges with evil motives at that, for their judgment was based only on the person's outward appearance.

The consequences of partiality

The favoritism of the rich involves a double inconsistency. First, it is inconsistent with God's view of the poor (5b-6a). Second, it is inconsistent with the hostile actions of the rich (6b-7).

Partiality opposes God's view of the poor

2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

In the OT the poor are almost equivalent to the pious since they are without any resources and must rely on God for all that they have (Ps. 40:17; 69:32-33; & Prov. 16:19; Isa. 66:2). Those who are physically poor are in a better position to be saved for they tend to be more desirous of spiritual riches (cf. Isa. 61:1-2, Lk. 4:18; 7:22 for Messiah's ministry to the poor). The

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rich , on the other hand, often love their riches more than God and are therefore in greater spiritual peril (Matt. 6:24; 19:23-24; I Tim. 6:9-10). However, poverty in itself is not meritorious, for James says that "God chose" the poor (cf. I Cor. 1:26-29), they didn't choose Him. The Bible is clear that if anyone comes to God it is because God prompted him to do so. The initiative begins with Him (Jn. 6:44; Ro. 8:29ff; Eph. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:1-2).

Unlike the rich who enjoy worldly pleasures, the poor enjoy their wealth in the realm faith; their riches are in the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:20; Lk. 12:21, 32-33) and the blessings of salvation.

The primary meaning of "kingdom" in the OT is a reign, not a territory. In that sense the subjects of the King enjoy His blessings wherever they are. However, the Kingdom of God is normally conceived of as beginning at Christ's return to earth. This is when the fullness of God's promises to His people will be felt.

Though God chose the poor, made them heirs of the kingdom, and calls them "those who love Him," some believers treat them with contempt. As children of God they should have acted like God (Ro. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25), but instead they were no different than the world.

Partiality is inconsistent with the hostile actions of the rich

2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

James now calls into question their favoritism for the rich were often those most antagonistic to the faith.

The rich oppress others. "Oppress" pictures a sovereign who uses his wealth and power to inflict his will upon others. In Acts 10:38, the only other place the word occurs in the NT, it refers to Satan's evil rule over his victims. In the OT it often speaks of the social and economic exploitation of the needy by the rich (Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:29; Amos 4:1; Zech. 7:10 also see Ja. 5:4, 6 for further illustration of this).

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The hostility of the rich is also manifested by dragging people into court. To "drag" someone somewhere indicates that the action is forced and contrary to the will of the person being oppressed. This is not necessarily religious persecution but the use of legalities that take advantage of the poor and deprive them of their rights (see Ja. 5:1-6).

2:7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

Furthermore, the rich incite religious persecution and blaspheme the honorable name, the name of Christ (II Jn. 7; Phil. 2:9; I Pet. 4:4), the Lord to whom all believers belong. Blasphemy is extreme slander and is the same as speaking against God. The church by its preferences has sided with the enemies of God.

Partiality opposes God's law

Partiality is also condemned because it is disobedience to Gods' royal law. Violation of such is a serious offense.

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.

James is willing to admit that some are practicing what the law demands - namely, they are loving others as they would love themselves. The first class condition in Greek indicates that the "if" clause is actually being fulfilled. That is, "If you are fulfilling the law, and it appears you are, then you are doing well."

The law is called "royal." A number of suggestions have been given as to why. The best two are probably that James either sees the law as (1) that which stands above everything else, it is superior to all other laws or (2) it's origin is from their King (Jn. 13:34; I Jn. 3:10-11; 4:7-8) and the precept that governs life in the kingdom. It is debated whether he is speaking of the whole revelation of God (see discussion on 1:25), or the law of love which he quotes.

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"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," is from Leviticus 19:18 where "neighbor" is limited to the people of God ("You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against *the sons of your people*, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.") Jesus, however, uses it in a broader sense to include anyone "whom our circumstances allow us to benefit" (Lk. 10:30-37 - Hiebert, 164) and expected the level of our love to reach His own (Jn. 15:12; Matt. 7:12) which included even loving our enemies (Matt. 5:44). "You" is singular showing that loving others is an individual responsibility. Those that live consistently according to the Scripture are doing well.

The contrast to those who do not keep the law is next given.

2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

The same first class condition in Greek appears again (see verse 8). The violation of the law of love is considered factual. "If you show partiality, and you do. . ."

The word "by" in Greek is used of personal agency. That is, it is used of people, not things. Here the law is personified as a person who sees the people's evil acts and testifies against their sin. Their lack of love makes them transgressors, or law-breakers.

2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

"For" explains the seriousness of transgressing the law. James is presenting the situation as a mental concept rather than an historical reality or possibility (Hiebert, 166). No one only stumbles in only one point of the law but is able to keep the rest, however, even if someone could he would be guilty of the entire law.

Being a transgressor of the law (2:9) means that one steps over the boundary that God has set. This person oversteps the line in only one point. Of the 613 commandments in the OT to only stumble once would be a considerable accomplishment. But his single failure still makes him a

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lawbreaker. James is not saying that by breaking one commandment we have broken all the rest as well, rather he is saying that we are guilty of not keeping all that the law demands. The law is viewed as a single unit consisting of various commands. To break one is to damage the unit. Every violation is deserving of judgment. This is demonstrated in the verse that follows.

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.

"For" introduces James explanation of what he means by "whoever keeps the whole law is guilty of all.". Though adultery and murder form part of the law, James is primarily concerned about their common origin. Both "equally express the will of the one Lawgiver" (Hiebert 168). James' selection of murder and adultery as comparisons reveal the darkness of the sin of partiality - all three display a failure in "loving your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Matt. 5:21 ff. for Jesus' deeper understanding of these things). It would be foolish to assume that if we kept one of these commands we are not accountable to keep the other. To break one is to become a transgressor of the law.

[The appeal to live according to the law of liberty.](#)

2:12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

James concludes this section by appealing to the believer to conform his life to the law of liberty.

As we have said earlier, the law of liberty is not the Mosaic Law but is all revealed truth including the gospel (see discussion on 1:25). Salvation in Christ involves both the initial transforming work of the grace in our lives as well as the continuing grace that transforms us to live a life that pleases God (cf. Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:10; Gal. 5:13 ff.; I Pet. 2:16; and II Pet. 2:18-2 of unbelievers who professed Christ but denied Him by their actions).

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To be judged by the law of liberty, then, is to be judged by our response to the complete revelation of God. If we have responded to God's revealed will in faith, it will show in our deeds and speech.

2:13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

The reason we should watch our conduct is due to the nature of judgment. This unveils the seriousness of partiality. Judgment will be merciless to those who are unmerciful.

James is not saying that by showing mercy to others we will receive mercy. God's mercy is a gift. It cannot be earned, nor is it deserved. The possibility of earning mercy would contradict the whole tenor of the gospel. Rather, in following James' argument, a merciless attitude toward others is evidence that our character has not been changed by God. The merciless person shows that he has never comprehended the mercy of God, in this case the mercy of God in the gospel. The person who has mercy is confident that he is safe in Christ, for mercy is a fruit of salvation. This person can face judgment with absolute confidence that he will triumph.

TRUE FAITH IS SEEN IN GOOD WORKS

2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

James 2:14-26 continues the single theme of how faith is seen.

Verse 14 introduces the third product of genuine faith - good works.

Faith and works are not totally distinct concepts but are two elements that define the nature of the salvation that we receive by grace. Works never merit salvation or gain God's blessing, but salvation is not stagnant either. Just as God intervened in our lives and changed our thinking so that faith was born, so He continues to intervene producing a change in character that manifests itself in behavior.

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Some have claimed that the teaching of James and Paul are in conflict, but the truth is that they are fighting different enemies of the gospel. Paul is combating Jewish legalism that insisted that works were the means of justification. James is opposing those who believe that faith is nothing more than intellectual ascent to certain truths and not a life transforming process. Though the word "works" is used by both writers, Paul is speaking of human effort believed to earn salvation, James is speaking of fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit and flows from a transformed life.

The character of false faith

In 2:14 James asks two rhetorical questions: ⁽¹⁾ "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? ⁽²⁾ Can that faith save him?" His purpose is to have his readers contemplate the value of faith that has no outward signs of life.

The person being questioned is the one who repeatedly asserts that he has faith ("Says" is a present tense verb in Greek indicates repeated action). He acknowledges Christ as Savior and professes belief in the basic Christian doctrines. But since the individual has no outward expression of faith the reality of his profession must rest solely on what he says.

However positive the profession is, it is challenged by the fact that the person has no works. James logic is simple; anyone who has a heart changed by God would have some sort of corresponding change in daily conduct. If he does not, what benefit does his professed faith have? Can that faith save him?

The implication of the Greek is that the answer must be "none." James is not saying that faith alone is unable to save, but that faith that does not result in behavioral change does not save (in Greek the article before "faith" shows that James is referring to a specific faith - the kind of faith that has no works- not to faith in general). Faith that comes from God also generates fruit.

A hypothetical situation is next offered.

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2:15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

2:16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

Suppose there is a Christian brother or sister who has two needs; ⁽¹⁾ they are without clothing and ⁽²⁾ they need daily food. To be without clothing is literally to be naked, but figuratively speaks of someone who is shabbily dressed (Job. 22:6; 31:19; Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:36). In other words, the person was in rags. Furthermore, they lacked food. This person in need was not like many of the poor in our society who choose homelessness over work and find their necessities in their daily travels. The poor in James' day were often destitute and without resources to survive.

When the person of professed faith meets them, their only response is to tell them "Go in peace, be warmed and filled." "Go in peace" was a kind, friendly farewell among Jews. "Be warmed and filled" is probably in the passive voice, meaning something like, "I hope somebody will feed you and give you sufficient clothing." Perhaps he was implying something like "Trust God, He will meet your needs" (a misapplied Matthew 6:25-30).

James implies that the person speaking had the resources to help (for he could hardly be criticized if he was in the same condition as the one in need), but he did not give what was necessary. His faith produced no desire to act. This man is a Christian in name only - he sees the need, he has the power to help, but he doesn't have the compassion to get personally involved. James asks once more, "What does that profit?" His faith produced no benefit in either the speaker (for it was powerless to cause him to act like Christ) or the person in need. It was all empty talk - just like his original profession of faith was.

The application to faith is next applied.

2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

James is not depreciating faith, nor is he saying that biblical faith needs works added to complete it. Rather he assumes that works are

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present in faith that is genuine. Where the produce of faith is lacking, faith is dead. It is lifeless. "Eternal life cannot spring from a dead faith" (Hiebert, 181) (see also I John 3:17-18).

"Faith that is a profession can furnish no indication that it exists. It is a mere abstraction, a creed with no transforming power, a faith in name only. In fact, James said it is "dead." There is no activity, no sign of life, no functioning beyond mere assertion." (Kent, 93)

"Being by itself" is debated as to meaning. The word "being" is not present in the original Greek. It could mean that such faith is dead "in itself," that is, it is outwardly unproductive and inwardly dead. Or, a literal translation is also possible: it is dead "according to itself" (καθ' ἑαυτήν). The preposition "according to" was used to measure a norm or a standard. If this is what James intended then he would be saying something like, faith that has no works is dead when measured by its own barrenness. When profession of faith produces nothing, it proves itself to be lifeless.

Lifeless faith may be orthodox

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."

Verse 18 introduces James' assumption that someone will object to what he has just said. The objector appears to be saying that he has works while James has faith. The problem is that James is arguing the opposite. As a result, a number of suggestions have been made. Some say this is a supporter of James' argument not an objector; however, the verse begins with a strong adversative "but" (Ἄλλ') showing that this view is very unlikely. Other views are also possible. Whatever James may be saying the conclusion is clear: faith cannot be seen without works. If someone claims to have faith, that faith can be seen by what they do.

2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

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The objector is orthodox in his belief, namely, he believes that there is but One God (the *Shema* - Deut. 6:4-5 - which speaks of the unity of God was quoted by a pious Jew every night). James approves of his profession ("you do well"). But profession alone is not the same as faith, for demons, who oppose God also know full well that He is One. Knowledge about God does not mean that demons are saved. The demons' response to their knowledge is fear. They shudder (bristle in fear) at the thought of God and the judgment that awaits them. Though demons are not skeptics, agnostics, or atheists, their orthodoxy is of no value to them apart from faith.

2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

Verse 20 provides a transition between what has preceded and what follows. Those who do not believe that faith shows itself in works are stubbornly fixed in their belief. They do not want to recognize (they are unwilling - they have no will to understand) what James is saying though he will demonstrate his point in two OT examples (vv. 21-25). Their faith is useless, barren, unproductive. They were fools.

Two OT examples show that works are present in living faith.

2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

Abraham's example would be weighty to James' Jewish readers for he was the founder of the nation and revered as a man who followed God. James assumes that his opponents would agree that Abraham was justified by works when he offered up Isaac.

"Justified" has two basic meanings: (1) "to vindicate" or "show" that a certain course is wise or just (Isa. 42:21; 43:9; Matt. 11:29; Lk. 7:25, 35; Ro. 3:4; I Tim. 3:16); and (2) "to acquit" or "to declare righteous" (Isa. 5:23; 53:11; Matt. 12:37; Ro. 3:24; 5:1, etc.). "The latter, commonly called the forensic usage, indicates the divine approval of the one thus declared righteous on the basis of Christ's atonement (Ro. 3:21-26)" (Hiebert, 191). Either makes sense. Abraham's action vindicated what God had said about him earlier (Gen. 15:6). Or, Abraham was declared righteous by his act of

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faith. Faith and works produced by faith are inseparable, for the works that come from faith are simply saving faith in action. This second sense, the forensic sense, also appears in verses 23-24 and is the more likely the intended meaning here.

Some see a contradiction between James 2:21 and Paul's statement in Romans 4:2-3: "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." However, the contradiction is only verbal, not real. Paul relates Abraham's faith to Genesis 15:6 when he believed the promise of God toward him in spite of humanly impossible odds. It was here that Abraham was justified by faith and his relationship with God began. James is referring to Genesis 22:1-18. Obviously, the events in Genesis 22 occurred well after (30-40 years after) Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness. But Abraham's action proves James' point, namely, Abraham had works of faith (Gen. 22) because he was justified by faith (Gen. 15). Both Abraham's initial trust in God (Gen 15) and later his offering of Isaac (Gen. 22) are a response of Abraham's living faith.

Verses 22 and 23 support this interpretation.

2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

There are three results of working faith:

(1) Faith is perfected by works.

The fact that faith is perfected by works implies that faith came first and that it was matured by works. Faith was not a mental ascent or abstraction to Abraham; his faith existed in his works (this is the same idea as Gal. 5:6 "faith working through love"). In this case Abraham's "work" was his willingness to sacrifice his own son.

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As a result of works faith was perfected. "Was perfected" means "to be brought to its intended goal" (Doerksen, 71). "Abraham's works supported his faith and took it to the proper goal" (Hiebert, 193). The passive voice (was working) indicates that God is the One who does the perfecting, and the imperfect tense shows that the union between faith and works was active throughout Abraham's life (Hiebert, 194). By works God brought the initial seed of faith to the point where Abraham was willing to give every area of his life to God. "Faith is not matured until it flowers into appropriate works" (Kent, 104). Paul says that the believer is created for good works (Eph. 2:10) but without a mature faith the deeds he is created for will never be performed.

Once again, it should be clarified that James is not saying that faith and works are two separate entities that work together resulting in justification before God. Rather, we are justified by faith whether our faith is in its most infantile stages or in full maturity. But if we possess justifying faith, God will exercise that faith to cause it to be strengthened, grow, and produce the works we were made for.

(2) Scripture was fulfilled.

Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Abraham's "work" in Genesis 22 does not contradict this but "demonstrated what was latent in that earlier justification" (Hiebert, 195). Abraham's justification by faith was "fulfilled" when he offered up Isaac on the altar. That is, God had accepted Abraham's faith years before as the Scripture says, but through this test the vitality of Abraham's faith became evident. Abraham's response to God's command to offer up his son made it clear that Abraham had the kind of faith that results in God declaring him righteous (compare James 1:12. p. 16).

(3) Abraham was called a friend of God.

The fact that Abraham was called the friend of God doesn't appear in either of the passages that James quoted, nor does the OT tie it to either of the events. However, he was called this elsewhere (II Chron. 20:7; Isa.

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41:8). Faith brings the believer into a new relationship with God. He becomes God's friend (cf. Jn. 15:14-15).

2:24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

Verse 24 states the conclusion from the previous discussion.

Many struggle with this verse since it seems to imply that we are not saved by grace through faith as Paul so clearly teaches.

James has been insisting that faith and works are inseparable. His discussion from chapter 1 has been a discussion about faith. He has been defining faith in terms its outward action. The charge that James is teaching about salvation by works would never have occurred to him.

In the context, being justified "by faith alone" reflects the thoughts of those who believe that a dead, useless faith is sufficient in God's eyes to save. James says that such faith is not the kind of faith that God saw in Abraham. That faith will not result in justification.

The word "justify" (δικαίω; dikaiō) in Greek has a number of different meanings; the most significant is "to declare righteous." This is the sense in which Paul often uses it. We are declared righteous by faith, not by works (Gal. 2:16; Ro. 3:25, 26; 5:1). However, it can also mean "demonstrate or show to be righteous." For example, in Luke 16:15 Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." The Pharisees were attempting to show themselves as righteous before others through their behavior; Jesus said that the opposite was true: "God knows your hearts". In James 2:24 James is using the word "justified" in this sense. When James says "man is justified by works" he really means 'to show to be righteous' (not, 'to declare righteous'); he is speaking of demonstrating, not earning, salvation. Faith is seen by works. When God looked at Abraham, God saw the display of Abraham's faith through his works "when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar" (Ja. 2:21). So James can say that "Abraham our father [was] justified by works" (Ja. 2:21); Abraham's behavior "showed him to be righteous." (see

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Grudem, Systematic Theology, 731, 732 & 723, 724 for good discussion on this subject)

Robert Johnstone summarizes what is being said:

If someone were to ask, "Is it faith that justifies or works?' Paul replies, 'Faith alone justifies, without works.'" To him who, knowing and believing this, asks further, 'But does all faith justify?' James answers, 'Faith alone, without works, does not justify,' - for an inoperative faith is dead, powerless, unprofitable. Both statements, looked at in connection with the questions they are respectively meant to answer, are true, and both of vast importance. *Faith alone justifies, but not the faith that is alone."*

2:25 And 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?

Abraham provided the first example of living faith that expresses itself in action; Rahab the second.

Rahab is identified by her immoral past. She was a prostitute (Heb. 11:31; Josh. 2:1; 6:17, 22, 25). Rahab is at the opposite end of the spectrum of Abraham in almost every way but she was like Abraham in her faith. As a result, she is cited as a hero of the faith (Heb. 11:31) and is even part of the ancestral line of Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Abraham's faith was seen in his works. So was Rahab's. Her faith was seen in two ways: ⁽¹⁾ she received the messengers and ⁽²⁾ sent them out by another way. She was justified by her works, because like Abraham they were works of faith.

2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

In James' concluding statement faith is compared to the human body and works to the spirit. The greatest evidence that someone is alive is the

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presence of their spirit within them. A body that does not have the principle of life in it is dead. In the same way a sterile faith is like a corpse. It does not have the principle of life in it.