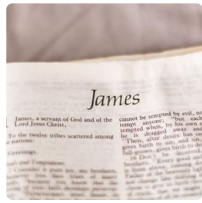


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James 2:8 - 3:12



James - Steve Gregg

James 2:8-3:12 is a call to reject favoritism and show mercy to others as a reflection of one's own receiving of mercy from God. The passage emphasizes that faith without works is dead, and that our words have immense power over the well-being of ourselves and others. The speaker, Steve Gregg, draws parallels to other passages in scripture and highlights the importance of treating others with the same honor and esteem we would give to God.

Transcript

Okay, we're in James 2, beginning at verse 8. We read a little bit beyond this in our last section, but I only commented up through verse 7. And in verses 1-7, James was rebuking the church for showing favoritism to the rich. He thought that was a bit strange that the church would do that. I mean, when you consider it, Jesus was never a rich man, and the apostles were not rich men.

And for the most part, James points out that the rich tended to be the ones who opposed the church, that opposed the gospel, and even brought them before the judgment seats of the courts and blasphemed God. Whereas God had chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, rich in another sense, a far more important sense, and to be heirs of the kingdom. Of course, he's alluding to the Sermon on the Mount there, where Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, Blessed are you four, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.

He says, has not God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? In saying he's chosen the poor to be rich in faith, he may even be thinking of the case, or cases like that, of the rich young ruler, who found difficulty in coming to faith because of his riches. And we said at the time that there's no guarantee that a rich man will be unspiritual, nor that a poor man will be spiritual. There are going to be poor people in hell, and there will be rich people in heaven.

I mean, people who are here, rich or poor, you can't determine a person's spirituality or their standing with God simply by their bank balance or their holdings. But, of course, true spirituality values something that the world does not. The things that are highly

esteemed among men are abomination to God, Jesus said in Luke chapter 16, I think it was.

And so, we need to be careful not to be caught up, as Jesus said in the parable of the sower, with the characteristic world and the deceitfulness of riches. Those things certainly do interfere, in most people's case, with the kind of faith that was known in the early church before they had the luxury of being rich. And he indicates that partiality toward the rich, or any kind of respect of persons on any other carnal basis, is to become a judge with wicked thoughts.

Now, people who show partiality to the rich very often have very obvious selfish motives, because to befriend the rich is to go some distance in assuring that you'll have rich people on your side when you may have a need or whatever. It says in Proverbs, a rich man has many friends, but they're not very true friends in many cases. They're people who like to be in a position of advantage and in favor with rich, in case they can get something of that from them.

But to show favor to the rich, or to any person on any basis other than their true righteousness and their spirituality and their standing with God, is to make judgments differently than God does. And he continues on this thought of partiality, and he calls it a sin. In verses 8 through 11, he says, if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbors as yourself, you do well.

But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he's guilty of all. For he who said, do not commit adultery, also said, do not murder.

Now, if you do not commit adultery, but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. Now, sin, as 1 John tells us, in 1 John chapter 3, I think it's verse 4 or verse 6, somewhere around there, John says sin is the transgression of the law. So James agrees with that definition.

He says in verse 9, to commit sin is being convicted of transgression of the law. And to break God's law is sin, and therefore is intolerable among Christians. Now, the law he has in mind, he identifies for us.

It's not the law of Moses. It's what he calls the royal law. In verse 8, the royal law, the word royal suggests it's associated with the king, or the kingdom.

It's the kingdom law. It's the law of our king. And of course, to the Christian Jew, as well as the Christian Gentile, the king and his law speaks of the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus is the king, and his law, as you recall, was that we must love one another. Now, Jesus quoted the Old Testament law on this, and so does James. The passage in Leviticus 19, 18, you shall love your neighbors yourself.

Jesus actually, somewhat later in the upper room, extended it a bit further, made the demands a little more stringent, it seems, when he said, A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Which, to my mind, goes even beyond just loving your neighbor as yourself. When John the Baptist said, if any of you have two coats, give one to him that has none.

That would be an example of the Old Testament form of loving your neighbor as yourself. You'd basically treat your neighbor as your equal. If you've got an unequal amount, and he's got none, you share with him, then you're both equal.

You love him equally with yourself. But Jesus said, we should learn to love one another as he has loved us. And there's a sense in which Jesus' behavior toward us was to put us before him.

That's not how we're to relate to him. Obviously, he must be above us in all our relating to him. But in terms of his relation to us, he made himself our servant.

Jesus said, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. And he gave his life, a ransom for many. And he said, that greater love is no man than this, but that he lay down his life for the brethren.

And when you lay down your life for somebody else, you're putting that person above yourself. You know, if you've got two coats and somebody has none, you can give him one of your coats and you're equal. But if you just have your one life, and he has his one life, and it's you or him, and you say, take me, I'll die for him.

You're not making anything equal. You're actually taking the loss yourself, so that he might not have to take a loss. You're putting the other above.

And that's the way that Jesus said we're to love one another. And John says that in 1 John also, by the way. He says that this is hereby perceived as the love of God, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

And he goes on and says, but he that has this world's good and sees his brethren have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in words, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. That's in 1 John chapter 3 and verses 16 through 18. That as Jesus laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Now John, when he talks about that in 1 John 3, gives this example. If you have this world's goods, and you see your brother in need and you don't help him, well, how can you claim to have the love of God in you? In other words, laying down your life for your brother doesn't always mean dying in his place. It can mean simply laying down your prerogatives and your rights for him.

You have a right, of course, to spend whatever money you've honestly gained, however you wish. Well, I mean, not necessarily for God, because God expects you to surrender all that when you become a Christian. But in terms of your stewardship, it is yours, not somebody else's.

If money honestly comes to your hands, you're God's steward of that money. And what you do with it is entirely your decision, under God, of course. It's not a poor man's decision.

He can't come and demand your money from you. But, if he needs something out of mercy, you can give him what he has no right to claim, and that is need, the things he needs. And that is part of how John illustrates laying down your life for your brother.

It's taking the rights that you possess and giving them to somebody else. And putting somebody else above yourself, even to the point of dying for them, of course. Now, that is the royal law.

James quotes it from the Old Testament, for some reason, instead of just quoting Jesus' own words. But then Jesus quoted this Old Testament law, too, and no doubt the point that James is just trying to make is the royal law, the law of the kingdom, is to love. Is to have a supreme love for Jesus and for the brethren.

And he says, showing partiality to the rich is a violation of that law, the law of love. It's interesting that he makes it just as much a violation of the law of love as adultery and murder, which he gives as other examples. Because he says, if you show partiality, you're a sinner, and you transgress God's law.

And lest you think that there's only a small matter, a small violation, realize that to keep the whole law, and yet violate it in one point, is simply to break the whole thing. Because it's not so much that the laws have weight in themselves. The reason for keeping the law of God is because it is the will of God.

And to violate his law is to set yourself against his will, to rebel against him as a person. And it's the lawgiver that you're rebelling against, not the law, when you violate the law of God. So it emphasizes, he who said, do not commit adultery, is the same one who said, do not kill.

It's the lawgiver that is the issue here. You violate one of his laws, and you violate them all because it's the lawgiver himself that you're up against here. And if you don't love your neighbors yourself, as for instance when you show partiality to the rich, and put the poor man in a lesser position, and give him lesser dignity in the church, you're obviously not loving that poor man in the sense that Jesus instructs you to, so you're violating the lawgiver just as much as if you broke the Ten Commandments.

Now, this is interesting in view of a debate I had on the radio recently with Harold,

because he indicated that sin should be defined simply as the violation of the Ten Commandments. The willful violation of the Ten Commandments. And he said in that sense, Christians don't sin.

They don't ever do that. That was his position. And it was very hard to get him to acknowledge that even for him to be angry and to speak unkindly to his wife, that that too was a sin.

He called that an error, not a sin. And so, it was very hard, but this would have been a very good scripture to bring up with him. Because he says, if you show partiality, certainly that's not an outright violation of any of the Ten Commandments.

Yet he says you commit sin, you are convicted of the law as a transgressor, and he compares it with committing adultery or murder, which are of the Ten Commandments. He basically says that any violation of the love commandment is as bad as any other violation of it is. Even those that are enumerated in the Ten Commandments.

So he says, whoever keeps the whole law, yet stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all. By the way, stumbles in one point suggests not necessarily an act of outright rebellion against God. I mean, in the sense that you don't sit down and say, I want to rebel against God.

That's just stumbling. A stumbling is usually something done somewhat by accident. Later on in James chapter 3, in verse 2, he says, we all stumble in many things.

So he acknowledges that this kind of sin occurs in the life of believers, many times. He says, we all stumble in many things. The person who violates one point of the law, even by stumbling into a violation, has broken it, and is therefore convicted by the law.

Now, is James saying, therefore, Christians don't sin, because we then be condemned, and we can't be condemned, therefore we must not sin. No, he tells us that we do stumble in James 3, 2. It's obvious that what he's saying is that insofar as we take Christian ethics and morality seriously at all, we have to be consistent in applying the royal law to all types of relationships and all types of behavior, not just to the blatant kinds of issues like marital faithfulness or respect for a person's life. Those too, of course, are a part of love.

To commit adultery or murder is a violation of the love commandment, but so is showing partiality to a rich man or a poor man. Though those issues are not emphasized to the same degree in the Old Testament as murder and adultery are, yet even the Old Testament makes it clear that it's wrong to show favoritism to the rich, or even to the poor for that matter. To show favoritism to one or the other on the basis of his financial status is a sin.

It's a violation even of the law of Moses, as you can see by looking at Exodus chapter 23,

which, of course, is one of those chapters that makes up what's called the Book of the Covenant, which was given, those three chapters, 21 through 23 in Exodus, are a segment that is called the Book of the Covenant. It was given apparently at the same time the Ten Commandments were given, but these chapters were not written on stone. It says in Exodus 23.3, you shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

And then in verse 6 of the same chapter, you shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. In other words, you should not show disfavor to the poor because he's poor and he can't bribe you. You should not favor the rich, but you shouldn't favor the poor man just because he's poor either.

In other words, you shouldn't show partiality toward a person based on your sympathy for him as a poor man or based on your hope for gain from a rich man. You should make your judgments righteously based on actual merit of their case, not on whether you think, well, I feel sorry for this guy because he's poor, so I'm going to twist justice in his favor. Or, I hope to gain something, a bribe or something from this rich man, so I'll twist justice in his favor against the poor.

Both are forbidden in the law. And although the situation James is describing is not a courtroom situation, as is the case in Exodus, but rather a church situation, yet he says there's a parallel here. We make judgments all the time, and we reflect those judgments on our behavior toward people.

And to show favor toward a rich man, or for that matter, to show favor to a poor man who is not more righteous. But just because he's rich or just because he's poor isn't to become judges with impure motives or with evil thoughts. That's what it says in verse 4. And it violates the law.

It violates the law of Moses, it violates the royal law of Scripture. The royal law of Jesus, which is also according to Scripture, per se, it says. Now, verse 12 and 13 say, So speak, and so do, as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment. Now, this is the second time he identifies the royal law as the law of liberty. He calls it the law of liberty.

We saw it also back in chapter 1, verse 25. He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it. There's no doubt that he has the same law in mind here as he had in verse 8, which he called the royal law, according to Scripture.

It's a law found in the Old Testament Scripture. It's also the law that Jesus reiterated as the chief law for Christians, for people in general. And it is a law of liberty.

Why is it a law of liberty? Because to keep that one law liberates you from any other obligations. It doesn't mean that there are no obligations associated with it, but you do

them naturally when you keep this one. Jesus, when he was asked what the great commandment was, said, And Jesus said, In other words, if you just do these two things, you don't have to worry about all the others, because you will be staying within the righteous requirements of the law by the very act of loving God with all your heart, and by loving your neighbor as yourself.

Paul makes this same point in Romans chapter 13, and states essentially the same thing Jesus did, only emphasizing the second of these great commandments, the one you should love your neighbor as yourself. Because he says in Romans 13, 8, For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, and you shall not covet. And if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this same.

Namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Now that statement, love is the fulfillment of the law, reminds us of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount about his role vis-a-vis the law.

In Matthew 5, 17, he said, don't think that I have come to abolish the law and the properties. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For I say unto you, that until heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle of the law will pass, until all be fulfilled.

And as we talked about this before, the laws that were somewhat ritual and ceremonial in nature, the ones that were symbolic and looked forward to the coming of Christ, he fulfilled them by fulfilling them. He fulfilled them by being the thing they anticipated, and then, you know, those laws are no longer needed, because what they looked forward to has come. The shadow now has given place to the substance.

But what about the moral issue kinds of laws? How did he fulfill those? By giving his spirit, so that it says in Romans 8, 4, that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. So as we walk in the spirit, the righteous requirements of the law, the moral issues of the law, are fulfilled in us. Why? Because the Holy Spirit that we're walking in produces the fruit of the spirit, which is love.

And love is the fulfillment of the law. So if you simply walk consistently in love toward your brother, you fulfill it. All the law is fulfilled, it says in this.

Love does no harm to a neighbor, Paul says, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. If you turn to Galatians 5, notice this, verse 13. For you, brethren, have been called to liberty.

James calls this the law of liberty. You can call to liberty, only do not use your liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is

fulfilled, there's that word again, the fulfillment of the law.

In one word, even this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. This one law gets a lot of press in the Bible, from Paul, from James, from Jesus. But if you bite and devour one another, beware, lest you be consumed by one another.

Now, here in Galatians 5, as well as Romans 13, Paul says, as Jesus did, that all the law is fulfilled in this one commandment. Which means, simply, that if you do this one commandment, all the others will pretty much take care of themselves. And yet, he speaks in verse 13, in the context of this, you have been called to liberty.

This command set you free. It sets you free, but not free from moral obligations, it makes you free to fulfill those obligations from your heart. Because the law that was imposed in the Old Testament was not written on the heart.

Therefore, it was imposed upon an obstinate and rebellious and fallen nature, which could not agree to it wholeheartedly, in the sense as to keep it. Now, he writes his law in our hearts. He makes us loving people.

By the work of the Spirit in your heart, you become a loving person. And, therefore, the keeping of the commandments, to not commit adultery or steal or kill or any of those things, that's not something that's hard to do. That's something you're now liberated to do.

You're at liberty, but not at liberty to sin. And not at liberty to use it as an opportunity for the flesh. But, through love, to serve one another.

That's the commandment. That's a real freedom that we're given. Instead of just being given a code of conduct to try to live up to, we're given a Spirit who produces a disposition in our hearts toward the right kind of conduct.

And, therefore, we're set free from that burden of having to keep a code that goes against our nature. We now have a new nature that agrees to this code, that wants to do the righteous thing. And, while there is, as Paul points out, both in Galatians and in Romans, there is a struggle between this nature, this loving nature of the Spirit, between that and the law that works in our members.

Nonetheless, the Spirit dominates in the life of a Christian. And, therefore, we do keep or fulfill the righteous requirements of the law, as he said in Romans chapter 4. Now, he calls this the law of liberty, because we're liberated from the code, the external code, by having the work of this inward law work in our inner man. He says in verse 13, James 2, 13, For judgments shall be without mercy for the one who has shown no mercy.

Here he's alluding to the Sermon on the Mount again. I've counted 20 times in the book of James that he alludes to or quotes from the Sermon on the Mount. This is another one.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Matthew 5, 7, Blessed are the merciful, for they, and presumably only they, shall obtain mercy. I say presumably only they, because the beatitude would be empty of meaning, if others besides were going to obtain mercy. He indicates that those who show mercy are the ones who can count on being shown mercy too.

He emphasizes that later in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 6, after he gives the model prayer. He says, For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. And if you don't forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father won't forgive you your trespasses.

That's in Matthew 6, 14-15. Again, the same thought. You show mercy to others, God will show mercy to you.

Now that doesn't mean that the receiving of mercy from God is meritoriously earned by you showing mercy. There might be some fairly merciful non-Christians out there who will not receive mercy from God because they have rejected the gospel. But it does suggest that the Christian who is the recipient of God's mercy needs to not only be a recipient, but a channel of God's mercy.

That not only do we receive grace, but we are full of grace and we act graciously toward others. And Jesus told at least one very scary parable about that in Matthew 18, about the king who paid a great debt to a servant. Because he begged him for forgiveness, and he forgave and freed him.

That same servant later went out and found a servant who owed him some small pittance and would not forgive him, although he begged for mercy too. When the king heard about the unforgiving attitude of this forgiven servant, he called him back on the carpet and said, You're a wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt.

You should have forgiven your fellow servant his debt. And he gave him over to the tormentors. He says that he might pay everything that's owed.

In other words, the mercy was withdrawn. Which is, I mean, the parable means anything. It must mean this.

That once we've received forgiveness from God, if we cop an unmerciful attitude toward others, and refuse to become the channel for grace and mercy that God intends for us to be, we receive it. We're supposed to give it out. Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you.

You received the love from him and you love one another. It just kind of goes through you. He loves you in the back door and you love others out the front door.

He gives you mercy in the back door and you show mercy to others out the front. It's just

a function of love. It's just a function of the royal law that you show mercy to others.

You become a violator of the law habitually and, you know, there are penalties. And the person will have judgment without mercy who has been himself unmerciful in his conduct toward others. That's what James says, as Jesus made it very clear.

If that's so also. For judgment is without mercy. To him who has shown no mercy.

And mercy triumphs over judgment. Now, mercy triumphs over judgment could simply mean that God's mercy toward us is greater than his judgment toward us. That if the two, mercy and judgment are definitely both aspects of God's character.

And they are both supposed to be aspects of our character. Jesus said that the Pharisees and scribes had neglected the weightier matters of the law. Justice and mercy.

And faithfulness. But justice and mercy. Leading concerns with God.

Micah 6, 8 says he showed the old man what is good and what the Lord required of you. But to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Justice and mercy always the twin virtues.

They are a part of God's nature. They are to be a part of our conduct and our nature. And of the two, however, mercy is predominant in God.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. But not always. God would be merciful to all, the Bible says.

He'd love to be merciful to everybody. But judgment is going to have to triumph in a few cases where people simply have not met the conditions for receiving mercy. Mercy is still mercy even if conditions are required.

If you owe me \$10,000, I'd say, listen, I'll tell you what, I'll forgive you the whole debt. If you'll just go out and paint this poor person's house over here for free. You know, I'll just forgive you the \$10,000.

Is that a merciful thing for me to do? Even though there's conditions attached. I mean, obviously that's mercy. I'm giving them something better than they deserve and that's always mercy.

And God says, okay, I'll forgive you all that debt, but what I want you to do is forgive others. What I want you to do is love others as I love you. And not only do I want you to do it, this is a command.

This is required. This is the law of your king. It's a royal law.

And you are not at liberty to shirk this responsibility. And you will experience judgment

without mercy. Mercy will not triumph over judgment in your case if you show no mercy.

Because he will have judgment without mercy who has shown no mercy. So, showing mercy to others is a condition for receiving mercy from God. And when you do, it says that will triumph over judgment.

That is, if you have been a merciful person, then God's mercy towards you will have the upper hand in the tension between justice and mercy. I mean, if justice were served to you, of course you'd go to hell. Mercy is what we desire and we can receive it under the conditions that Jesus himself said in the Sermon on the Mount.

We can receive it. James simply reiterates it as he does so frequently in this epistle. Now, verse 14 of chapter 2 begins probably the best-known passage in James.

At least, the one that has been very significant and has received a lot of attention in the debate between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic religion before. I mean, this was one passage that Luther never really came to grips with as much as I think he could have. I don't have any problems with this passage myself.

I don't see it as really in conflict with what Paul taught and based. I think Paul and James taught and believed the same things. But Luther, I think, because he was pendulum swinging.

He was coming out of a religion that was entirely of works and faith had very little to do with it. And he had discovered, though just surely by faith, and Abraham was imputed righteous because he believed God and so forth. He became the man who had to champion this idea of faith alone in contrast with the adversary, the Roman Catholic Church that was almost into works alone.

And so when he came across a passage like James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26, it didn't emphasize faith alone. Now, I believe Luther is correct in saying it's faith alone that saves us. But James kind of puts a spin on that, that we need to also remember that faith, if it's saved, is never alone.

It is simply faith that saves. But that simple faith has its accompaniments. In Hebrews chapter 6, after writing that frightening passage about those who fall away and the impossibility of their being renewed to repentance, whatever all that means, the writer says in Hebrews 6, 9, But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

He said, I'm writing about people who fall away, but I don't expect that to happen in your case. What I expect instead in your case is that I will see in your life those things that accompany salvation. Salvation has its companions.

When salvation comes to you, so do certain accompaniments. And James tells us what

those accompaniments are, a changed life. And that anyone who claims or professes to have a faith that is not evidenced by a changed life had better keep looking for that faith that saves.

Because there are inferior species of faith that simply cannot give you life. In fact, James indicates some kinds of faith is dead. And how can that which is dead be looked to as a source of life? The just shall live as a result of his faith, Paul stressed.

But you can't live as a result of a faith that isn't alive itself. And so James simply helps us to sort out the difference between the kind of faith that does and the kind of faith that does not save. And James' emphasis is it's a faith that is accompanied by works.

It is a faith that doesn't get a boost from works, but which produces works by the very nature of the kind of stuff it is. The very nature of the faith that saves is a life-changing kind of an experience, kind of a disposition. A trust in God that enforces on the conscience a new type of behavior, a righteousness, of obedience.

This is the kind of stuff that faith produces. Paul said in Romans twice that his mission as an apostle was to bring all nations to the obedience of faith. The obedience of faith.

And in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 6, Paul said, In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that works through love. Paul had the same theology James did. What matters to God is not whether you're circumcised or not, or whether you meet any other religious conditions or not.

What matters to God, what really commends you to God, is whether you have this kind of faith. Now, Paul emphasizes in the Romans writings that it's faith alone, but in James 5 and 6 he tells us more clearly than in some places, what he means when he uses the word faith. It's not just anything that might parade itself as faith.

The devils believe in trouble. They have a species of faith, James tells us, but they're not saved because not every kind of faith that a person may profess to have can save them. It is true that anyone who is saved is saved simply because he has the right kind of faith.

The thief on the cross was saved because he had the right kind of faith. Now, you never got to see what kind of faith it was, because he never had time to live it out. He died the same day that he came in that faith, and he was nailed to the cross, so he was unable to do any good works to show that that's the kind of faith he had.

Jesus, however, seeing the heart, knew that had that man lived, his life would have demonstrated the kind of faith he had. That's the point. You're not saved by good works, and even after you believe and begin to have good works, there's not some kind of quantity of good works that will cause you to measure up.

You are saved and accepted in the beloved the moment you have a living faith. But

James just tells us how to tell if you've got it or not. That kind of faith changes your orientation, changes your disposition, changes your whole course of life, and changes the whole quality of your activities or your works.

From evil works, dead works, as he calls them, to good works. And so, let me read the passage, and then we'll talk about it in some detail. What does it profit my brethren if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God.

You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble. But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works was faith made perfect, or perhaps complete? And Scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, and he was called a friend of God.

You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. Likewise was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. So again the emphasis here is the faith.

A living faith versus a dead faith. A living faith can give life, a dead faith cannot. Giving life is what saving is all about, to have eternal life.

And so he raises the question, what does it profit a person to have a faith of a sort that does not produce works? He says, can faith save him in verse 14? The answer to the question, can faith save a man, would have to be yes. But in the condition he's describing, a man who has something he calls faith, but doesn't have any corresponding behavior to show that his faith is of a saving type, that person's faith cannot save him. Whatever he's calling faith is not the kind of faith that God is looking for.

It's not the faith that works through love. And Paul makes, I mean James makes it clear that the faith he's talking about is exactly the kind that Paul talked about when he says in Galatians 5, 6 it's a faith that works through love, because he gives an example of what we would call love. He says, if a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, depart in peace, be warm and filled, but you don't give them the things which are needful for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it doesn't have works, is dead.

Now notice the kind of works he suggests here is, you see a person who is in need, you've got what they need, they're in a desperate situation, you're not, but you don't do anything for them. Now, that's exactly the parallel situation that John was talking about in 1 John 3 that we looked at a moment ago, when he says, if a brother or sister has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his vows of compassion from him, which means he doesn't, he just kind of resists showing mercy to him, and doesn't do anything for him, he says, how does the love of God dwell in him? The passage in 1 John 3 said. Now, the same situation, John says, if you don't help a person in that situation, it shows you don't have the love of God in you.

James, describing exactly the same situation says, it proves you don't have the kind of works that go along with real saving faith. What kind of works are they? Works of love. Faith that works through love is the kind of faith that saves a person.

And James is simply describing another kind of faith as the kind that doesn't save, the kind that has a profession, but doesn't have any, doesn't work. Now, we're not talking about faith plus works, we're talking about a faith that works, and there's a world of difference. Legalism and even the Roman Catholic type of religion that Luther was coming against taught that faith is a good and important thing.

In fact, the Judaizers taught that back in Paul's day. That faith in Christ is a good thing, and no doubt essential for salvation, but it'll only get you part of the way to saving. The distance you've got to go from unsaved to saved can only be traversed partially by having faith.

The rest of it you've got to make up for. The Judaizers would make it with circumcision and keeping the whole law of Moses. Roman Catholicism had its own set of rituals and sacraments that they attached to it, but the point was a certain distance toward getting saved had to be made up by your own works.

Faith can only take you a portion of the way, the rest was your job. Now, that is not what Paul says when he says it's faith that works. That would be faith plus works saving.

But what Paul says, and later here James says also, is that it's a faith that works that saves you. As soon as you have the faith, you're all the way saved. There's no more ground to cover.

From unsaved to saved is made in a single step, and that is by coming into faith. But when we say faith, we must mean a faith that will show itself to be life-changing. And a changed life is the evidence that a person has become a Christian.

Saved in many respects, including and especially in that he keeps the royal law, according to Scripture, and loves. And a person who sees his brother in need and he has something to give and he doesn't get it, that person is violating the law and shows

himself, well, maybe his faith isn't all that genuine. Yeah, I always just kind of looked at it, it might be silly, is Paul and James describing the same thing if you're going down the road, and there's a fire in the fireplace, and that's Paul, a saving faith.

But the smoke coming out of the fireplace and the chimney if you're going down the road is James describing the evidence of your faith being worked out. And you see the smoke, so you know that you're saved. And if you have the fire, you know there's going to be evidence of smoke.

So I'm describing the same thing from a different angle. Okay, so the relationship of faith and works is now just the relationship of fire and smoke, respectively. Or of a tree and fruit, or something like that.

It's just something, the works are produced by the presence of that kind of faith. These things accompany, these good works accompany salvation. Once you have salvation, they do not earn it for you, and they don't even keep you saved.

I want to make this very clear. In the famous Warnership controversy that is raging among dispensationalists, among themselves, and also between Reformed theologians and some dispensationalists, and some of you are aware of this controversy, Zane Hodges, Charles Ryrie, some other dispensational writers have argued that it's just having a profession of faith that saves you. And that if you made that profession, you could fall away and never walk with Jesus a single day and die as an unrepentant sinner, but you'd still be saved.

You'll lose your rewards, of course, in heaven, needless to say. But you won't lose your salvation, even if you never are saved. Whereas the more historic gospel, in my opinion biblical also, teaches that if you're saved, then you're saved because you put your faith in Jesus as your Lord.

And why do you call me Lord, Lord, and don't do the things I say, Jesus said? The idea is, when you call Jesus Lord, is it an empty profession? Or is it an honest profession? Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do, the will of my Father. No doubt that's in the Sermon on the Mount also, Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 through 23. That is very possibly what James is expanding on here.

It's not just talking about it, it's doing. Now, it's not that you get saved by doing it, you get saved by having a Lord, who is also a Savior. And you don't take a Savior at one time and a Lord later, because Jesus is the same guy, he's Savior and Lord, you can't take half of him now and half of him later, either God or you don't.

Even as the Son has life, even as not the Son of God has not life, you either do or you don't. If you have the Son, you have one who is at once the Savior and Lord. He's both.

If you don't have the Lord, you don't have the Savior either. Because you don't have Jesus, you don't have the Lord. So salvation comes with the acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship.

As a famous passage in Romans 10 says, that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. Now, you've got to have a heartfelt, honest, professional, Jesus is Lord. If that's honest, then you'll act like him.

If you say he's Lord but you don't do the things he says, well then you're just showing that the profession is an empty hollow one, it's not genuine at all. So, good works are simply the product of taking the Lordship of Jesus Christ seriously in your life. If you're saved, it'll be evident.

It won't always be evident in all respects. I mean, Christians do not always act consistently the way Jesus did. But it is our goal to do so.

James, having preceded this passage by the talk about the royal law and how you violate one law and you're broken at all, is trying to emphasize that your work should be as consistent as possible. That you should not consider it tolerable to violate the law of liberty even on a few points or little issues. You should try to be consistently loving in everything you do and everything you say.

So speak and so do. As those who are going to answer to God on the basis of the fact that they were under this law of liberty. Now, your works will show that you take this law seriously and therefore that you're really under that Lord, under that King.

If you really are, if you really have this Lord. So, he gives an example of a loving thing to do. Here's a guy who doesn't have anything.

You got something, you give it to him. If you don't do that, how can you claim to have the faith that saves you? Because you obviously don't have love. And this faith that saves is a faith that works through love.

Verse 18, but someone will say, Now, I must confess, I disagree with the New King James translators in their placement of quotation marks here. I don't know why they do this. They've got only the first sentence in quotation marks.

You have faith and I have words. It strikes me that James is quoting somebody favorably here. And so, frankly, I think the quotation should be around the whole verse.

Namely, a person can rightly say this, You have faith, or so you profess. I have words. Show me that you really have faith without the words.

And I'll just prove to you my faith exists by the works I do. You know what I mean? That

seems to be one consistent statement and yet for some reason the quotation marks break it into like a short statement. And James' answer, as if James is answering negatively to it, which to me I think they just blundered there.

But to me I see James just saying, here's something that a person could honestly and rightly say with validity. You say you have faith, excellent. So do I. But I also have works, which it may be that you don't.

So, who really has faith? It's not a question of whether one's saved by faith or works, but whether they really have faith or not. I can show you that I have faith. Look at the way I live.

I can't see it by the way you're living. So how do you prove to me you have faith? You know? That's the idea here. And that's a legitimate thing to say in view of James' general argument here.

And it says in verse 19, you believe there's one God, you do well. I take the you do well to be somewhat sarcastic. Wonderful.

You're monotheistic. Excellent. So is the devil.

You know? So are the Muslims. So are the Jehovah's Witnesses. I mean, there's a lot of monotheists out there.

No, Mormons are not. Mormons believe in many gods. But the idea here is... The idea here would seem to be, so you believe in one God? I see all Jews believe in one God, except for the ones who are atheists now.

But, I mean, Judaism in all its forms is monotheistic as opposed to polytheistic. And he's writing to 12 tribes scattered abroad, I believe Jewish believers, or at least Jews who profess to be believers. Obviously he's calling into question some of their faith in this passage.

But here's a group of people that think they're in because they believe in one God, like Abraham did. Abraham believed in one God in an age of polytheism. They say, we have the faith of Abraham, we believe in one God too.

He says, so does the devil. So what? Look at Abraham's faith a little closer. His faith was proven by his words.

This is what he goes on to say. You see, you believe in one God? Fine, wonderful, you do well. But that's obviously not too well.

I mean, it's good to believe in one God, but it's not going all the way necessarily. Because the demons also believe and tremble. In other words, they believe strongly.

They believe more strongly than a lot of professing Christians do because the demons tremble. A lot of professing Christians don't have any fear of God. They claim to believe, but they live in a way that the Bible would indicate they're going to hell, and they don't even worry about it.

The demons got stronger faith of that sort than many professing Christians in the church do because the Christians in the church are so-called. Often they sin like the devil, live like the devil, but they don't tremble about it. In Isaiah chapter 66, in verses 1 and 2, God says that he is near to, this person, he will look to that person who is of a broken and contrite spirit and who trembles at his word.

And even, was it Felix or Festus, who trembled when Paul reasoned with him about temperance and justice and judgment of God and so forth. He trembled too. He didn't get saved, but he feared God for a moment there.

But now we've got a whole breed of Christians raised under a doctrine of antinomianism that says it doesn't matter whether you have works, you just have to have faith. It doesn't matter if your life has changed. I remember when I was a teenager and very new at witnessing, I was out with somebody who was more experienced than I was.

And someone he was witnessing to, we were together, said, well, I don't want to become a Christian because I like smoking dope or I like living with my girlfriend. And my friend said, you don't have to quit smoking dope or living with your girlfriend. You just have to believe in Jesus.

Jesus didn't come to take anything away from you. He just came to give you eternal life. Oh, that's nice.

I mean, that is, at the time, it struck me as true. I was a teenager, I'm fairly new at this stuff, and I love the Lord. That's pretty good.

You know, it's a pretty easy deal. But, of course, it didn't take long for me, and probably the person who said that probably outgrew that belief too, or else he isn't a Christian anymore, I imagine. But, I mean, he probably either backslid or grew up, I imagine.

But obviously that is antinomianism, the idea that Jesus didn't come to take away anything from you. He came to take away your ball and chain. He came to set you free, and that ball and chain is sin in your life.

And if you don't walk away from it, then you reject salvation. You know what I mean? Salvation comes at the cost of repentance and faith. And you have to repent and believe the gospel, Jesus said.

As Paul and others also said, Peter said that on the day of Pentecost. Repent. And so to turn from sin is required.

The devil believes, but he hasn't repented. But he's come closer than some Christians have, because he at least trembles. The demons at least tremble.

It doesn't quite bring them to repentance. It's more of the fear that leads to death than the godly fear, or godly sorrow that leads to life that they have. But, hey, I know Christians who don't tremble at the word, who don't tremble at the judgment of God, who don't have enough wisdom to fear God.

The devil, at least smart enough to know he's in trouble. With God. And the demons know that.

And they believe strongly in others. People who say they believe in God who's going to judge the world, but they live as though, you know, there's no judgment. You can seriously doubt that they really believe it.

Trembling would be a good way of showing that they really believe they're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. In view of the way they're living, trembling would be appropriate. Well, the demons believe that much.

But that even isn't enough to save them. Now, he says, Do you want to know, foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, another monotheist, but he was more than a monotheist. Was not Abraham our father justified by works? When he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Now, this is one of the hardest verses to harmonize with what Paul said.

Because Paul's emphasis in places like Galatians 3 and Romans chapter 4 is that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. And yet, James specifically says he was saved by works. Or at least asks rhetorically, wasn't he saved by works? And the answer is, yes, he was.

Well, seemingly the opposite statement of what Paul says. Now, Paul, in both Galatians 3 and Romans 4, where he makes this assertion, in both places he quotes Genesis 15-6. Abraham believed God and it was imputed for righteousness.

You see, it's faith. He believed God. That was imputed for righteousness.

He was justified by faith. But James is not unclear in that verse. He quotes the same verse.

And he indicates that it is when Abraham offered his son on the altar that that scripture was fulfilled. That Abraham believed God and it was imputed for righteousness. Now, he and Paul had the same theology.

Abraham believed God and that was imputed for righteousness. To be imputed for righteousness is to be justified. So he was justified by faith.

But not by faith only. Again, he was justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. And that's what James is pointing out.

Sure he was justified by faith, but that faith was made complete by behavior, obedience. And the works he did show that he had this kind of faith, that he was truly justified. So he was justified, as it were, by faith and works.

That's what it says in verse 24. You see then that a man is justified by faith, by works, and not by faith only. Now, not by faith only in verse 24 means, of course he acknowledges that you are justified by faith.

But not by faith only. The works have to be there as well in order to show that that is the right kind of faith. Now he says you're justified by works.

He's not trying to replace the doctrine of justification by faith by an opposite doctrine of justification by works. He acknowledges you're justified by faith. He quotes the same scripture in Paul and it shows that Abraham is justified by faith.

And then by saying not by faith only, he is affirming that it is by faith, but not faith only. It's by faith that works. It's a faith.

You have faith in your life, you also have the works in your life. And that is what the whole picture of justification involves. A living, working faith.

Now, of Abraham, it says in verse 21, was not Abraham our father justified by works? That is, in addition to his faith, his works were a part of his life. That's all part of the experience of being a righteous man. When he offered Isaac, his son, on the altar, that is, of course, only one act of obedience, but the epitome of Abraham's act of obedience.

His offering up of Isaac is called upon as proof of his faith, not only here, but also in Hebrews chapter 11. And there it actually expands on a little bit. In Hebrews chapter 11, it says by faith.

Abraham, when he was tested, see earlier James said our faith must be tested. And whoever passes that test will receive the crown of life. But in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 17.

Hebrews 11, 17. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. And he who received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac your seed shall be called.

Which is the irony of it, because Isaac hadn't had any children yet. And therefore, how could Abraham's seed be called through the line of Isaac, if Isaac were going to die childless? Well, that's where faith came in. Abraham accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Now, this gives us a little more insight into the crisis of faith that Abraham experienced when he was asked to offer Isaac on the altar. Here's a situation. It would be hard enough for anyone to sacrifice a child on the altar.

I mean, who would want to do that? It would be the hardest thing any parent could do. Just to believe that, you know, I should obey God to that point, to make that ultimate sacrifice, laying my only son on the altar. That would be hard in itself, but there's another dimension in Abraham's case.

Because all of his hopes, not only for his own family life, but for the world. Because all the nations of the world would be blessed through his seed. And that was the guy.

This child, or young man, was the one through whom the nation's journey left. And here it's time to kill him. So, how could he trust, how could he believe that these promises would be fulfilled if, in fact, he carried out God's orders and killed Isaac? Well, the answer is, I guess, not many choices.

I guess God's going to have to raise him from the dead. And Abraham figured that's what he'll do. That takes a lot of faith.

Either a lot of faith or a lot of stupidity. I've known a lot of groups, you know, that kind of kill off their kids by withholding insulin from diabetic children or something like that. And then they go and pray and expect God to raise them from the dead.

I don't know a lot of kids like that, but I've known a few. And that's, you know, that's kind of, to my mind, that's kind of weird fringe kind of Christianity. That's not the epitome of faith.

But in this case, Abraham had genuine faith. He knew God had appeared to him, spoken to him, told him to do it. Yet God's promises had to be fulfilled, though there was no imaginable way how he could, unless he raised him from the dead.

So that's what Abraham figured he'd do. That took great faith for him. And it says in verse 22 of James, James 2, 22, Do you see that faith was working together with his words? In other words, the actual work or action of offering Isaac, that had to spring from faith, did it not? I mean, how much faith needed to be present for him to go ahead and try to carry out this obedience to God? You can see that faith was working.

That's the point. It's faith that works. His activities showed his faith at work.

Faith was working through these works, through the works of offering, of obeying. And by works, faith was made perfect or complete. This is probably the most balanced statement of James's position in this whole chapter.

Faith and works. The works are exhibiting the phenomenon of faith working. Faith is

working through these works.

And the works are the completion of the faith. Faith is incomplete until it has produced a different kind of works. Now, as I said, in the case of the thief on the cross, he didn't produce any good works.

But he could hardly be blamed for that. You know, he didn't have any opportunity. But a person who has this kind of faith and has the liberty to live out his life, his faith will be completed or his faith will be the other part, the other evidence of salvation.

Besides the fact that he just says he believes, the other part of it, the completion of that, is the way he lives. Which is, of course, essentially, obedient to Christ as Lord. Yes? I was wondering where you draw the line.

You know, when you try to look at a Christian and see by his works if he's really saved or not. But you don't know how far he's come, you know what I'm saying? Yeah, I don't think that James is giving us a standard by which to judge other people. I think he's trying to encourage self-examination in this respect.

When you ask where I draw the line, I don't draw those lines. It's impossible. I don't have the discernment to do it.

Only God knows the part. And even the person who has faith, some have weaker faith than others. Some have faith, along with certain character weakness, who may desire to live a godly life, but fall more commonly than someone else does into patterns that he's not yet conquered.

I mean, you can't, whether, saving faith doesn't make you instantaneously a mature and perfect and sanctified person. But, something does happen immediately. And that is a change in your orientation.

Your orientation is no longer against God, but toward God. The person who is truly saved wants to obey God. I've said this before, I think this is essentially the principal evidence within the believer that he has passed from death into life, as far as objective evidence that he can take a look at and say, am I saved or am I not? In your heart, have you changed from your orientation where you wanted to please yourself before, and that was your principal objective in life.

And now your principal objective in life is to do the thing pleasing in God's sight. Your performance of those objectives is another issue, because your strength or your weakness, your maturity or your level of insight, or any of those things may have something to do with how well you perform your desired obedience. But it is the case that a person who has truly got a saving faith has a changed orientation.

Because this is what repentance is, changing your mind. And their mind has been shifted

from previously approving of sin to now disapproving of sin. And even if that person does sin, he will never do so with approval.

He will not approve it. He may fall into sin, and he might even, and this is never permissible, but he might even, redundantly sin. But he'll never really approve of what he's done.

And he'll always repent of it, if he's genuinely saved, because he simply cannot approve of that kind of behavior anymore. And if he does it, he'll be doing as Paul says, the thing he hates. Not the thing he loves anymore.

When a sinner who is unregenerate sins, he's doing the thing he loves. When a Christian sins, he's doing the thing he hates. And it's the presence of hatred for sin that gives evidence to an orientation toward obedience in the heart.

And that is the new heart, the law written on the heart, the change, the conversion. Now, I would say that every person who's converted, there has been some incremental change in their behavior, immediately. I mean, the totally, you know, well, before a person's converted, they sin just by habit and by preference, you know.

Once you're converted, those sins that were just sins of preference will fall away. The habits may take a while to overcome in some cases. But the preference, you know, I mean, I knew a guy who just lied for fun, you know, before he was saved.

He was a con artist. He just takes some kind of pleasure in deceiving people, even when he had nothing to gain from it, just to see if he could pull it off, you know. Now, I can't relate to that because I've never been a liar.

I've had other sins, but not that as a downfall of my character. But I can't understand. But I guarantee you, as soon as he got saved, he didn't prefer to lie.

He didn't prefer to fool people. He might have fallen to temptation because of a habit of lying on occasion. I don't know whether he did or not.

But I'll tell you that there's an awful lot of lying that didn't happen anymore in his life as soon as he was saved because you don't prefer to sin anymore. You prefer to be holy when you're converted. So some change occurs immediately.

And, you know, and then continuing change should happen as you're learning more to consistently walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Now, after talking about Abraham's faith, how his faith produced works, or his faith was working and works for the completion of his saving faith and so forth, he says, we see them. Or no, it says in verse 23, and the Scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and was counted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.

That Abraham was imputed righteous by faith, James acknowledges. But the Scripture that says he was that way was actually found its fulfillment in his behavior. Now, actually, the Scripture he quotes occurs in Genesis considerably earlier than Abraham offering up his son on the altar.

It's Genesis 15-6 that's being quoted here as Abraham believed God and was counted to him for righteousness, whereas it was actually Genesis 22 later, seven chapters later, that he offered his son Isaac on the altar. He was justified before he offered Isaac. But his whole life of obedience was the fulfillment of that salvation by faith, that justification by faith in his life.

And, of course, the epitome of that was when he offered Isaac up. It's just given as the sample of his behavior that epitomizes his general orientation of obedience to God. By the way, Paul, in Romans 4, stresses with almost equal strength the fact that the only faith that could save even Abraham was one that had works or that was wholehearted, at least.

Because in Romans 4, in verse 17, or verse 18, Romans 4, 18, speaking of Abraham, it said, Who, contrary to hope, believed in hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what was spoken, so shall your descendants be. And, verse 19, not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead, since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but he was strengthened in his faith, giving glory to God and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to perform, and therefore, verse 22, therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Again, referring to Genesis 56. In other words, because his faith was this compelling, this life-changing, this wholehearted, therefore, because it was that kind of faith, it was accounted to him for righteousness. If it had been a lesser type of faith, like the demons have, it wouldn't have been counted for righteousness.

So, Paul and James both emphasize that not only was Abraham justified by faith, but by a very significantly life-changing kind of faith that changed his whole orientation. He was fully convinced, and he gave glory to God, and he didn't consider the obstacles to God fulfilling his promise. He just moved forward in faith.

Same kind of thing, Paul and James are saying. You know, it's works. Let me make this clear.

When James says faith without works, the works he means are not ritual, religious works. He's not talking about religiosity. He's not talking about the kind of works that Paul often speaks negatively of.

When he says, you know, if it's a works, then it can't be a grace, and so forth. I mean,

he's talking a great deal about circumcision, law works, and ritual works and stuff. What James is talking about here is simply, the word works can just be rendered as actions.

The guy's actions showed that what he said with his mouth, he proved it with his actions. What was in his heart came out in the way he acted, the way he lived. That's all that he means here.

Faith that doesn't have a corresponding way of life that it produces is not the faith that we're talking about when we talk about being justified before God. Rahab is also given as an example. In verse 25, likewise was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way.

Now there's no mention here of Rahab's faith in James. He just mentions her works. But, interestingly, she also is mentioned in Hebrews 11.

And it says, by faith, Rahab received the spies and so forth. The same incident in her life that she's commended for her faith in, in Hebrews 11, she's commended for her works in here. Now, she had faith that worked.

Both faith and works, two sides of the coin. She was justified by having the kind of faith that produced this kind of works. Now, by the way, that does not mean that everything that Rahab did in this story is to be commended.

Many people have used the case of Rahab to try to justify convenient lying if it's, you know, if it helps somebody. I know Richard Wurmbrand has gone on record in a number of his books saying that he thought it was okay to lie to interrogators and so forth and throw some of them on a false scent. And when they say words they didn't pre-impress were on the secret meetings being held, he felt like it's the loving thing to lie, to send them off in the wrong direction.

And Rahab would be an example of that. She lied about whether the spies were with her or not and she didn't tell the truth and there you go. But the problem here is you can't just take stories out of the Old Testament that say somebody did something and say therefore it's okay to do because an awful lot of things were done by people in the Old Testament that aren't okay to do.

And Rahab is commended not for her lying, she's commended for her faith. This is in no way to construe the idea that God is pleased with everything she did. After all, she was a harlot.

There's no reason to believe he was pleased with that. She's not commended for being a harlot nor a liar. She's commended for believing God and for taking the side of God's people instead of the side of her own people.

Just like not everything Abraham did is commendable. When he lied about his wife being

his sister twice, that's not something to be imitated. Although he's commended for his faith, not everything his actions were consistently faith-filled.

So don't take the fact that Rahab is here commended for a proof text that it's okay to lie when it's convenient for the cause of good. Now, there may be some cases where it is the more loving and therefore more righteous thing to lie than to tell the truth is maybe an issue worth taking up on another occasion. But let me just say this.

In the case that is sometimes given, the example that Richard Wurmbtrang gives, lying is not the only alternative. It's not the only loving alternative to telling the truth. I mean, obviously if they're driving bamboo shoots under your fingernails and saying, where is the hidden meaning of who are your leaders? There's three things you can do.

One is you can say, they're over here and tell the truth. So they get arrested, that wouldn't seem a very loving thing to do. Or you can say they're over there and you're lying, which might seem more loving.

But there's a third alternative that's also loving. It's to say, I won't tell. Do your worst.

But that can be a little more costly. It's a little easier to send them on a false sense and get a little relief. But you can also tell the truth and say, well, I know, but I won't say it.

You know? Anyway, that's the more heroic way. And I'm not saying I'd have the strength to do that. I would hope I would.

But in terms of standing back dispassionately, looking at the situation and talking about ethics, I think that telling a lie in that situation isn't the only loving alternative. You could tell the truth and still spare your brothers. Anyway, maybe Rahab couldn't have.

If Rahab had told the truth and said, yeah, they're right here under the barley stacks in my upper room here, she couldn't have done that at the same time as Sparadrap. Although, who knows, maybe an angel of the Lord would have stood in there and honored her truthfulness. You know, Corey Ten Boom tells a story about during the time they were hiding Nazis.

I don't think it was her house, but one of their friend's houses had a hidden compartment under the kitchen floor where they hid the Jews. Did I say hid the Nazis? Oh, I'm sorry. Hid from the Nazis.

Hid the Jews from the Nazis. OK. Someone checked me, so I figured I must have said it wrong.

I did a quick rewind and say, hid the Nazis. OK. Where they hid the Jews from the Nazis.

And there was a family living in this house, and there was a trap door, and they kept over the trap door, they kept the kitchen table with a tablecloth that reached the floor

and obscured the view of the trap door. And on one occasion where the Nazis were actually coming into the house, and the Jews fled, and they went under the table and down the trap door and shut it afterwards, and then the family tried to act nice a lot when the Nazis came in. I think they had a little girl who was maybe five or six years old, I don't remember.

And the Nazis came in, and they said, where are the Jews? And they looked right at the little girl and said, where are the Jews? And the parents had always taught their little girl, because they were Christians, to always tell the truth. But at this moment, they hoped that she might not do what they had taught her to do, and they hoped that she might not tell the truth, so that the Jews would be spared. But the little girl, being guileless, she just said, well, they're under the table.

And so the Nazi got down, and he started to lift the tablecloth, and this little girl broke uncontrollably into laughter. And the Nazis thought they were being mocked, and they got up, and they stormed out of the room and started to search somewhere else. Which sounds like a divine intervention to me, you know.

I mean, I don't know that that's always what would happen, but telling the truth is something God might honor. You never can tell. When you resort to fleshly and even forbidden means of trying to do good.

Remember, the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Some people try to work the righteousness of God by wrath. Some do by dishonesty.

But I guess it remains to be seen, for the most part, by most Christians, what God would do to intervene supernaturally if we did the right thing, even when at risk. And told the truth, even when it would possibly be dangerous to do so. Never know how much God might come to their aid.

In that case, Corinthian Boone tells us. Looks like God was involved in that, particularly in that little girl's toe, making her laugh the way she did. So, verse 26 says, For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Okay, he's emphasized that quite enough. Now, I'd like to get into chapter 3. I don't expect us to finish chapter 3, because we only have a little time left this session, but we need to make as much headway as we can in the material. So, let's go on into chapter 3. My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we, we, meaning we teachers, shall receive a stricter judgment.

For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, or in the things he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in the horse's mouth, that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

Look also at ships. Although they are so large, and are driven by fierce winds yet, they

are turned by a very small rudder, wherever the pilot desires. Even so, the tongue is a little member in both great things.

See how great a forest a little fire can kindle. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and itself is set on fire of hell, or by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, and reptile, and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless our God and Father, and we curse men of the same tongue, who have been made in the civility of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Or according to King James, ought not so to be. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives? Or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh. Now in this section, James shows his concern, that he shares the concern that Solomon has in the Proverbs, a great deal, for right kind of speech.

In the Proverbs, we have warnings against speaking too soon, speaking too much, speaking in the wrong spirit, and many other things about defects of speech, speech defects. You know, and advises that we answer softly to someone who's angry, and quiet them down that way, or we simply don't speak our whole mind, or that we don't speak like the piercing of a sword, but as a healing word. So many things in the Proverbs emphasize the need to speak right.

So does Jesus. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And therefore he said, by a man's words he'll be condemned, or he'll be justified, by the way that he speaks, because it will exhibit what's in the heart.

It goes into a man's mouth, the deposit, but what comes out of his mouth, the deposit. Now no doubt James has the words of Jesus on this and in other places in Jesus' teachings in line here. There's a number of places in this passage that we just read that seems to allude to certain things Jesus said, including, no surprise, the Sermon on the Mount.

Particularly in verse 6, when it says that the tongue, when it says at the end of verse 6, it is set on fire by hell, the word hell there, is not the regular word the epistles usually use for hell. It's not Hades, it's Gehenna, the word Jesus usually used for hell. When Jesus spoke of hell, his word usually was Gehenna.

When the epistles refer to hell, they usually use the word Hades. James uses the word Jesus used, and it says the tongue is set on fire by hell, in the Sermon on the Mount. In

Matthew 5.22, Jesus said, after saying, you have heard it was said that you shall not commit murder, and whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment.

He says, but I say unto you, whosoever is angry at his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Rachah, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says, Thou fool, shall be in danger of Gehenna, or the fire of Gehenna.

The fire of Gehenna is the same expression, or a similar expression, to that which James uses here. The fire by Gehenna. And the tongue itself, if you say, Thou fool, or in other words, if your speech portrays that your heart is lacking in this love that is supposed to characterize your life, it can be as great a defect as to commit murder.

The difference between a person who wants to commit murder but restrains himself, and a person who wants to commit murder and does, is that one has more self-control than the other. But both are murderers, as far as their heart is concerned. And so the tongue can be another way you exhibit your murderous spirit.

And you can be as much in danger of hellfire by the abuse of your tongue, as by murder, or anger, or whatever. Now, that is a probable allusion to the Sermon on the Mount. Other things Jesus said are alluded to here also.

At the very beginning, My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. This expression, stricter judgment, as applied to teachers, seems to come from Jesus' statement to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Matthew 23, like in verse 8, Jesus says, But you do not be called rabbi or teacher.

For one is your teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Then in the same passage, in verse 14, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, who are of course teachers, hypocrites, for you devour widows' houses before a pretense make law-abiding parents. Therefore you will receive the greater judgment, or the greater condemnation.

Not the same words in the Greek, but seemingly the same concept as used in James 1. Teachers receive a stricter judgment, or a greater condemnation. Why? Well, because they influence more people, for good or for ill. If you live in sin, you'll be condemned for living in sin.

But if you influence many others to live in sin, then you'll still be condemned, only greater. You know, there's a lot of places in the Bible that indicate that there's degrees of judgment. Now, I'm not sure that James has here in mind the judgment of hell necessarily, that Christian teachers are facing the judgment of hell.

It may simply mean that we're going to be judged more strictly because we judge. Teachers have to make judgments all the time. If we're going to teach anything, we have to judge between truth and error.

We need to judge between... What did Jeremiah say in this morning's class? Between this... In Leviticus, it's between the sacred and the profane. If you take the... What's the precious from the Bible, or something like that? Is that what he said? Teachers and preachers have to make judgments all the time. And those judgments, because they are teachers, are imposed on the thinking of the sheep.

And if the sheep happen to walk according to those judgments in their own lives, and there are wrong judgments, then a great deal of the responsibility rests upon the teacher. Not all of it. Because you as a listener are supposed to discern, and you shouldn't obey your teachers if they tell you things that are clearly against the Scripture.

There is some responsibility incumbent upon you as a listener, but still, that doesn't let the teacher off the hook. I can't say, well, you know, I can teach any kind of heresy. I want to, because these people shouldn't follow it if it's wrong.

Well, it's not that easy. Because there is responsibility on both sides, but more on the teacher. And he makes judgments.

And Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Judge not that ye be not judged. The person that makes the most judgments is probably in danger of the most judgment himself. And the same measure he meets will be measured against him.

And so we, who are teachers, receive a stricter judgment. It doesn't mean we're going to go to a lower hell, necessarily, but it means that there's a stricter standard of judgment going to be brought in terms of our conduct. We have to live the life and speak the truth more than others, because our words and our lives affect others more than the average person's does.

And he says in verse 2, For we all stumble in many things. Now, this is not acknowledged by all Christians. Some think that we don't all stumble in many things.

But James was aware of the same thing you and I are aware of, and we do. We do stumble. That doesn't mean we do it many times every day.

I was raised with the view that we all sin and thought, word and deed, many times every day. I don't know that that's biblical. I don't think that every day of my life that I've sinned many times.

In fact, I really believe there's been some days in my life that I'm not aware of having committed any sins. I wasn't convicted of any sin in my life. But whether, I mean, James is not saying how frequent this is.

He's not saying we sin all the time, but he says we all stumble in many ways. We all stumble in many things. And if anyone doesn't stumble, for example, in the way he talks, in word, that person is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body.

Now, in all likelihood, bridle the whole body means your own body. Although in the context of teachers, it's tempting to see bridling or directing the body, like driving a team of horses, is what the leader in the congregation does, what the teacher does by his very teachings. He directs the body, the thinking and the behavior of the body of Christ.

If that were the way to look at this, then where he talks about horses and ships being guided by small rudder and small bit, then he'd be comparing the body of Christ with a ship under sail or with a horse. Those images, by the way, are not unknown in the Scripture. I don't specifically know of a place in the Bible that refers to the church to a ship, but I do know of passages where we might see churches compared to a horse.

It says in Zechariah chapter something, I think it's in chapter 10, talks about how God had made Judah, the men of Judah, his goodly horse in the battle. And I've known a number of commentators that believe that in Revelation, where Jesus is seen riding a white horse and conquering the nations with the sword that proceeds out of his mouth, that this is nothing other than a description of the progress of the gospel through the world. The word out of his mouth making these conquests of souls and Jesus riding upon the vehicle of the church.

Now I'm not here to say that's the right interpretation, but there's a number of commentators, many of them very mainline, who think that's what that vision is portraying. So I don't know if the church is ever compared to the horse in the Bible or not. It could be.

But if it is, like I said, it's kind of tempting for you as a teacher to see him saying that person who speaks correctly, who doesn't offend in his speech, that person is qualified to direct the body of Christ. Like the bit in the horse's mouth that gives the horse its direction, or the ship with its rudder, it directs it. It's a relatively small member, but it turns the whole body.

It would also give meaning to verse 6, where it says, the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set on our members that it defiles the whole body. If that were a reference to the body of Christ, it would be easy to see how that would be true.

Wrong speech can defile the whole body of Christ, can defile many. Bitter words, a root of bitterness stringing up can defile many. And the whole body of Christ can ultimately be destroyed, or not destroyed, but defiled by words.

In fact, Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 3, where he talks about how he laid a foundation, and others like Apollos came and built on the foundation, but he said, let everyone be careful how he builds, because some build with wood, hay, and stubble, and some others build with gold, silver, and precious stones, and whatever they build is going to be tested with the fire. And he says there, don't you know that you, collectively plural, are the temple,

the living God, and whoever defiles the temple of God, God will destroy it. But in the context, he's talking about preachers, building the temple with wood, hay, and stubble, or with gold, silver, and precious stones.

That's what they speak, that's what they build with. Paul spoke the pure gospel, I have laid a foundation, there's no other foundation I can lay, others come and build on it. How? By preaching and teaching in the church, they build up the church.

But if anyone defiles the church, he says, God will destroy that person. So there is a sense in which teachers, by their wrong words, can defile the whole body, or at least a local body. And so, like I said, this passage, as a teacher, I kind of see it a little bit that way, although I couldn't argue that that's necessarily what James had in mind.

He might be talking about your personal body. But how does your speech defile your body? He may have in mind Jesus' statement in Matthew chapter 15, where Jesus said, it's not what goes into man's mouth that defiles him, what comes out of his mouth defiles him. And the thing that comes out of the mouth comes out of the heart, from which comes adultery, and fornication, and murders, and blasphemies, and a whole list of stuff, that certainly could say defiles your body, as a temple can be defiled by these kind of behaviors.

And so he may be thinking that wrong speech, because it comes out of a wrong heart, is just part of the whole fabric of a wrong life. And that if a person gets control over his speech, since it's the most slippery member, both literally and figuratively, the tongue is the hardest to get control over. It's a wild beast that is untamable.

You can bridle it, and you must bridle it, because he said in chapter 1, if any man seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue, he deceives his own heart and his religion is empty. You've got to bridle it, but you can't tame it. You're going to have to keep that bridle on all of your life, because it's unmanageable.

It's full of deadly poison. It can defile your whole life. It can set you on fire of hell, figuratively speaking, and corrupt your whole nature.

Words have such a power over your well-being, spiritually and even conceivably physically. And even your body and your nature and everything can be defiled by what comes out of your mouth. And so, to see it as individual body, in verses 2 and verse 6, that is your personal body, is probably the most natural way to take it.

And especially because of the fact that the concept of the church as the body of Christ seems to be almost distinctly Pauline. I don't recall that there's any specific writings outside of Paul's epistles where the church is referred to as the body of Christ. Therefore, it might seem unlikely that James would refer to the church in that term.

So I could go either way, and I think very possibly it's more accurate to see him speaking

about how your tongue will defile you personally. And if a person has his tongue under control and does not offend in his speech, well, since that's the hardest thing to control, it must mean you've already got everything else under control first. And you'd be a perfect man.

I think James is suggesting that there aren't many who can lay claim to that. He said we all stumble in many things. But the thing that we're most likely and most vulnerable to stumbling is that of the use of our tongue.

Well after you've rooted out excesses of sin in your life, you may still have sins of speech. Proud boasting or slander and gossip or sarcastic bitterness. I mean, these things are still sometimes present in the speech of people who otherwise are living a clean life because it's the hardest thing.

It's the most slippery. And yet it does damage disproportionate to its size. Think of how great a fire a little spark can start can burn down a whole forest, James says.

Or a small bit in a big animal's mouth or a small runner on a big ship driven with fierce winds. Nonetheless, these things exercise an influence disproportionate to their size. So the tongue is not a real large member.

It's not as large as a leg or an arm. But in a sense it can do a lot more damage than a leg or an arm can do. He indicates that virtually every kind of creature has been tamed.

This would be a hyperbole in verse 7. Now of course there are some animals that have never been tamed. But he's essentially saying that all kinds of animals have come under man's dominion. Even reptiles and birds and things.

But the tongue has not. The tongue is not tamable by man. And this either means that only God can tame the tongue, no man can.

Or it means that the tongue simply can't be tamed no matter what. It can be bridled, but not tamed. It will always, as long as you have a corrupt nature as long as you have fleshly desires as long as you have sin in your memories there will be the danger of an unbridled tongue exerting its old sinful behavior again.

And it will not be broken like a horse can be broken. It will not be domesticated. It's a wild thing.

And you simply have to restrain it by, as the psalmist put it, putting a watchman at his mouth or bridling it and saying I will not or as the old express says, bite your tongue. Bite your tongue means don't say that. Sometimes indicating that you've got to resort to radical measures to keep from saying something.

You can't just not say it. You've got to do something like bite down on your tongue

because it's ungovernable. Well, that's not of course a biblical statement but it does acknowledge the need to, if necessary exercise extreme measures to get that tongue under control so it doesn't do the kind of damage that it might otherwise do.

He points out the, and I'll quit with this in verses 11 and 12 and even 10 he points out the inconsistency of having two characters basically. Your mouth spewing out love for God on the one hand and spewing out on the other hand cursings and unloving kind of speaks toward your brother who happens to be made in the image of God. And since he's made in the image of God, James indicates that's reason enough to honor your brother and to esteem him and to treat him in a way analogous to the way you treat God.

That is with some respect and with some love. And if you love God but you don't love your brother these things ought not so to be. It's exactly what 1 John chapter 4 says at the end there.

It says if any man says I love God but hates his brother he's a liar. For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen how can he love God whom he has not seen? James says the same thing. How can you really honestly and purely be praising God and really loving God when in fact your love for your brother is Latin? You curse your brother.

Is your heart divided? Your heart is the wellspring of what comes out of your mouth and springs don't produce sweet water and bitter water at the same time. Trees that by nature are to produce figs don't produce, what's he say, olives? No, what's he say? A fig tree, my brother, can't bear olives. Or can a grapevine bear figs? No, because it's the nature of a grapevine to produce grapes, not figs.

These things do not produce a product contrary to their nature. Neither do our hearts, by the way. If our hearts are pure, pure things will come out of our mouths.

Or at least that will be what we will be endeavoring to be consistent in the case. Ephesians 4 says let no corrupt communication proceed on your mouth, but only that. Which is good to the use of edifying that my minister gracefully here.

That's the only kind of appropriate speech from a Christian. Now, in the verses we'll take next time, in verse 13 and following he talks about wisdom. Speech is still involved in the discussion.

But only partially. The focus then turns to wisdom. The two kinds of wisdom from above and from below.

The wisdom from above is exhibited, at least in part by what you speak in the case. But there's more to it than that. And we'll come to that contrast, that dichotomy of two kinds of wisdom next time, at verse 13.