

James, Dead Faith, and the Hypothetical Objector: James 2:18-26
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{18} But someone will say,

James introduces the hypothetical objector.

"You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. {19} You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!"

Hypothetical objector argues against James.

Some English translations insert quotation marks either here or here indicating the end of the objection, neither of which is warranted. Since there are no quotations marks in the original Greek, such decisions must be made on the basis of the grammar. It is more likely that the objector's words proceed through v. 19.

The objector appeals to the Shema (Deut 6:4) in his argument against James that faith and works are not related.

{20} But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? {21} Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? {22} Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? {23} And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

James responds to the hypothetical objector.

Conjunction δὲ [but] indicates change of speaker from hypothetical objector back to James

Second person singular θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι [do you want to know] and the use of the vocative ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ [O foolish man] indicate that James is speaking to the hypothetical objector.

Second person singular βλέπεις [Do you see] indicates that James is continuing his response to the objector.

{24} You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. {25} Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? {26} For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James returns to his readers.

Second person plural Ὁρᾶτε τοίνυν [You (pl.) see then] indicates James is speaking to his readers.

There are two justifications; one by faith and one by works. There is no single justification by both faith and works.

1. The word 'μόνον' [only] could not be an adjective modifying 'faith' since it does not agree in gender.

2. Rather, it is an adverb which modifies the understood verb 'justified.'

3. The text should read "a man is justified by works and not only [justified] by faith."