The “Faith” Problem in James 2

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ABSTRACT

Faith is the main theme in James chapter two. Again, James has his exhortation and reason (purpose) to back up his exhortation. In this chapter, however, James uses a personal (2:4, 6), theological (2:5, 7, 19-20), and scriptural reflection (2:8-11, 21, 23, 25) in his reason (purpose). These reflections reveal that James exhorts his readers that are familiar with a Jewish background and his exhortation is personal. Interestingly, James provides his commentaries on Biblical quotations (2:22, 24, 26).

Keywords: Greek Exegesis, James, Faith

INTRODUCTION

The noun ‘faith’ appears 11 times in this topic (2:14[2x], 17, 18[3x], 20, 22[2x], 24, 26). The verb ‘to believe’ occurs three times (2:19[2], 23). Without works appears 4 times (2:18, 20, 26[2x]). The noun ‘work’ appears 12 times (2:14, 17, 18[3x], 20, 21, 22[2x], 24, 25, 26).

How does James discuss this topic?

1) Conditional sentence / ἐὰν (14, 15, 16, 17). Verse 14 starts Τί τὸ ὄφελος with and verse 16 ends with it as well. Illustration: Social community (15-16)

2) Imperative / request (18)

3) Illustration-Question: Demons (19) and Question (20)

4) Illustration (Question)-Statement-Argument: Abraham (21), Statement (22), argument (23).

5) Statement-Illustration (Question): Statement (24), Rahab (25).

6) Illustration: Body and Spirit (26).
RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses syntactical analysis as its research method. A syntactical analysis is a method that seeks out the relationship between a word with the other words. In other words, this article analyzes the function of nominative such as either a nominative subject or predicate nominate. Nominative itself is a form and it needs to be exegeted its function.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Verse 1

Text

Ἀδελφοί μου, μη ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἐχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης.

Analysis

Ἀδελφοί μου] ‘my brothers’. Simple address of vocative.
ἐν προσωπολημψίαις] ‘with partiality’. Manner.
τὴν πίστιν] ‘(your) faith’. Accusative of direct object of μη . . . ἐχετε.
τοῦ κυρίου] ‘in the Lord’. Objective genitive.
ἡμῶν] ‘our’. Relationship genitive.
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] ‘Jesus Christ’. Genitive of apposition.
tῆς δόξης] ‘the glorious’. Attributive genitive.

Verse 2

Text

ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἂν ἄρ Χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἑσθήτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἑσθήτι,

Analysis

ἐὰν . . . εἰσέλθῃ] ‘if (a man) goes into’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).
eἰς συναγωγὴν] ‘into the assembly’. Location.
ἐν ἑσθήτι λαμπρᾷ] ‘with a bright clothes’. Instrumental.
eἰσέλθῃ] ‘(if a poor man) goes into’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).
δὲ] ‘and’. Connective.
καὶ] ‘also’. Connective.
ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἑσθήτι] ‘with filthy clothes’. Instrumental.
Verse 3

Text

ἐπιβλέψητε δέ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθήτα τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἴπητε· σὺ κάθου ὡδε καλῶς, καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἴπητε· σὺ στήθι ἢ κάθου ἐκεῖ ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιον μου,

Analysis


Verse 4

Text

καὶ οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

Analysis

Verse 4-7 have questions. καὶ] ‘both’. Correlative conjunction. οὐ διεκρίθητε] ‘you made distinctions’. Perfective aspect. Accomplishment or achievement. What is the function of this aorist? Culminative aorist. The occurrence οὐ in question of indicates the answer yes.

ἐν ἑρωτοῖς] ‘among yourselves’. Preposition ἐν plus dative case indicates location.
καὶ ἐγένεσθε ‘and you become’. Perfective aspect. Accomplishment or achievement. What is the function of this aorist? Culminative aorist.

κρίται ‘judges’. Predicate nominative.

διαλογισμῶν ‘of reasonings’. Genitive of means.

πονηρῶν ‘evil’. Attributive genitive.

Verse 5

Text

ἀκούσατε, ἄδελφοι μου ἁγαπητοί· οὐχ ὁ θεός ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἢ ἐπηγείλατο τοῖς ἁγαπῶσιν αὐτῶν;

Analysis

James provides a reason through a question (repeat the question).

ἀκούσατε ‘listen’. Perfective aspect.

ἀδελφοί μου ἁγαπητοί ‘my beloved brother’. Simple address of vocative.

οὐχ ‘did not’. The appearance of χ due to the vowel and the rough breathing afterwards. The occurrence οὐχ in question of indicates the answer yes.

ὁ θεός ‘God’. Nominative subject of ἐξελέξατο.


τῷ κόσμῳ ‘to the world’. Dative of reference or dative of rule.

πλουσίους ‘to be rich’. Double accusative of object-complement. Complement.

ἐν πίστει ‘in faith’. A few possibilities: spatial, reference, or dative of rule.


τῆς βασιλείας ‘of the kingdom’. Genitive of subordination.

ἡς ‘which’. Relative pronoun serves as a genitive of direct object of ἐπηγείλατο.

τοῖς ἁγαπῶσιν ‘to those who love’. Dative of indirect object.

αὐτῶν ‘Him’. Accusative of direct object of ἁγαπῶσιν.

Verse 6

Text

ὑμεῖς δὲ ἡτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχὸν. οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια;

Analysis


δέ ‘but’. Adversative.

tὸν πτωχὸν] ‘the poor’. Accusative of direct object of ἤτιμάσατε.


οἱ πλούσιοι] ‘the rich men’. Nominative subject of καταδύναστεύουσιν.

καταδύναστεύουσιν] ‘(the rich men) oppress’. Habitual present. Imperfective aspect and accomplishment.

ὑμῶν] ‘you’. Genitive of direct object.

καὶ] ‘and’. Connects the verbs.


ἔλκουσιν] ‘(the rich men) pull’. Habitual present. Imperfective aspect and accomplishment.

ὑμᾶς] ‘you’. Accusative of direct object of ἔλκουσιν.

eἰς κριτήρια] ‘to the lawcourt’. This preposition with an accusative case indicates a location.

Verse 7

Text

οὐκ αὐτοὶ βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς;

Analysis

οὐκ] ‘do not’. The appearance of κ due to the vowel and the rough breathing afterwards. The occurrence οὐκ in question of indicates the answer yes.


tὸ καλὸν ὄνομα] ‘the good name’. Accusative of direct object of βλασφημοῦσιν.

tὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ´ ὑμᾶς] ‘which has been called upon you’. This construction is a accusative of apposition.

Verse 8

Text

Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελείτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν, καλὸς ποιεῖτε·

Analysis

Verse 8 and 9 use an if clause.

Εἰ . . . τελείτε] ‘if you fulfill’. This construction indicates the first-class condition: the assumption of truth for the sake of argument (Wallace 690).


νόμον . . . βασιλικὸν] ‘law of king’. Accusative of direct object of τελείτε.

κατὰ τὴν γραφήν·] ‘according to the writing’. Standard.

τὸν πλησίον] 'neighbor'. Accusative of direct object of ἀγαπήσεις.

σοῦ] 'of you'. Genitive of relationship.

ὡς] 'like'. Comparative.

σεαυτόν] 'yourself'. Accusative of direct object of ἀγαπήσεις.

καλῶς] 'well'. Degree.

ποιεῖτε] 'you are doing'. Descriptive present.

Verse 9

Text
εἰ δέ προσωπολημπτεῖτε, ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάξεσθε ἐλευκόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται.

Analysis
εἰ . . . προσωπολημπτεῖτε] 'if you show partiality'. Hapax legomenon. This construction indicates the first-class condition: the assumption of truth for the sake of argument (Wallace 690).

dὲ] 'but'. Adversative with the previous verse.

ἁμαρτίαν] 'sin'. Accusative of direct object of ἐργάξεσθε.

ἐλευκόμενοι] 'with the result of convicted'. Result participle.

ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου] 'by law'. Agency.

ὡς] 'like'. Comparative.

παραβάται] 'violators'. Predicate nominative.

Verse 10

Text
ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ, πταίσῃ δὲ ἐν ἕνι, γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος.

Analysis
Verse 10-11 have because or for.


γὰρ] 'for'. Causal.

ὅλον τὸν νόμον] 'the whole law'. Accusative of direct object of τηρήσῃ.

πταίσῃ] '(whoever) stumbles'. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfill-ment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).

dὲ] 'but'. Adversative.

ἐν ἕνι] 'in one (point)'. Location.

γέγονεν] 'he has become'. Gnomic perfect.
πάντων] ‘of all’. Wholative genitive.

**Verse 11**

**Text**

ὁ γὰρ εἰπών· μὴ μοιχεύσῃς, εἶπεν καὶ· μὴ φονεύσῃς· εἰ δὲ οὐ μοιχεύεις, φονεύεις δὲ, γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

**Analysis**

ὁ . . . εἰπών] ‘he who said’. Substantival participle.
μὴ μοιχεύσῃς] ‘do not commit adultery’. Prohibitive subjunctive.
καὶ] ‘also’. Ascensive.
εἰ . . . οὐ μοιχεύεις] ‘if you do not commit adultery’. This construction indicates the first-class condition: the assumption of truth for the sake of argument (Wallace 690).
φονεύεις] ‘you murder’. This construction indicates the first-class condition: the assumption of truth for the sake of argument (Wallace 690).
γέγονας] ‘you have become’. Stative aspect.
παραβάτης νόμου] ‘violator (transgressor) of law. Predicate nominative.

**Verse 12**

**Text**

Οὕτως λαλεῖτε καὶ οὕτως ποιεῖτε ώς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι.

**Analysis**

Οὕτως] ‘therefore’. Inferential.
καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.
Οὕτως] ‘therefore’. Inferential.
ὡς] ‘as’. Comparative.
διὰ νόμου] ‘by the law’. Means.
ἐλευθερίας 'of liberty’. Descriptive genitive. Cf 1:25.
μέλλοντες 'those who will be’. Substantival participle.
κρίνεσθαι 'to be judged’. Complementary infinitive.

Verse 13

Text
ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἄνελεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἐλεος· κατακαυχάται ἐλεος κρίσεως.

Analysis
tῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι] ‘to the one who does not do’. Dative of indirect object.
ἐλεος] ‘mercy’. Accusative of direct object of τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι.
κατακαυχάται] ‘(mercy) triumphs over’. Gnomic present.
κρίσεως] ‘judgment’. Genitive of subordination.

Verse 14

Text
Τί τὸ δφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγη τις ἔχειν, ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχῃ; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;

Analysis
Τί] 'what (is)’. Predicate nominative.
tὸ δφελος] ‘the good / profit’. Nominative subject.
ἀδελφοί μου] ‘my brothers’. Simple address of vocative.
ἐὰν . . . λέγη] ‘if . . . he says’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).
ἔχειν] ‘to have’. Indirect discourse.
ἔργα] ‘works’. Accusative of direct object of ἔχῃ.
δὲ] ‘but’. Adversative.
μὴ ἔχῃ] ‘he does not have’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).
μὴ δύναται] ‘is (the faith) able’. This construction expects the answer ‘no’.
ἡ πίστις] ‘the faith’. Nominative subject of μὴ δώσαται.


αὐτόν] ‘him’. Accusative of direct object of σώσαι.

**Verse 15**

**Text**

ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειτομένοι ὡσιν τῆς ἐφημεροῦ τροφῆς,

**Analysis**


ἀδελφὸς] ‘a brother’. Nominative subject of ὑπάρχωσιν.

ἡ] ‘or’. Alternative.


καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

λειτομένοι ὡσιν] ‘were lacking’. Periphrastic participle.

τῆς ἐφημεροῦ τροφῆς] ‘daily food’. Genitive of direct object.

**Verse 16**

**Text**

εἴη δὲ τις αὐτοίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάξεσθε, μὴ δώτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὅφελος;

**Analysis**

εἴη] ‘(one of you) says’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).


τις] ‘one’. Nominative subject of εἴη.

αὐτοῖς] ‘them’. Dative of indirect object.


θερμαίνεσθε] ‘be warmed’. Command.

καὶ χορτάξεσθε] ‘and be filled’. Command.

μὴ δώτε] ‘do not give’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).

αὐτοῖς] ‘them’. Dative of indirect object.

tά ἐπιτήδεια] ‘the necessary things’. Accusative of direct object of δῶτε.

tοῦ σώματος] ‘the body’. Subjective genitive.

tί] ‘what (is)’. Predicate nominative.

tὸ δεξιός] ‘the good / profit’. Nominative subject.

Verse 17

Text
οὗτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστιν καθ’ ἑαυτήν.

Analysis
οὗτως] ‘so’. Inferential.

καὶ] ‘also’. Connective.

ἡ πίστις] ‘the faith’. Nominative subject of ἐστιν.

ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ] ‘if (it) does not have’. Third class condition: uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely (Wallace, 696).

ἔργα] ‘works’. Accusative of direct object of ἔχῃ.


ἐστιν] ‘is’. Impersonal verb. State.

καθ’ ἑαυτήν] ‘by itself’. BDAG states that isolation or separateness.

Verse 18

Text
Ἀλλὰ ἐρεῖ τις· σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω. δειξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγὼ σοι δειξώ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.

Analysis

ἔρεῖ] ‘(he) will say’. Predictive future.


πίστις] ‘faith’. Accusative of direct object of ἔχεις.

ἔχεις] ‘you have’. General present.


ἔργα] ‘works’. Accusative of direct object of ἔχω.

μοι] ‘me’. Dative of indirect object.

tὴν πίστιν] ‘faith’. Accusative of direct object of the imperative.

σου] ‘of you’. Subjective genitive.


σοι] ‘you’. Dative of indirect object.


μου] ‘of me’. Subjective genitive.


Verse 19

Text

σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστιν ὁ θεός, καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαίμονα πιστεύουσι καὶ φρίσουσιν.

Analysis


ὅτι] ‘that’. Indirect discourse.

εἷς] ‘one’. Predicate nominative.

ἐστιν] ‘is’. Impersonal verb. State.


καλῶς] ‘well’. Manner.


καὶ] ‘also’. Connective.

tὰ δαίμονα] ‘the demons’. Nominative subject.


καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

Verse 20

Text
Θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι, ὡς ἄνθρωπος κενε, ὦ πάντις χωρίς τῶν ἐργῶν ἄργη ἐστιν;

Analysis
δὲ] ‘but’. Adversative.
ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ] ‘oh empty man’. Simple address of vocative.
ὅτι] ‘that’. Indirect discourse.
ἀργή] ‘useless (worthless)’. Predicate nominative.
ἐστιν] ‘is’. Impersonal verb. State.

Verse 21

Text
Αβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἔχει ἐργῶν ἐδικαίωθη ἁνενέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον;

Analysis
ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν] ‘our father’. Nominative of apposition and genitive of relationship.
οὐκ . . . ἐδικαίωθη] ‘was not . . . justified’. This construction expects the answer yes. Constative aorist. Perfective aspect and state.
ἀνενέγκας] ‘when offering’. Temporal participle.
tὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ] ‘his son’. Accusative of apposition and genitive of relationship.
ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον] ‘on the altar’. This preposition with an accusative case indicates location.

Verse 22

Text
βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργη τοῖς ἐργοῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐργῶν ἡ πίστις ἐτελεώθη,

Analysis
βλέπεις] ‘you see’. Present in indirect discourse. Imperfective aspect and achievement.

ὅτι] ‘that’. Indirect discourse.


συνήργησε] ‘was works together’. Descriptive imperfect. Imperfective aspect and accomplishment.

τοῖς ἔργοις] ‘with (his) works’. Dative of means.

αὐτοῦ] ‘his’. Subjective genitive.

καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.


ἐπληρώθη] ‘was perfected’. Notice that ‘perfect’ has occurred twice in 1:4. Cf mature or complete. Constative aorist. Perfective aspect and achievement.

καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἡ λέγουσα· ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.

Analysis

καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

ἐπληρώθη] ‘was fulfilled’. Constative aorist. Perfective aspect and achievement.

ἡ γραφὴ] ‘the writing’. Nominative subject.

ἡ] ‘which’. Relative pronoun function.


τῷ θεῷ] ‘God’. Dative of direct object.

καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

ἐλογίσθη] ‘it was considered’. Constative aorist. Perfective aspect and achievement.

εἰς δικαιοσύνην] ‘as righteousness’. Result.

καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

φίλος] ‘the friend’. Nominative subject of ἐκλήθη.

ἐκλήθη] ‘(the friend of God) was called’. Constative aorist. Perfective aspect.

**Verse 24**

**Text**

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

**Analysis**


ὅτι] ‘that’. Indirect discourse.


δικαιοῦται] ‘(the man) is justified. Gnomic present. Imperfective aspect and state.


καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.


**Verse 25**

**Text**

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ραάβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἔξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἁγγέλους καὶ ἐτέρα ὃδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα;

**Analysis**


δὲ] ‘and’. Connective.

καὶ] ‘also’. Additional idea.


ἡ πόρνη] ‘the harlot’. Nominative in simple apposition.

οὐκ ἔξ ἔργων] ‘was not by works’. This construction expects the answer yes. Means.


ὑποδεξαμένη] ‘when welcoming (receiving)’. Temporal.


καὶ] ‘and’. Connective.

ἐτέρα ὃδῷ] ‘by different road’. Dative of means.

Verse 26

Text

 wang tò sōma χωρίς πνεύματος νεκρόν ἐστιν, σύμως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρίς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστιν.

Analysis

 wang] ‘just as’. Comparative. Cf 2:25 uses a different word but the same meaning.


tò sōma] ‘the body’. Nominative subject.


ἐστιν] ‘is’. Impersonal verb. State.

oútwç] ‘thus’. Inferential.

kàl] ‘also’. Additional idea.


ἐστιν] ‘is’. Impersonal verb. State.

CONCLUSION

Chapter one demonstrates that the real problem is not our external, but the problem of the heart. James continues this concept to chapter two. Partiality occurs due to the problem of the heart (faith). Our words become the problem due to the problem of the heart. Believers who do not match their faith with their works have the heart problem.

REFERENCES


