**Lecture 5: Faith that Bears Fruit (James and Hebrews)**

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2)

Introduction

James

*pistis* (16x); *pisteuō* (3x)

*Faith does not doubt* (1:2–8)

Proverbs 1:6 The LORD gives wisdom.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Among the mature [*tois teleiois*] we do impart wisdom

Colossians 1:28 Teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature [*teleion*] in Christ.

*diakrinō*  “to doubt”?

James 2:4 Have you not then made distinctions (*diekrithēte*) among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Mark 11:23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and thrown into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart (*mē diakrithē*), but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

What is doubt?

OED “Uncertainty as to the truth or reality of something or as to the wisdom of a course of action”; “A feeling of uncertainty; an inclination to disbelieve or hesitate”.

D Howard-Snyder *Having* doubts [is] not to be identified with doubting *that*. If one doubts *that* something is so, one is at least strongly inclined to disbelieve it; *having* doubts … lacks that implication.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Peter Enns *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our “Correct” Beliefs*[[2]](#footnote-2)

Calvin If we wish to consult the well-being of such as go astray, we must consider the character and disposition of every one; so that they who are meek and tractable may in a kind manner be restored to the right way.

*Faith does work* (2:14–26)

A different understanding of “faith” (2:14–19)

Schlatter A merciful impulse is “in its entire essence inclined to action” and so “it loses its natural goal when it breaks off before it gives”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Kamell It was her [Rahab’s] faith that … that distinguished her from her townspeople. In Joshua 2:9–11, Rahab described the fear that fell upon all the people because they heard of the works of Israel’s God and knew they were doomed. In a manner parallel to the demons in James 2:19, they knew of and feared Yahweh, but their knowledge did not save them.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Luther O it is a living, busy active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

A different understanding of “to justify” (2:20–26)

James 2:22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed [*eteleiōthē*] by his works.

James 2:24 You see that a person is *justified by works* and not by faith alone.

Romans 3:28 For we hold that one is *justified by faith* apart from works of the

law.

1 Clement 30:3 Let us join, then, with those to whom grace has been given by God. Let us clothe ourselves with unity and humility, ever exercising self-control, standing far off from all gossip and evil-speaking, *being justified by our works*, and not our words [*ergois dikaioumenoi mē logois*].

1 Clement 32:4 And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are *not justified by* ourselves [*ou di’ heautōn dikaioumetha*], nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or *works* [*ergōn*] which we have wrought in holiness of heart; *but through faith* [*dia tēs pisteōs*] by which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

James 2:25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified *by works* when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

Hebrews 11:3 *By faith* Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Hebrews

*Faith Defined (11:1)*

10:35–38 do not throw away your *confidence* [*tēn parrēsian*]…For you have need of *endurance* [*hypomonēs*]…but my righteous one shall live by *faith*,

Structure 10:35 Confidence

10:36 Endurance

10:37–39 Faith

11:1–40 Faith

12:1–13 Endurance

11:1 *hypostasis…elenchos*

ESV: Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen.

NIV: Now faith is **confidence** in what we hope for and **assurance** about what we do not see.

CSB: Now faith is the **reality** of what is hoped for, the **proof** of what is not seen.

KJV: Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.

Käsemann: As echo of the objective and divine Word, faith is consequently a certainty that is objectively established and in its surety towers above all earthly possibilities.

Chrysostom: For since the objects of hope seem to be unsubstantial, faith gives them substantiality, or rather, does not give it, but is itself their substance. For instance, the [general] resurrection has not come, nor does it exist substantially, but hope makes it substantial in our soul.

Koester: The author says not that faith *has* proof, but that faith *is* proof of things unseen… [Human faith] does not create divine reality, but divine reality creates faith… [The] unseen realities of God give proof of their existence by their power to evoke faith where otherwise there would only be unbelief. The object of Christian hope can be known by its effect upon human beings.

*The Continuity of Faith*

*Jesus the Believer?*

2:13 “I will put my trust in him”.

12:2 *archēgon…teleiōtēn*

ESV: the **founder** and **perfecter** of our faith

CSB: the **source** and **perfecter** of our faith

KJV: the **author** and **finisher** of ourfaith

NIV: the **pioneer** and **perfecter** of faith

12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Richardson After reviewing the faithful actions of Israel’s ancestors, the author says that Jesus endured a cross as the “pioneer and perfecter of faith (12.2), strongly implying that the virtue of “faith (*pistis*) was the means of his endurance and perfectly displayed while suffering the shame of crucifixion; and, Jesus’ perfect example of steadfast confidence and obedience is why the audience is exhorted to *consider him* most of all (12.3).[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Faith and Salvation*

3:18–4:3 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were *disobedient*? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of *unbelief*. 4:1 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united *by faith* with those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4:6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of *disobedience*

7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Conclusion to Hebrews and James

Overall Conclusion

1. Daniel Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith: What it is and What it is Not”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50.4 (2013): 357–372 at 359. Emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Peter Enns, *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our “Correct” Beliefs* (New York: HarperOne, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adolf Schlatter, *Faith in the New Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology*, trans. Joseph Longarino (Bellingham: Lexham, 2022), 314–315. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mariam J. Kamell, “The Concept of ‘Faith’ in Hebrews and James,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus’s Faith as the Climax of Israel’s History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2:338, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)