

12. For the presentation of the gospel to be understood, it requires the unbeliever to have the mental clarity to process incoming information from which a decision can be reached.
13. Unbelievers are destitute spiritually. Some are destitute physically and mentally. This combination requires the latter situation to be resolved before the former can have a hope of being effectively addressed.
14. The intended effectiveness is for the unbeliever to have clarity of thought when hearing the gospel in order to make an objective decision. Some people will respond positively while others negatively.
15. This is the result of the Law of Freedom. The unbeliever is a free agent and has the option to accept or reject the gospel message.
16. The body can have a negative effect on the soul. When these circumstances occur, it can often lead to negative volition when the gospel is presented because the body's deficiencies are not addressed first.
17. So by commanding the couple to, "Go! Be warm! Be filled!" James concludes the verse by asking the question, "what use is that?" The word "use" is the noun **ὄφελος** (*óphelos*): "advantage." Here is the expanded translation of the verse:

James 2:16 If a believer should say to a couple who are unbelievers, "Go in peace [**שלום** **הלך** *Halak shalom*]. Be warm and be filled," but you do not provide for them what is necessary for the body, what advantage is that? (EXT)

The Problem of Operational Death

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

1. It is personal faith in the veracity of biblical principles that allows the Holy Spirit to retain biblical thought in the believer's soul, specifically in his stream of consciousness.
2. However, doctrine retained does not become active unless it is made operational by personal volition. Those who know a lot of doctrine, but do not consistently apply it; suffer from periods of Operational Death.
3. It is the application of the Word of God that facilitates its principles into paths of least resistance. Applying biblical principles fulfills the proclamation found in Hebrews 4:12, "The Word of God is alive and powerful."

(End JAS2-75. See JAS2-76 for continuation of study at p. 751.)



4. All legitimate production in the Christian's life is only possible by knowledge of doctrinal concepts applied under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. All else is human good which can decline into evil.
5. Although the believer who functions under the Spirit's power may produce divine good, the power is in the veracity of the Word not the physical energy of the believer.
6. The advanced believer, under the power of the Spirit, should consider himself a conduit of divine power released into the scrum of the Angelic Conflict.
7. We are warriors who are making the advance in the Lord's phalanx. We are trained by the Holy Spirit. We learn to use the artillery contained in the divine armory of ideas.
8. The weapons found there are for personal internal and external application into the devil's world. The Holy Spirit is the drill Sergeant; we are combatants in the Lord's army.
9. The crisis that plagues Christendom today is the failure to function under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit through application of Bible doctrine resident in the souls of the saved.
10. This predicament has produced the problem of Operational Death due to a breakdown in the spiritual mechanics of believers. Failure to understand the doctrine—the basic doctrine—of the filling of the Holy Spirit is what allows this operation to occur.
11. Associated with this failure is the inability to process doctrine into the soul's *kardía*. Some know some doctrine, but its intrinsic power cannot be applied if the Holy Spirit is not the catalyst behind its application.
12. All production in the believer's life is dependent upon an inventory of biblical truth and its application under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Human energy, enthusiasm, and action are not—crossed by the absence of the Spirit's guidance and power.
13. Well-intentioned “good works” are neutralized by the fact that energy of the flesh can only produce human good and its protégé,¹ evil.
14. This occurs when a believer is in the throes of emotional revolt, a subject eloquently discussed by R. B. Thieme, Jr., in his book, *Reversionism*:

¹ “One who is protected or trained or whose career is furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2003), s.v. “protégé.”)

Emotional activity is designed to operate in subordination to the absolutes of Bible doctrine that reside in the mentality of the soul. If the [*kardía*] contains doctrine, the emotional response is appreciation for truth and divine viewpoint. The result is capacity for life, love, happiness. However, if the [*kardía*] is controlled by the sin nature, the authority of doctrine is rejected and the emotions react with wide mood swings—irrationality, egocentricity, instability, imbalance. (pp. 26–27)

Corrupted emotion is always the result of the sin nature's refluxing in one of three areas: the area of weakness, which produces personal sins; the lust pattern which produces trends toward legalism or antinomianism; or the area of strength, which produces human good.

Emotional revolt is tantamount to the emotion fornicating with the sin nature and with Satan's policy of good and evil.² The true function of the emotion as responder is reversed.

Once emotion assumes the role of aggressor, it becomes a tool of the sin nature. This answers a very pertinent question: Why are so many believers unable to apply doctrine even though they may take it in regularly? Emotional revolt! (p. 27)

As Bible doctrine is neglected or rejected, Christendom becomes increasingly heretical and controlled by emotionalism. The spiritual life must be based solely on the infallible Word of God; otherwise, it is merely "experience." Christians minus doctrine think and act like unbelievers. They rely on the unreliable—*human experience and human viewpoint* (Jeremiah 17:5).³ (p. 28)

15. The problem James addresses in chapters one and two is those who are hearers of the Word, but not doers of it. This may be characterized as Operational Death.
16. To be a doer of the Word depends on facilitated doctrine in the *kardía* followed by application to life and circumstances. This is not what is happening in verse 17 as James continues his analysis of Operational Death.

² In our study of *James: Chapter One*, we depicted emotion functioning as a pimp for the sin nature tempting the soul's volition. When volition responds to the temptation, the Holy Spirit exits the soul, causing resultant fornication to produce a ménage à trois: "When the lust pattern's agent provocateur copulates with free will, it creates a ménage à trois resulting in a pregnancy and, when sin gives birth, it delivers a child born dead" (James 1:15, EXT).

³ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Reversionism*, 2d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2000), 26–27, 28.



17. The verse begins with demonstrative adverb: **οὕτως (houtōs)** and the conjunction **καί (kai)**: “Even so.” This is how the NASB translates these words whereas the NIV offers, “In the same way,” which is probably better since this phrase takes us back to the comments made by the man in verse 16.
18. This person’s failure is the expression of hollow words that when interpreted mean absolutely nothing and do not address the problems confronted by the cold and famished couple.
19. When a believer is in reversionism he is operationally dead. He may know some doctrine which he accumulated by faith, but he has blackout of the soul with regard to application. He functions on human viewpoint motivated by negative volition.
20. Rather than respond in a way that alleviates the suffering of the couple, he uses a vacuous and meaningless bromide: “Go in peace—*Halak shalom*. Be warm and be filled.” They would not have asked for clothing and food if they had possessed the means of acquiring them.
21. This leads James to follow the words, “Even so,” with the phrase “the faith”: the definite article **ἡ (hē)** + **πίστις (pístis)**. It is important to note the definite article since its use refers to the whole body of doctrine associated with faith. In context, it refers to the application of doctrine to circumstances.

πίστις: faith as fidelity to Christian teaching. This point of view calls for ἔργον (érgon) as well as the kind of πίστις that represents only one side of true piety: James 2:14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 26.

That which is believed, body of faith / belief / teaching (an article of faith that was firm and unshakable). That which, according to God’s will, is to be believed.⁵
22. From these excerpts, we learn that “the faith” is technical for Bible doctrine in the soul. In our context of James 2, we find the issue is not only doctrine in the soul, but also its application to the circumstances one engages in his Christian walk.
23. The man in verse 16 did not do this. He had faith due to the fact he was a believer. He had some doctrine, but due to Operational Death he did not have the filling of the Holy Spirit, he had no recall of doctrine, and, therefore, did not apply it.

⁴ ἔργον: “Of works of faith, meaning springing from faith; with πίστις, of the faith, (James 2:14, 17–26 [cf. especially with vv. 22, 26])” (Spiros Zodhiates, ed. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 651).

⁵ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. & ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 820.



24. The end result is exposed by the phrase, ἡ (*hē*) + πίστις (*pístis*): “the faith.” This indicates he had faith, but faith is useless if it does not have an object and the object of faith for a believer is the Word of God.
25. When salvation is in view, the object of one’s faith must be Jesus Christ. Faith in anything else is useless. Faith in one’s morality—useless. Faith in one’s financial contributions to a non-profit—useless. Faith in walking the aisle, feeling sorry for you sins, joining the church, getting baptized, tithing, giving your testimony, and faith in doing good works—useless. Faith in one’s accolades from others because of doing these things—useless.
26. It is interesting that James’s epistle is the first entry in the New Testament canon. His theme so far has to do with taking in the Word of God and applying it to life and circumstances.
27. At the same time he is arguing about those who hear the working object of their faith which is the Word of God taught by James, but not placing their faith in the Word resident in their souls as the working object for its application to others.
28. The absolute summum bonum of the Christian way of life is not just the hearing of the Word, but the application of the Word. The phrase, *hē pístis*: “the faith,” must have a working object from resident doctrine in the soul.

Summary of the phrase, ἡ (*hē*) + πίστις (*pístis*): “the faith”:

1. This term refers to what is believed and in Scripture it has two major applications: (1) the working object of faith is Jesus Christ for salvation and (2) the working object for spiritual growth is Bible doctrine.
2. There are two underlying principles that pertain to both of these objects: (1) the grace of God as opposed to human works and (2) the rejection of human merit or virtue.

Romans 4:16 For this reason it is by means of faith, in order that it might be in accordance with grace; that the promise of salvation might be valid to all humanity; not only to those from the law, but to those Gentiles from Abraham’s faith⁶; who is the pattern with reference to all of us.” (EXT)

3. Because the noun *pístis* and the verb form πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) are transitive and demand objects, then their function is associated with absolute grace.

⁶ Abraham was saved when he was a Semitic Gentile, living in the third dynasty of Ur around the year of 2100 B.C. (Genesis 11:28, 31). He did not become a Jew until he was 99 years old (Genesis 17).