

12. Even done biblically, the production of divine good is limited by the doctrinal inventory of the believer. Consistent and legitimate application to life and circumstances requires an inventory of biblical principles in the *kardía*.
13. I would impose the following necessity to every believer who wishes to develop a highly functional inventory of problem-solving devices in his soul. He must be *in cathedra*. He must be “in the chair.”
14. Faith must have an object for inculcation and application to occur. Faith in the veracity of the Word results in inculcation while faith in resident doctrine in the stream of consciousness results in application.
15. Failure of application results in no works since faith by itself is dead.

James 2:17 So also faith, if it does not have production, keeps on being observably dead, being by itself. (EXT)

Paragraph. 2: The Principle of Vindication: James 2:18–20.

James 2:18 But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (NASB)

1. This paragraph is introduced by a debater’s technique. James introduces the straw-man technique: “An argument or opponent set up so as to be easily refuted or defeated.”¹
2. James is going to utilize classical rhetoric to defeat the notion that works are primary to faith in the function of the Christian *modus operandi*. We will observe his use of the straw-man method of argument in verse 18.
3. A brief introduction to this system of argument is the subject of George A. Kennedy’s book, *Classical Rhetoric*, and its chapter, “Judeo-Christian Rhetoric”:

Scriptural truth must be apprehended by the listener, not proved by the speaker. Somewhat surprisingly the early Church adopted the Greek word *pístis* [faith] to mean “Christian faith.” In classical Greek, the meanings of *pístis* range over the spectrum of “trust, belief, persuasion”; it was, however, the word used by Aristotle for proof in rhetoric, and this usage became standard among teachers of rhetoric.

¹ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th ed., s.v. “straw man.”



The acceptance of *pístis* to mean “Christian faith” by the early Church implied at the very least that faith came from hearing speech, and provided a future opening for the acceptance of classical rhetoric within Christian discourse.

Rhetorical criticism of the gospels and of the other parts of the New Testament has made great progress in the late twentieth century; a substantial body of scholarship is now available. An important goal of rhetorical criticism is to try to hear the biblical texts as an ancient audience would hear them, and that means an audience familiar with classical rhetorical practice whether from study in school or from experience of the secular world. Among the early Christians there were many simple people with little formal education, but there were many others who had had some formal training in Greek language and rhetoric, and in the sophisticated Greek-speaking communities of Antioch, Miletus, Ephesus, Corinth, Alexandria, Athens, and Rome most hearers would have had some expectations of how a speech should be arranged and delivered. The gospels and the epistles were read aloud in Christian churches, and necessarily received by the congregation as speech.²

4. James is obviously one of the pastors who knew the structure of Classical rhetoric and utilizes it in his argument against those who insist that works take priority over faith.
5. James’s argument begins with the adversative conjunction **ἀλλά** (*allá*): “But.” This is followed by the indefinite pronoun, **τις** (*tis*). It is masculine singular gender, but, since indefinite, it refers not to, “a man,” but to, “someone.”
6. Part of debater’s technique is to never address an individual by name, but anonymously. Therefore, the sentence begins, “But someone,” followed by the future active indicative of the verb **λέγω** (*légō*): “will say.”
7. The future tense is predictive summarizing the action indicated will happen in the future therefore it is asserted that, “someone will say this.”
8. This is followed by what James’s Straw Man says, “You have faith,” is the present active indicative of **ἔχω** (*échō*): “You have.” The present tense indicates what some other person claims to have as a continuing possession.
9. What is contended is that this other person claims to possess continuing “faith,” the Greek noun **πίστις** (*pístis*): “faith,” a system of learning that results in placing confidence in a specific object, i.e., Bible doctrine.

² George A. Kennedy, “New Testament Rhetoric,” in *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2d. ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 146–47.



10. An unusual circumstance regarding the noun *pístis* is the absence of the definite article. Its absence generally places great emphasis on the following noun. Further, in English its absence often indicates obscurity.
11. The absence of the definite article requires the translation to read, “But someone will say, ‘I have *a* faith,’” but not ‘*the* faith.’ This obscurity is further compounded by the absence of an object for this unparticular faith.
12. The next word in the verse is the grammatical term, crasis (krā'sīs), whose use is described by the following excerpts:

Κράσις [*krásis*]: mixing, blending of things. Grammar, *crásis*, i.e. the combination of the vowels of two syllables into one long vowel or diphthong.³

Crasis: Greek grammar. The combination of the vowels of two syllables, especially at the end of one word and beginning of the next, into one long vowel or diphthong; as in *καὶ ἐγώ* for *καὶ ἐγώ* [*kagō*: *kaí egō*].⁴

Crasis Form: *καὶ ἐγώ*: A crasis form of *καὶ* + *ἐγώ*; a personal affirmation adding to or confirming a previous statement: “and I.”⁵

13. The unbeliever would say, “You have a faith without an object and I (*καὶ ἐγώ* [*kagō*]).” This crasis is a form taken from Classical Greek and used as a debater’s technique. It also indicates James’s knowledge of the formal structure of debate.⁶
14. Following *kagō* is the present active indicative of the verb, *ἔχω* (*échō*): “I have,” followed by the plural noun, *ἔργον* (*érgon*): “works.” In this debate, the unbeliever asserts he has numerous works while the believer has a little faith without an object.
15. This opening salvo is simply the set-up for the Straw Man which follows.
16. The Straw Man’s argument begins with the aorist active imperative⁷ of the verb *δείκνυμι* (*deíknymi*): “to prove or make clear by evidence or reasoning, *explain, prove something*; James 2:18.”⁸

³ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., rev. Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 990.

⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. “crasis.”

⁵ Rodney J. Decker, *Reading Koine Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 244.

⁶ The development of the grammatical form, crasis, is thought to have originated from the Greek’s aversion to pronouncing too many vowels in a row so they blended two words to form one.

⁷ This is imperative mood 21 in the Book of James.

⁸ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 214–15.



17. The aorist tense is ingressive, “used to stress the beginning of an action or the entrance into a state.”⁹ This lends urgency to the statement, therefore it is translated, “You begin to show me your faith—**πίστις (pístis)**—without an object now.” This is the beginning of the argument’s Straw Man technique aimed against his opponent’s inability to perform works.
18. The active voice requires immediate action to occur by the Straw Man accompanied by the imperative mood which is a command to demonstrate his faith, which we know does not reference a biblical inventory.
19. If the Straw Man does not place his faith in Scripture, then he will not be able to produce any works. This is brought out next by the preposition of separation **χωρίς (chōrís)**: “by itself; without.”
20. The challenge is for the Straw Man to show his faith “without the works” or “by itself.” “The works” is the definite article **τῶν (tṓn)**, plus the ablative of separation of **ἔργον (érgon)**: “the works.”
21. Notice that in the argument the word “faith” has an indefinite article: “a,” indicating “any” faith, while the word “works” in plural and has a definite article “the” indicating “several” works.

James 2:18a But someone will
say this, “You have a faith without an object and I
have works; you demonstrate to me your faith,
apart from the works ...

Summary so far:

1. The principle that is missing in the Straw Man argument is the requirement of a working object for faith. The noun **πίστις (pístis)** and the verb **πιστεύω (pisteúō)** are transitive and demand a working object for the production of divine good.
2. The working object of faith in any Christian’s life is his resident inventory of biblical knowledge. An advancing knowledge of concepts, categories, and doctrines in the stream of consciousness for application to life and circumstances that result is in the production of divine good, or in our context, “works.”
3. Faith that is without a working object is dead. This occurs in the soul of the believer who avoids serious Bible study, does not know the process of learning it under the Spirit-filled system, and thus has no meaningful inventory to apply.

⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 558.



4. This is the circumstance we have already observed in:

James 2:14 What advantage, my fellow members of the royal family, if anyone alleges he has faith in the Bible, but keeps on not having production? Is faith alone able to evangelize his neighbor? No, it cannot. (EXT)

5. Faith with a working object results in the production from divine guidance from a believer's inventory of ideas and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.
6. However, James is setting up a debater's technique by introducing the thinking of the Straw Man who emphasizes works, but refuses to recognize the necessity of doctrine as the working object of one's faith.
7. Those who put works as top priority for believers do not understand how divine good is produced, consequently their criticisms sound good to the untrained ear, but they are the arguments of spiritual childhood.
8. The basic reproach is to criticize the predominance of time spent in Bible study as compared to the little amount of time in application.
9. James's effort is to characterize works as the incidental result of those who have spent significant time in Bible study.
10. The issue James is stressing is that Bible study develops an arsenal of biblical principles and doctrines that serve as the working object of one's faith.
11. When a believer does not consistently develop an advancing biblical inventory of ideas, then his faith does not have a working object and his works are human good and potentially evil.
12. The "works-first" approach also infiltrates into the doctrine of salvation. The working object of one's faith for salvation is Jesus Christ, but the "works-emphasis" approach has developed the false doctrine of doing "good works" for salvation.
13. Whether a person is saved, or not, this "works-emphasis" philosophy distracts from the grace plan of God. The working object of a believer's faith is the ever-increasing inventory of divine categories of absolute truth resident in his soul.
14. It is from this inventory that enables a believer to produce divine good under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit. The end result of the philosophy of showing one's faith by his works is the subtle elimination of the working object which is the Word of God.

