

Will Groben: Why I think there is no “diatribe” in James 2.18

¹⁸ Ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγὼ σοὶ δείξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.

Translation 1:

But someone will say, “You [James] have faith and I [Someone] have works.”
Show me [James] your [reader’s] faith without works, and I [James] will show you [reader] my [James’] faith by works.

Problems:

1. Someone is accusing James of faith without works here, which is opposite of James’ true situation.
2. James responds to the thought that he has faith and Someone has works by asking the reader to show faith without works so James could show his faith by his works. This contrasts with what Someone said.

Translation 2:

But someone will say you [reader] have faith and I [James] have works;
Show me [James] your [reader’s] faith without works, and I [James] will show you [reader] my [James’] faith by works.

I believe there should be no quotation marks in this passage. James stated that someone might contend that his readers have faith [without works] and James has works [though also faith], the idea being that the concepts can be separated. James finished the verse with the challenge for the readers to show their faith somehow without any works and he would show his faith by his works. This solves both problems from above. The problem I mentioned in class, that σὺ is singular, is not any more of a problem for my translation than the NET’s, since σου and σοὶ are singular also.