

34. James introduces the final paragraph of his second chapter by reviewing a historical event that is well-known to those in his congregation. The subject he wishes to amplify is the importance of not only hearing the instruction from the Word of God but obeying it through application.
35. It is not James' fault that two thousand years later some misguided theologian distorted his illustration into a works program for salvation. Yet, this is exactly what has occurred by these sources pilfering a phrase that not only misses James's point but distorts the gospel of salvation in the process.
36. "Justified by works" is not James' polemic against other New Testament writers who profess "justification by faith." The contexts for each address completely different circumstances.
37. Justification by faith for salvation is a subject Paul addressed in Romans. Absolutely no works can be offered in that application of the phrase. Here is Paul's explanation of the term:

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Mosaic Law, the righteousness of divine integrity has been confirmed by the law and the prophets in the Tanakh,

v. 22 this is the righteousness which belongs to the integrity of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; (for there is no distinction between the unbelieving Jew and unbelieving Gentile;

v. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God),

v. 24 receiving justification freely by His grace through the redemption from the slave market of sin in Christ Jesus. (EXT)

38. Salvation of the unbeliever's soul is acquired when the lost person directs his faith to the working object of Jesus Christ resulting in salvation by means of grace. This volitional decision results in him being justified before the Supreme Court of Heaven by means of faith alone, not by any means of works.

Romans 3:28 Therefore we logically conclude then that man is vindicated, justified by means of nonmeritorious faith apart from works of the Law. (EXT)

39. Post salvation, the believer is instructed to:



2 Peter 3:18a Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

39. This “growth” through “grace and knowledge” describes the works a believer must perform while being trained as a good soldier for Christ. Several passages encourage the inculcation of “wisdom and knowledge”:

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Ephesians 1:17 ... the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις (*epígnōsis*)] of Him.

Colossians 2:2 ... attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

v. 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NASB)

40. The Greek word for “wisdom” is the noun **σοφία** (*sophía*) and is defined thusly:

In respect to divine things, insight, deep understanding, represented as a divine gift; the ability to regulate one’s relationship with God; insight imparted from God. Divine wisdom, including the ideas of infinite skill, insight, knowledge, purity. The knowledge of how to regulate one’s relationship with God.¹

41. The Greek word for “knowledge” is the noun **γνῶσις** (*gnōsis*) and defined accordingly:

Objectively spoken of what is known: religious knowledge, i.e., doctrine; a deeper Christian knowledge. The faculty of unfolding the deeper knowledge or fundamental principles of the Christian religion.²

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “σοφία,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1300–1301.

² Ibid., “γνῶσις,” 378.



42. It is the accumulation of wisdom and knowledge from serious study of the Word of God that the believer is enabled to build an inventory of divine guidance by which he can advance from being a hearer of the Word to a doer of the Word.
43. The issue in the Christian way of life is to become enabled to apply divine thought to life and circumstances. To accomplish this objective the believer must grow in grace which in time results in the accumulation of divine thought in the soul.
44. Without such an advance, the believer is handicapped in the field of application. He is a soldier for Christ, but he has no artillery of thought to deploy in the invisible war of the Angelic Conflict.
45. No military officer would deploy his troops into a hot zone without any training, without any weapons, or without a strategy. They would be systematically slaughtered on the battlefield.
46. It is not God's desire that His people suffer the similar fate in the battle of ideas in the devil's world. That's why He has made available the completed canon of Scripture, so each believer can avail himself to the teaching of Bible doctrine.
47. God provides all the logistics necessary for the advance, but the believer must resolve to learn the "wisdom and knowledge" so he can apply it in his daily walk.
48. But without an inventory of thought to apply, the believer becomes a casualty. Such a situation at best is a case of hearing the Bible taught, but not applying it to the details of life.
49. It is this process that we have been studying in James, the use of the Law of Freedom to make the decision to pursue truth rather than ignore the responsibility.
50. A high inventory of biblical wisdom and knowledge transforms a hearer believer into a doer believer. This is characterized by the phrase "vindicated by works."
51. Vindication is the result of using one's faith to consult the working objects of Bible doctrine and then applying them. Just as Abraham built up his inventory resulting in his successful performance on Mount Moriah, so also the Christian believer is also vindicated by works when he applies doctrine to his life.
52. This group of doctrines is what emerges from James 2:21, **(1)** the Law of Freedom, **(2)** utilization of working objects, **(3)** vindication by works, and **(4)** becoming a doer of the Word.



Here now is an expanded translation of:

James 2:21 Abraham, the progenitor of our Jewish heritage, was he not vindicated by works when his volition consulted wisdom and knowledge from the working objects of the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant and from that inventory from his own volition offered up his only son, Isaac, on the altar? Yes, he was. (EXT)

PRINCIPLE: Justification, or better, vindication occurs when a believer places his faith in the working objects of doctrines in his stream of consciousness for the purpose of producing divine good.

James now takes the principles in verse 21 and develops applications:

James 2:22 Do you see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; (NASB)

1. This verse begins with the present active indicative of the verb **βλέπω (blépō)**: “to see.” This is an instantaneous present tense which means the action is finished at the moment of speaking.
2. This has to do with comprehension of principles of doctrine contained in verse 21 and the conclusion that faith, **πίστις (pístis)**, had working objects. These working objects in this case were the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant.
3. The verb “to work” is the progressive imperfect active indicative of **συνεργέω (sunergéō)**: “to work with.” This is a compound: the prefix, **σύν (sún)**: “together with,” and the plural noun, **ἔργον (érgon)**: “works”: “to work in coordination with.”
4. It is a progressive imperfect which “describes an action that is in progress in past time from the viewpoint of the writer. It speaks of simultaneity with another action.”³
5. This translation reads smoothly this way, “Do you now comprehend that faith was working simultaneously in coordination with.” The faith indicated here refers to Abraham’s continuous reference to the working objects of his faith, i.e., the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant.
6. This culminated in him becoming a doer of the Word, indicated by the prepositional phrase, “with his works,” the plural of *érgon*.

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 543.



7. The plural here refers to Abraham's consistent accumulation of information in his soul which convinced him that God was using him to initiate a new race of Homo sapiens from which would immerge the Messiah.
8. Faith coordinated with works. The works were the working objects of the Abrahamic Covenant. Out from the source of these works, "faith was made perfect." The word "perfect" is the aorist passive indicative of the verb **τελειόω (teleiōō)**: "complete, mature, made perfect, to reach the intended goal."
9. James is now presenting answers to the question he posed in James 2:21. (See the expanded translation on page 464.)
10. After weeks of studying the spiritual growth process that took place in Abraham's soul, we were able to observe his systematic advance toward spiritual maturity.
11. What kept him focused were the challenges he faced. Some he did not immediately pass but ultimately, his spiritual progress was validated on Mount Moriah indicated by the verb, *teleiōō*: "spiritual maturity."
12. What kept pushing Abraham forward? Challenges, difficulties, poor decisions, misunderstandings, and following bad advice. **(1)** He was told to leave his home town and its culture. He made the trip to Canaan after spending a period of time in Haran. **(2)** Because of a famine, he took Sarai to Egypt and told the Pharaoh she was his sister prompting the Lord to intervene on their part. **(3)** He had to fight a war with the Mesopotamian Allied Army to free Lot from danger. **(4)** He took bad advice from his wife, Sarai, which produced the adulterine, Ishmael. **(5)** He bartered with the Lord about sparing the Pentapolis where Lot resided. **(6)** He made another poor decision during his audience with Abimelech, king of Gerar, again introducing Sarah as his sister, and **(7)** he did not properly handle the matter with Hagar and Ishmael when he dismissed them into the wilderness.
13. These were the actions of a man who had to grow in grace, not only for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, but also to organize his thoughts regarding his relationship with the Lord and with others.
14. The verb *teleiōō* means "to reach a goal." The goal was spiritual maturity. This objective is more efficiently attained when the believer efficiently resolves pressures in life. Poor decisions limit future options while good decisions expand future options.
15. Coming out of Ur, Abraham was not an extraordinary believer. He may be described by the Latin term, *a posse ad esse*: "From possibility to reality."



16. This is who we are the day we are saved. Possession of all the imputed assets at salvation, we have the potential of becoming a mature believer, but the attainment of that reality requires the inculcation of Bible doctrines that become working objects for application to life and circumstances.
17. The goal to be reached is spiritual maturity. The exigencies we confront during the growth process challenge the volition of everyone. Some find these tests to be more than they can bear while others press forward believing that grace will find a way.
18. These challenges are designed as checkpoints along the way. The first test of the believer is to see if he will apply what he knows. Application to the circumstance must have biblical principles in the *kardía* that can be applied.
19. Ignorance of the problem-solving device or reluctance to apply it results in a delay in the advance. Recall and application resolves the issue and progress is made.
20. The obvious conclusion is that doctrine must be in the soul as an inventory of working objects for the resolution of these checkpoints when they occur.
21. The key to application is faith in the veracity of the working object. In fact, faith must have working objects if resolutions are to occur. If so, then one's faith is perfected.

James 2:22 Do you now comprehend that faith in the Abrahamic Covenant was working simultaneously in coordination with his works on Mount Moriah and out from the source of these works, faith was made complete, mature, perfected; (EXT)

Principles:

1. Faith must have working objects in the soul made up of promises, categories of systematic theology, doctrines, and wisdom as the summum bonum.
2. Through spiritual growth these accumulate into facilitated working objects for problem-solving, spiritual advance, and expert analysis of the passing scene.
3. When the believer does not advance from the status quo of salvation, then he is stymied in his spiritual growth, he lives the life of an unbeliever, and his “production” consists of human viewpoint, human good, and evil.



4. This is the reason James was so emphatic in James 1:22–24 about the necessity of not only hearing the Word taught but also doers of the Word:

James 1:22 But keep on becoming doers of the implanted Word, and not only hearers who deceive themselves due to self-induced stupidity.

v. 23 For if, and it is true, anyone is a hearer of the Word in the *noús* and not a doer from the *kardía*, such a person, is like a nobleman who looks contemplatively at his facial features in a mirror;

v. 24 for once he had continued to contemplate himself intently in the mirror and departed, he has the existing result of immediately disregarding what kind of man he habitually and regularly was. (EXT)

5. The believer cannot be a doer until he first becomes a conscientious hearer of the Word. At that point his Law of Freedom must submit to those things heard by putting them into action as a “doer of the implanted Word.”
6. Therefore, hearing and doing work in tandem. Hearing must occur first and what is heard must begin the process of being facilitated as a primary behavior pattern.
7. This process is moved along by positive volition to its application to life and circumstances. This is how a believer becomes a doer of the Word.
8. Abraham was inculcating information over the course of 45 years. Initially they were retained in his stream of consciousness as “doctrine retained” but not applied.
9. In the early years, personal experiences caused him to apply at times but not do so in others. Spiritual growth eventually enabled him to consistently execute what he had learned.
10. The five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant were ultimately facilitated in his soul, he placed his personal faith in their veracity and what they meant to him and to his prophesied posterity.
11. When he was approached by the Lord in Genesis 22:1–2 and given instructions to take Isaac to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering, his working objects responded.



12. Abraham began as a hearer of the Word. He went through the tests for application and ultimately passed them. He knew that the Lord's Word to him was immutable and must be fulfilled.
13. When the day came to place his faith in the working objects of the Abrahamic Covent, he did not waver; he "rose early, saddled his donkey, took two of his young men, Isaac his son, split wood, mounted up, and rode out" (Genesis 22:3).
14. Abraham had accomplished the objective of making the link between faith and the necessary working objects of doctrine in his soul.

James 2:22 Do you now comprehend that faith in the Abrahamic Covenant was working simultaneously in coordination with his works on Mount Moriah and out from the source of these works, faith was made complete, mature, perfected; (EXT)

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God? (NASB)

1. James now goes back to where this whole process began, indicated by the phrase, ἡ γραφή (*hē graphē*): "the Scripture." It is followed by the culminative aorist passive indicative of the verb πληρόω (*plērōō*): "was fulfilled."

πληρόω: To fulfill, bring to a full end, accomplish, complete. By implication, to make perfect, accomplish an end.⁴

2. The aorist tense is culminative, it is used to stress the cessation of an act or state and brings the event to a conclusion and completes the action.
3. James introduces it with "which says," the present active participle of the verb, λέγω (*légō*): To recount; to utter definite words, connected and significant speech equal to discourse; to put forth, propound."⁵
4. James now quotes a specific verse in Scripture which he confirms "was fulfilled": Genesis 15:6, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness."

⁴ Zodhiates, "πληρόω," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (1993), 1178.

⁵ Ibid., "λέγω," 913.



5. The verb “believed,” is the constative aorist active indicative of **πιστεύω** (*pisteúō*): “to believe.” The constative aorist can occur in an instant of time, but it gathers up into one entirety the length of time involved.
6. The active voice tells us that Abraham produced the action at the moment he believed in Christ while the indicative mood is declarative representing the verbal action from the viewpoint of historical reality.
7. Abraham’s faith had to have a working object which comes next, the proper noun **Θεός** (*Theós*). To identify which member of the Trinity is indicated takes us back to the Hebrew of Genesis 15:6 where we find the word, “Lord,” the tetragrammaton containing four Hebrew letters, **יהוה** (*Yehowah*), presented here with vowel points.
8. The Jews would not pronounce this word, so they chose to use the word **יהוה** (*'Athonay*) which appears in English Bibles in all capital letters: LORD.” We know that the Person of the Trinity being referenced is the Second. God the Father is never revealed visually, and God the Holy Spirit cannot be seen.
9. Therefore, the only person of the Trinity that can be observed is Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament in a Theophany, the manifestation of the person of Jesus Christ in His preincarnate state.
10. Theophany is a doctrine that identifies the appearances of Jesus Christ before the First Advent as the manifest Person of the Trinity. In the Old Testament there were several appearances in which He is revealed: in the form of a man, the angel of the Lord, the pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day at the Tabernacle, the burning Bush, the Shekinah Glory.
11. It was Jesus Christ who evangelized Abram in the context of Genesis 15:6, an event that the grammar of both the Old and New Testament texts indicate occurred in Ur of the Chaldeans prior to his departure to Haran.
12. The working object of Abraham’s faith was *'Athonay*, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God the Father then imputed to him His perfect righteousness.
13. “Reckoned” is the NASB’s English translation of the constative aorist *passive* indicative of the verb, **λογίζομαι** (*logízomai*). This is an accounting term that in this context reveals God the Father “had previously credited” His righteousness to Abraham’s account.
14. The constative aorist regards the action of the verb in its entirety, regardless of its extent or duration. In this case, the imputation of divine righteousness was credited to Abraham’s account in a yoctosecond.



15. The passive voice indicates that Abraham received the action of the verb, *logízomai*. Previously Abraham produced the action of placing his personal faith in the working object of Jesus Christ.

16. This event is reported initially in:

Genesis 15:6 And he [Abram] had been caused to believe [Hiph‘il causative perfect: in the past with results that last forever] in the Lord; and God kept on crediting [Qal imperfect] it [Abram’s faith in the Lord] to him for righteousness [permanent imputation in time and eternity].
(EXT)

17. Although this verse occurs in Genesis 15:6, the Hiph‘il causative perfect places the time of the event’s occurrence in the past. Abram could not fully comprehend divine guidance, nor could he respond to it by application as an unbeliever.

18. This means that Abram placed his personal faith in Messiah while living in Ur when the Lord first approached him with Paragraph One of the Abrahamic Covenant.

19. James concludes verse 23 with this clause, “... and he was called the friend of God.” The verb “called” is the aorist passive indicative of *καλέω* (*kaléō*). It refers to an honorary citation, an identifying name or title.

20. Abraham’s honorary appellation is stated next, “friend of God.” This is a quote borrowed from Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, in his appeal to the Lord for His protection from the armies of the Moabites and Ammonites in:

2 Chronicles 20:7 “Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?”

20. The word “friend” in 2 Chronicles is *רֵעַ* (*‘ahav*) and in James is *φίλος* (*phílos*); both mean “love.” In neither text is the noun preceded by the definite article “the” in the Hebrew or Greek texts. This absence places special emphasis on the noun.⁶

21. *Phílos* is the strongest word for love in the Bible and should not be translated “friend,” but “loved one of God” or “one whom God loves.”

(End JAS2-47. See JAS2-48 for continuation of study at page 471.)

⁶ English translations of James 2:23 read, “the friend of God” in the NASB and KJV but is correctly absent in those of the NIV and NET.

