

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."

