

## C. The Working Objects

1. Transitive verbs must have an object. The verb **πιστεύω** (*pisteúō*): “to believe,” is an example and John 3:16 illustrates this principle:

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son [ Jesus Christ ], that whoever believes [ πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) ] in Him [ εἰς αὐτόν (*eis autós*): in Jesus ] shall not perish [ in the lake of fire ], but have eternal life.

2. In this verse, the working object is Jesus Christ. His work on the cross involved the divine imputation of the sins of the entire human race upon Him and their subsequent judgment.
3. Those whose working object for their faith is Jesus Christ have the results of being delivered from the lake of fire and the imputation of eternal life.
4. Post salvation, believers are tasked with the objective of developing within their mentality a high inventory of biblical principles, doctrines, commands, and problem-solving devices.
5. This ever-increasing inventory of divine thought, direction, and guidance results in the acquisition of “working objects” for his faith.
6. Whereas at salvation the working object for one faith is Jesus Christ, post-salvation, the working object for one’s faith is the Word of God present in his soul.
7. In each of these categories there is an ultimate result of justification. At salvation, faith in Christ results in justification by means of faith in Him and results in the imputation of divine righteousness to the believer.
8. Justification by works is the result of the believer placing his faith in the working object of the Word of God in order to accomplish divine good.

**Romans 4:13** For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

**Romans 4:16, 22<sup>1</sup>** For this reason it is by means of faith in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law [ **Jews** ], but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham [ **Gentiles** ], who is the father of us all, **v. 22** and therefore it [ **faith in Christ** ] was credited to Abraham as righteousness [ **justification by faith** ].

9. In the parenthesis that includes verses 17–21 we see Abraham building an inventory of doctrine that will develop into working objects of Abraham’s faith which resulted in his justification by works in James 2:21:

**Romans 4:18** In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “So shall you descendants be” [ **Genesis 15:5b** ].

**v. 19** Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb;

**v. 20** yet, with respect to the promises of God [ **the working objects of Abraham’s faith** ], he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith [ **advance to spiritual maturity, giving glory to God** ] [ **grace orientation** ],

**v. 21** and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform [ **see Hebrews 6:13–15; James 2:21** ]. (NASB)

10. In James 2:21 and following, the offering of Isaac was the production of a mature believer functioning with maximum doctrine in his soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Verses 17–21 is a parenthesis that emphasizes the missing link between salvation and spiritual maturity. Abraham is the pattern that exists between salvation adjustment to the justice of God and maturity adjustment to the integrity of God.



11. This passage refers to the 50-year period of spiritual growth in which Abraham advanced to spiritual maturity. The working objects for his faith were the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant that resulted in his reliance on the integrity of God.
12. Abraham's doctrinal rationale that gave him the confidence to sacrifice Isaac is addressed by the writer of Hebrews in:

**Hebrews 11:17** By faith rest [ doctrine resident in his *kardia* ], Abraham, when he was tested, [ *πειράζω* (*peirázō*): evaluation under pressure ], offered up [ *προσφέρω* (*prosphérō*): as a hearer he became a doer ] Isaac. He who repeatedly had received [ *ἀναδέχομαι* (*anadéchomai*): to seize and lay hold of what is believed ] the promises [ five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant in the divine decree ], yet he was ready to begin the process of offering up as a sacrifice, his only son.

**v. 18** Toward whom [ Abraham ] it had been communicated [ constative aorist passive indicative of *λαλέω* (*laléō*): “repeatedly” ], “In Isaac your gamete shall be designated” [ Genesis 22:12c; predictive future passive indicative, prophetic of a new race, the Jew ].

**v. 19** He [ Abraham ] having calculated [ aorist middle participle of *λογίζομαι* (*logízomai*): an accounting term: add up the facts and conclude ] that God also was able [ the adjective *δυνατός* (*dunatós*): omnipotence ] to raise up [ aoristic present active infinitive of *ἐγείρω* (*egeíró*): instantly by resuscitation ] Isaac out from the dead; for which reason also he recovered [ culminative aorist middle indicative of *κομίζω* (*komízō*): flashback to Genesis 22 ] him by means of a comparison [ *παραβολή* (*parabolḗ*): equivalent to *τύπος* (*týpos*): “type” ] to the cross. (EXT)

13. Paul writes in Romans about Abraham's faith in the working object of Jesus Christ for salvation. The apostle uses Abraham as the subject of a rhetorical question in his arguments to Jewish legalists. He argues how Abraham and Isaac were saved before the institution of the Mosaic Law which they revere.



**Romans 4:1** Therefore to what conclusion are we forced to declare [ future active indicative of ἐρέω (*eréō*): introduces a rhetorical question as a debater's technique to communicate a point of doctrine ] that Abraham, our forefather [ προπάτωρ (*propátōr*): progenitor the Jewish race ], in his earthly life, has discovered [ perfect active infinitive of εὐρίσκω (*heurískō*): the completed action of finding out for oneself ]?

**Romans 4:2** [ Protasis ] For if we assume that [ εἰ (*ei*): expresses to legalistic Judaizers a condition which is hypothetical ] Abraham was justified [ aorist passive indicative of δικαιόω (*dikaiōō*): 1st-class condition, and it is considered to be true ] by means of works [ ἔργον (*érgon*): human energy ], he has [ progressive present active indicative of ἔχω (*échō*): continuous action in a debater's technique ] a basis for boasting [ καύχημα (*kaúchēma*): exultation ], but [ ἀλλά (*allá*): adversative conjunction introducing the Apodosis ] not before God.

**Romans 4:3** For what does [ λέγω (*légō*): present of ongoing duration ] the Scripture continuously say? “Abraham believed [ aorist active indicative of πιστεύω (*pisteúō*): constative indicating momentary action] God [ Θεός (*Theós*)<sup>2</sup>: Jesus Christ ], and his faith was credited [ culminative aorist passive indicative of λογίζομαι (*logízomai*): imputed ] to Abraham's account for righteousness.”

**v. 4** But the one who works [ ἐργάζομαι (*ergázomai*): human energy ] for salvation his compensation is not credited to his account according to grace but, in contrast, according to debt.

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<sup>2</sup> In Genesis 15:6 the divine name in Hebrew is יהוה (Yehowah, or YHWH), sans vowels, and has traditionally not been pronounced, primarily out of respect for its sacredness. Whenever Hebrew readers found these letters, they always substituted for them the word יהוה (athonay): “Lord.”



**Romans 4:5** **But** [ δέ (*dé*): the antithesis of v. 4 is grace ] **to him who does not work** [ negative conjunction μή (*mē*): “does not,” plus the present active participle ἐργάζομαι (*ergázomai*): “to exert energy” ], **but** [ (*dé*): conjunction of contrast ] **instantaneously believes** [ aoristic present active participle of πιστεύω (*pisteúō*): “faith alone” ] **in Him who perpetually justifies** [ static present active participle of δικαιόω (*dikaióō*) ] **the ungodly** [ ἀσεβής (*asebēs*): unbeliever ], **his faith** [ πίστις (*pístis*): absence of works ] **is credited** [ present passive indicative of λογίζομαι (*logízomai*): “credited to his account” ] **for righteousness** [ δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosúnē*): “the imputation of divine righteousness” ]. (EXT)

14. The passages in Romans and Hebrews confirm the stark differences between Abraham’s faith in Messiah for salvation, Genesis 15:6, and his faith in Messiah to accomplish divine-good production, the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant and his works on Mount Moriah.
15. It is the latter that is the subject in James’s reference in James 2:21. We have spent an extensive amount of time confirming the difference between these two working objects in the life of Abraham.
16. We have studied these subjects beginning with JAS2-35, page 341, and concluding with JAS2-46, page 455, a total of 115 pages of research.
17. From this exhaustive study we have developed enough background information to construct an expanded translation. Let’s start out with the NASB and go from there:

**James 2:21** **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?**

1. This verse begins with the proper noun Abraham who is identified by James as “our father.” James is the writer. He is a Jew. His parents were Joseph and Mary, each recorded in the chart pedigree of Messiah going back to Solomon and Nathan respectively.

2. The chart pedigree is traced further back in history from David to Judah who was assigned the honor of leadership over the Jewish people. It is from the tribe of Judah that Israelite kings would emerge.
3. Judah's father was Jacob whose name was changed to Israel and was a son of Isaac, the first full-blooded, natural-born son of Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish race.
4. Those gathered in the synagogue in Jerusalem were also Jews, their lineages traced back on one of the twelve sons of Israel, each found in the chart pedigree of Abraham.
5. Having identified Abraham as the subject, James than poses a question, "Was he not justified," the aorist passive indicative of the verb **δικαίωω** (*dikaiōō*): "vindicated."
6. The culminative aorist indicates it is the main verb while the passive voice means Abraham received vindication. The indicative mood verifies this as a historical reality.
7. This culminative aorist looks back to the summum bonum<sup>3</sup> of Abraham's life, the point when he applied maximum doctrine to the situation God assigned him.
8. The Book of Hebrews commands believers "to not forsake our own assembling together" (Hebrews 10:25) which refers to consistent inculcation of divine viewpoint by means of Bible study.
9. However, even the most consistent students of the Word have not obtained the objective if, although hearers, they are not also doers. The divinely desired sequence of events occurs when doctrine is the working object in the soul which under the Law of Freedom produces divine good.
10. We have studied the result of both options in two passages:

**1 Corinthians 3:11** For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid which is Jesus Christ.

**v. 12** Now if anyone keeps on building on this foundation: **gold silver, precious stones, wood hay, straw,**

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<sup>3</sup> The supreme good from which all others are derived (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2003), 11th ed., s.v. "summum bonum.")

**1 Corinthians 3:13** each man's production will become obvious for the day [ **evaluation tribunal of Christ** ] shall declare it, because it shall be revealed with fire. The fire itself shall test every man's work [ **divine good vis à vis human good** ] of what quality it is.

**v. 14** If any man's work [ **divine-good production** ] endures which he has built in time, he will receive a reward.

**v. 15** If any man's work [ **energy of the flesh** ] is burned up, he will suffer loss [ **of reward** ]; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.  
(EXT)

**2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the evaluation tribunal of Christ for the purpose that each one may receive back the things done through his body, according to what he has done in time whether **good of intrinsic value** or **worthless**. (EXT)

11. The events at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ are the final exam which results in believers being vindicated by the acknowledgement of divine-good production in time.
12. The best word to translate “justification,” is “vindication” because it best defines the Greek verb, **δικαίωω (dikaiōō)**. Let's first consult a Greek lexicon and then an English dictionary:

**Dikaiōō (2) to render a favorable verdict, vindicate; by or on the basis of works, by what one does; cp. James 2:21; by oneself as a result of one's own accomplishments.**<sup>4</sup>

**Vindicate. To clear of accusation, blame, suspicion, or doubt with supporting arguments or proof. Vindication. 1. The act of vindicating or condition of being vindicated. 2. Something that provides evidence or support for a claim or argument.**<sup>5</sup>

13. These references describe the relationship the believer has with the Word of God. In the case of Abraham, he was issued five paragraphs referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant.

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, “δικαίωω,” in *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), 249.

<sup>5</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), s.vv. “vindicate, vindication.”

