

PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED:
THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

How Paul Led James
To Abandon James's Transitional Doctrine Of Justification By Works
And To Accept Paul's Revelation Of Justification By Faith
(Or Why It Is Error To Teach Christians Today That "Faith Without Works Is Dead")

By

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Through my mother and father,
To my wife Felecia,
my son Kenny and his wife Sapphira,
my daughter Briana,
and all that love His appearing

THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>I. INTRODUCTION</i>	1
A. BACKGROUND	
B. SUMMARY	5
<i>II. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO GENTILES AND TO JEWS AMONG THE GENTILES</i>	20
A. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES	20
B. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO JEWS AMONG THE GENTILES	23
<i>III. PAUL’S TERMINOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION</i>	25
A. THE ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH”	25
B. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY FAITH”	29
C. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”	35
D. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS OF THE LAW”	38
<i>IV. PAUL AND THE ROLES OF THE LAW AND GOOD WORKS</i>	39
A. THE ROLE OF THE LAW	39
B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO DO GOOD WORKS	42
<i>V. JAMES’S MINISTRY TO JEWS AND JEWISH CHRISTIANS</i>	43
<i>VI. SAME TERMS, DIFFERENT MEANINGS</i>	45

VII. JAMES'S TERMINOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION	47
A. TWO KINDS OF "FAITH"	47
1. "Faith" That Does Not Save Versus Saving "Faith"	50
2. Profitless "Faith" Versus Profitable "Faith"	51
3. Dead Versus Living "Faith"	51
4. "Faith" That Is Alone Versus "Faith" That Is Not Alone	52
5. "Unshown "Faith" Versus Shown "Faith"	52
6. "Faith" That A Demon Has, Versus "Faith" That A Demon Does Not Have	53
7. "Faith" Of A Vain Man Versus "Faith" Not Of A Vain Man	53
8. Lessons From Abraham	53
<i>a. "Faith" not cooperating with "works" versus "faith" cooperating with "works"</i>	54
<i>b. Unperfected "faith" versus perfected "faith"</i>	55
<i>c. "Faith" that does not fulfill Gen. 15:6 versus "faith" that fulfills Gen. 15:6</i>	56
<i>d. "Faith" not counted for righteousness versus "faith" counted for righteousness</i>	56
<i>e. "Faith" that is not the "faith" of a friend of God versus the "faith" of a friend of God</i>	57
9. Concluding Observations	57

B. THE ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH”	60
1. James And “The Body”	60
2. James and “Faith”	61
C. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”	66
1. Observations	69
2. Lessons From Rahab	71
D. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED . . . BY FAITH ONLY”	73
VIII. JAMES AND THE ROLES OF LAW AND WORKS OF THE LAW	74
A. THE “WORD” INCLUDES THE “PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY,” I.E., THE LAW OF MOSES	74
B. THE “ROYAL LAW,” THE “LAW,” AND THE “LAW OF LIBERTY” ARE THE LAW OF MOSES	76
C. A “DOER OF THE LAW” IS A DOER OF THE LAW OF MOSES	79
IX. PAUL AND JAMES CONTRASTED	79
A. CONTRASTING PAUL’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH” WITH JAMES’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH”	80
B. CONTRASTING PAUL’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH” WITH JAMES’S “FIRST KIND OF FAITH”	81
C. CONTRASTING PAUL’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH” WITH JAMES’S SECOND KIND OF “FAITH”	81
D. CONTRASTING PAUL’S “WORKS” WITH JAMES’S “WORKS”	82

E. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH	83
F. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”	83
G. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON THE CHRISTIAN AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW	84
H. CONCLUSION	84
<i>X. THE TERM “GOSPEL” REFERS TO WHAT <u>PAUL</u> PREACHED</i>	87
<i>XI. THE “GOSPEL” PAUL PREACHED: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND NOT BY WORKS, FREEDOM TO LIVE A SCRIPTURAL LIFESTYLE EXCLUDING THE LAW OF MOSES AND ITS COMMANDMENTS</i>	91
A. THE BASIC TRUTHS	91
B. THE “TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL”	92
<i>XII. PAUL INTRODUCES HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM</i>	96
A. PAUL’S INDEPENDENCE FROM THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM, INCLUDING JAMES	97
B. PAUL COMMUNICATES HIS “GOSPEL” TO “<u>THEM</u>”: <u>THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM</u>	99
C. PAUL “<u>COMMUNICATES</u>” HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM	104
D. PAUL “COMMUNICATES” HIS “GOSPEL” “<u>PRIVATELY</u>” TO THE APOSTLES “<u>OF REPUTATION</u>”	106
E. PAUL DEFENDS HIS “GOSPEL” AGAINST THE FALSE BRETHERN	107

F. THE APOSTLES “OF REPUTATION” “<u>ADDED NOTHING</u>” TO PAUL’S “GOSPEL”	108
<i>XIII. THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP</i>	112
A. “BUT ON THE CONTRARY”	112
B. THOSE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “<u>SEE</u>” THAT <u>PAUL</u> WAS ENTRUSTED WITH HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE <u>UNCIRCUMCISED</u>	113
C. THOSE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “<u>SEE</u>” THAT <u>PETER</u> WAS ENTRUSTED WITH <u>PAUL’S</u> “GOSPEL” TO THE <u>CIRCUMCISION</u>	114
D. THOSE WHO WERE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “<u>RECOGNIZE</u>” THE <u>GRACE</u> OF PAUL’S APOSTLESHIP, AND MINISTRY OF HIS “GOSPEL,” TO THE GENTILES	115
<i>XIV. PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED</i>	119
A. THE RECONCILIATION	119
B. CONFIRMATION OF THE RECONCILIATION	121
C. IF JAMES DID NOT ABANDON HIS DOCTRINES ON JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW, THEN CHRISTIANITY’S TEACHING ON THESE ISSUES IS CONTRADICTORY	124
<i>XV. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL OF ACTS 15</i>	130
A. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL	130
B. THE TIMING OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL	134
<i>XVI. ACTS 21 AND PAUL KEEPING THE LAW</i>	140

<i>XVII. THE TIMING OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES, THE EVENTS OF GALATIANS 2, AND THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS</i>	143
<i>XVIII. WHY JAMES’S TAUGHT HIS DOCTRINES ON JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW</i>	145
<i>XIX. CONCLUSION</i>	147
<i>APPENDIX A: LOVE HAS FULFILLED THE LAW</i>	149
A. THE MIRACLE AT CANA	149
B. AN ANALOGY	151
C. ROMANS 13:8-10 AND GALATIANS 5:13-14	152
<i>APPENDIX B: JAMES WROTE HIS EPISTLE TO JEWS</i>	161
A. JAS. 1:1	161
B. JAS. 2:14-20	162
C. JAS. 4:4	162
D. JAS. 4:8	163
E. JAS. 5:1-3	166
F. JAS. 5:6	167
G. JAS. 5:19-20	168

TABLE OF CHARTS

CHART ONE	PAUL’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF FAITH	28
CHART TWO	PAUL’S JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH	32
CHART THREE	PAUL’S JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS	37
CHART FOUR	JAMES’S TWO KINDS OF FAITH	59
CHART FIVE	JAMES’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF FAITH	63
CHART SIX	JAMES’S JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS	68
CHART SEVEN	PAUL AND JAMES CONTRASTED	86
CHART EIGHT	“THEY . . . <i>ADDED NOTHING</i> TO ME”	111
CHART NINE	“BUT ON THE CONTRARY”	118
CHART TEN	THE TRANSITION	129

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*How Paul Led James
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By Kenneth E. Roberson, Sr.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Are Christians “justified by faith” (Rom. 3:28) as Paul teaches, “justified by works” (Jas. 2:21) as James teaches, or by both? From ancient times, man has considered *how* to be right with God. Job of old asked, “*How* should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2.)¹

Justification, generally speaking, refers to the process by which God treats or regards people as righteous. Only once in the New Testament did Jesus personally say that a man was “justified.” At Luke 18:9-14, Jesus taught by way of a parable that a publican who humbly prayed to God and smote his breast was “justified.” But how? By the publican’s faith? By his faith and his prayer? By his faith, prayer, and work of

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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptural quotations are from the King James Version (KJV).

smiting his breast? Jesus does not say. We therefore ask, “*How* should man be just with God?”

For centuries, our Bible has included Paul’s teaching on justification by faith and James’s teaching on justification by works. This is as it should be, since Paul’s epistles, and the Epistle of James, are Scripture, and all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. (2 Tim. 3:16.) But does this mean that all Scriptures are binding today on the Christian? Specifically, does this mean that James’s teaching on justification by works applies today to Christians?

The vast majority of Christians would probably agree that not all Scriptures are binding on the Christian. For example, by some estimates there are 613 commandments of the law of Moses. Those commandments are part of the Scriptures, but most Christians would probably agree that not all 613 apply today to Christians. Some Christians make distinctions between moral, judicial, and ceremonial commandments of the law of Moses, and teach that the ceremonial commandments, such as those requiring animal sacrifice, are not binding today on the Christian. However, even this assumes that not all Scripture is binding on the Christian. In other words, to *whatever* extent one acknowledges that the law of Moses does not apply today to Christians, *to that same extent one acknowledges that the law of Moses was a transitional doctrine.*

In this essay, we use the term “Christian,” whether in the context of discussing Paul’s epistles or the Epistle of James, to refer a person who believes in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16; Jas. 2:12) and is *saved* (Acts 16:31; Jas. 5:20), and is therefore a member of His

Church (see 1 Cor. 1:2; Jas. 5:14). As we will see, Paul taught that (1) Christians are “justified by faith” (Rom. 3:28, 5:1; Gal. 3:24) and not “justified by works” (Rom. 4:2), as Paul used those terms; (2) Christians are free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law of Moses or its commandments for any purpose; and (3) Christians are free to enjoy a lifestyle that includes a *nonobligatory* compliance with the law of Moses to honor God in accord with their preferences or consistent with the dictates of their consciences. Finally, as we will also discuss, Paul maintained that Christians, when interacting with people who observe the law of Moses as a way of life (e.g., devout Jews), are free to engage in a nonobligatory compliance with the law of Moses to avoid offending such people.

On the other hand, James maintained that Christians were not “justified . . . by faith only” (Jas. 2:24) and Christians were “justified by works” (Jas. 2:21, 25), as James used those terms. He also maintained that Jewish Christians must comply with the law of Moses.

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that James’s teachings in the preceding paragraph do not apply today to Christians. As we will see, *these teachings too were transitional*. They ceased to apply after James accepted Paul’s teachings on justification and the role of the law of Moses in the life of the Christian. This essay will demonstrate this by reviewing, among other things, the meaning of the terms “faith,” “works,” “justified by faith” and “justified by works” as Paul uses those terms in Rom. 3:28, 4:2,

5:1 and Gal. 3:24. Similarly, we will review James's meaning for the terms "faith," "works," "justified . . . by faith only," and "justified by works" in Jas. 2:14-26.

The Scripture is the Word of God and, therefore, does not contradict itself. Various attempts have been made to reconcile what Paul and James have to say on justification and the role of the law of Moses in the life of the Christian. For example, a common but erroneous way to reconcile Paul and James is to say: "we are justified by faith, but the faith that justifies does works." As we will see, this approach erroneously assumes, e.g., that Paul and James have the same definitions for the term "faith." A related and erroneous reconciling attempt is: "we are saved by faith, but a saving faith is never alone."

However, we will see that, although Paul and James use the terms "faith," "works," and "justified by works," the two apostles have quite different meanings for those terms. Similarly, although Paul uses the phrase "justified by faith" and James uses the phrase "justified . . . by faith only," the two apostles have different meanings for those terms. Efforts to reconcile the doctrines of Paul and James on justification and the role of the law of Moses in the life of the Christian that fail to appreciate the profound differences in the meaning of pertinent terms used by these apostles obfuscate the true significance of Paul's doctrine, and the transitional nature of James's doctrine, on these issues.

One thing that contributes to a misunderstanding of James's inspired letter is the erroneous viewing of that letter through the lens of Paul's inspired writings. This may

have contributed to Martin Luther's mischaracterization of James's epistle as a "right strawy epistle" in the preface of Luther's 1522 German translation of the Bible. This essay maintains that the correct view is that James's teaching on justification and the law of Moses in the life of the Jewish Christian was and is the inspired Word of God, but was transitional.

B. SUMMARY

We summarize the essay below. **Part II** of the essay briefly discusses the apostle Paul. As the essay demonstrates, he was an apostle and a teacher of God's Word. His broad ministry extended to Jews and Gentiles, and to churches, some started by him and others not. Paul wrote about half of the books in the New Testament. Additionally, more than half of the Book of Acts, Luke's historical record of the early church, pertains to Paul's dissemination of the gospel.

Paul wrote his epistles to *Christians*, and thus to a church(es) or to individual Christians. In **part III** we explore Paul's terminology of justification in those letters and prove the following. When Paul says that a person is "justified by faith," the essential meaning of "faith" is: *that part of the "fruit of the Spirit" consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and "with the heart," that what God says is true. "Faith" here is a technical term for Paul.* Moreover, when Paul teaches that a person is "justified by faith," the underlying process is: *"faith is counted for righteousness."* For Paul, this righteousness is a gift from God, justification is by God's grace, and Christians are continually "justified by faith."

Paul also employs the phrase “justified by works.” By that phrase, *Paul refers to two processes that a person engages in pursuant to a contract: (1) a person engages in “works” and (2) in return God “pays” that person with righteousness as a debt God owes for the “works.”* For Paul, the word “works” in this context means *outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him.* And Paul teaches that no one is “justified by works” as he utilizes this phrase. Nor is anyone “justified by works of the law.” “Works of the law” for Paul consist of outward conduct done *because it is required by the law of Moses* and with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him. (When we refer below to the “law,” we refer to the law of Moses.)

Part IV briefly discusses the roles of the law and good works in the life of the Christian according to Paul’s teaching. The essay reviews the Scriptures showing that the law was transitional. That is, God intended the law to lead people to Christ but, once they become Christians by faith, they are dead to the law and no longer under it. Christians sometimes sin and offend God but, because Christians are not under the law, their sins do not break the law and therefore are not transgressions; Christians cannot be found guilty of violating the law; and there is no condemnation for Christians. Moreover, Paul teaches at Romans 13:8-10 that *love, one of the nine parts of the fruit of the Spirit, already has completely fulfilled the law*; therefore, there is no need to “keep” or comply with it. Paul emphasizes that Christians are to do “good works,” but they have no role in Paul’s concept of justification by faith.

Part V discusses the apostle James. There were numerous people named James in the New Testament; the James discussed in this essay was the half-brother of Jesus Christ. James was an apostle but the scope of his ministry was narrower than the scope of Paul's ministry. James's ministry extended to Jews, and especially to the Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church. He wrote only the Epistle of James. Notably, James wrote this epistle to the "*twelve tribes* which are scattered abroad[.]" (Jas. 1:1, italics added.) As the scope of James's ministry was narrower than Paul's, James is mentioned only three times in the Book of Acts and, each time, he is in or near Jerusalem.

In **part VI**, we explain that sometimes in the Bible the same term can have different meanings. For example, Luke 18:18-19 record that a ruler once asked Jesus, "*Good* Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Italics added.) Jesus replied, "Why callest thou me good? *None is good*, save one, that is, *God*." (Italics added.) The ruler was using the word "good" with its ordinary meaning among the Jews; Jesus was using it with a technical meaning making "good" an exclusive attribute of Deity. Jesus was trying to teach the ruler not to call Him good unless he acknowledged, correctly, that He was God.

Similarly, Paul and James use the terms "faith," "works," and "justified by works," and Paul employs the phrase "justified by faith" while James employs the phrase "justified . . . by faith only." Despite the fact that the terms that the apostles utilize are the same or similar, Paul, unlike James, has technical meanings for the terms "faith," "works," "justified by faith," and "justified by works."

In part **VII**, we examine James’s terminology of justification in his letter and demonstrate the following. In Jas. 2:14-26, “faith” involves belief that what God says is true. Moreover, a major key to understanding what “faith” is for James is to recognize that he teaches that just as a body without a spirit is dead, so “faith without works” is dead. (Jas. 2:26.) He therefore implies that just as a body with a spirit is living, so “faith with works” (by this we mean “faith . . . working with . . . works” (Jas. 2:22)) is living; otherwise “faith with works” is dead too and there is no point in James distinguishing between “faith without works” and “faith with works.” That means that, for James, just as a body can be dead or living and in that sense there are two kinds of bodies—a dead body and a living body—“faith” can be dead or living and in that sense there are two kinds of “faith”—dead “faith” and living “faith.”

As we will see, James’s first kind of “faith”—“faith without works”—does not save, and it is profitless, dead, alone, unshown, the kind that a demon has, and the “faith” of a vain or foolish man. Further, James’s discussion of Abraham shows that James’s first kind of “faith” does not work with “works,” is not perfected by “works,” does not fulfill Gen. 15:6 and is not counted for righteousness, is not the “faith” of a friend of God, and is not the “faith” of a Christian.

On the other hand, James’s second kind of “faith”—“faith with works”—saves and is profitable, living, not alone, and shown, and it is not the kind that a demon has and is not the “faith” of a vain or foolish man. Moreover, James’s second kind of “faith” works with “works,” is perfected, fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness, and

is the “faith” of a friend of God and the “faith” of a Christian. (Nonetheless, James never says that this second kind of “faith” is part of the fruit of the Spirit or belief with the heart.)

James leaves us to deduce his essential meaning of “faith” from his two kinds. His essential meaning of “faith” (in the context of humans, not demons) is: *belief inside a person that what God says is true*. (And unlike Paul, James never teaches that “faith” in its essential meaning is part of the “fruit of the Spirit” or belief “with the heart.”)

The essential meaning of “faith” for James is *neutral* and there are only two possibilities for such “faith”; it is either (1) the first kind and not the “faith” of a Christian *or* (2) the second kind, the “faith” of a Christian. “Faith” in its essential meaning for James does not tell you *which* kind it is. Which kind it is depends on an additional fact: whether the “faith” is without “works” or whether the “faith” is with “works.” When “faith” is without “works,” that “faith” is James’s first kind. When “faith” is with “works,” that “faith” is his second kind. In the context of justification, *“faith” in its essential meaning for James is thus not the technical term that “faith” is in its essential meaning for Paul*.

Moreover, unlike Paul in his epistles, James in his epistle does not indicate that James is writing exclusively to Christians. James begins his epistle, writing to the “twelve tribes.” (Jas. 1:1) *These are Jews*, some of whom are Christians *and some of whom are not*. James’s letter is like Old Testament writings to the Jews, some of whom trusted in God and some of whom did not. Thus, when James uses the word “faith” with

its essential meaning for him, *he uses that word with its ordinary, common meaning among the “twelve tribes,” i.e., the Jews.* Nothing in James’s letter demonstrates that the Jews to whom James writing would understand “faith,” with its essential meaning, to refer exclusively to the “faith” of a Christian.

When James says a person is “justified by works,” *James is referring to four processes.* According to Jas. 2:21-24, those processes are (1) “faith” works with “works,” (2) by “works” “faith” is perfected, (3) the person’s “faith” is counted for righteousness, and (4) the person is called the friend of God. This “faith” is James’s second kind. *“Works” are outward conduct that show “faith.”* Notably, James never says that his second kind of “faith” is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Moreover, James teaches that Gentiles are “justified by works,” because he teaches that Rahab the harlot, a Gentile, was “justified by works.” James also utilizes the phrase “justified . . . by faith only.” *It means justified by the first kind of “faith,” i.e., “faith without works.”* But James teaches that no one is “justified . . . by faith only.”

Part VIII examines the role of the law of Moses in the life of the Jew according to James’s teaching. For James, Jews, whether Christians or not, are under obligation to the law of Moses and must comply with it; their sins break the law, i.e., they are transgressions; and all Jews will be found guilty under the law. Jews who have shown no mercy are not Christians and God will judge these Jews without mercy. However, Jews who are Christians show mercy, and God will show them mercy despite their guilt.

It is only when one grasps that Paul and James use the same or similar terms with different meanings that one understands the fundamental differences in what these apostles have to say on justification and the role of the law. **Part IX** highlights the contrasts. There, the essay contrasts (1) Paul's essential meaning of "faith" with James's essential meaning of "faith," (2) Paul's essential meaning of "faith" with James's "first kind of faith," (3) Paul's essential meaning of "faith" with James's second kind of "faith," (4) Paul's "works" with James's "works," (5) Paul and James on justification and "faith," (6) Paul and James on "justified by works," and (7) Paul and James on the Christian and the role of the law.

The essay then turns to the reconciliation of what Paul and James have to say on justification and the role of the law to answer the question: how can we be just before God?

In **part X** the essay focuses on the fact that when Paul refers to the "gospel," he refers to the "gospel" that *he* preached. He proclaims that his "gospel" was a "revelation of Jesus Christ," the same phrase John used at the beginning of the Book of Revelations. In other words, Paul's "gospel" was just as much a revelation to Paul as the Book of Revelations was a revelation to John.

Part XI discusses the *content* of Paul's "gospel." As discussed there, the "gospel" included things that every apostle would know, e.g., Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. But beyond these basic truths, Paul's "gospel" *unveiled special, new truths: that a person was "justified by faith" and was not "justified by*

works” or “justified by works of the law” as Paul used those terms, and that Christians are free from the obligations of the law of Moses and free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law and its commandments for any purpose.

Paul also taught that Christians are free to engage in a *nonobligatory* compliance with the law as a way of life to honor God in accord with preference or conscience. Finally, Paul taught that when Christians interact with people who comply with the law as a way of life (whether they are Jews, or whether they are Jewish Christians who are not obligated to comply with the law), Christians are free to engage in a *nonobligatory* compliance with the law to avoid offending such people.

Part XII explores Paul’s introduction of his “gospel” *to the apostles in Jerusalem*. This part proves from Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians his independence from the other apostles and the independence of the source of his doctrine. Beyond that, part XII proves that when Gal. 2:1-2 record that Paul “communicated” his “gospel” to “them,” “*them*” *referred to the apostles in Jerusalem*. Part XII also proves that those apostles did not know about the special truths of Paul’s “gospel” until he introduced them to the apostles. First, Paul “communicated” his “gospel” to the apostles. The Greek word translated “communicated” means to explain or clarify, at the same time providing additional or different information. If the apostles knew all of the truths of Paul’s “gospel,” there was no need for him to explain it; *this shows there were truths of Paul’s “gospel” that the apostles did not previously know.*

Second, Paul communicated his “gospel” “privately” to the apostles “of reputation,” who were or included *James*, Peter, and John. Paul did this privately to the apostles “of reputation” because he was afraid that if he did it publicly, their reputation among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem might have caused the apostles “of reputation” to reject the special truths of Paul’s “gospel.” If the apostles already had known these truths, Paul’s fear would have been unwarranted. *This too demonstrates that there were truths of Paul’s “gospel” that the apostles did not previously know.*

Galatians 2 also teaches that when Paul communicated his “gospel” to the apostles “of reputation,” they “added nothing” to him during that conference. That means James did not add to Paul the doctrines of justification and the role of the law that James taught in his epistle. And Paul had never previously taught those doctrines. Accordingly, Paul’s “gospel” remained the same before and after his conference with the apostles “of reputation”; his “gospel” was unadulterated.

In fact, in the discussion of the “right hands of fellowship” in **part XIII**, we see that “on the contrary,” it was Paul who “added” to James, Peter, and John, who were “reputed to be pillars.” Paul caused them to *see* that God had entrusted Paul’s unadulterated “gospel” to Paul for him to take it to the Gentiles, and God had entrusted *Paul’s unadulterated “gospel”* to *Peter* for him to take it to the circumcision, i.e., to Jews who emphasized compliance with the law as a way of life. Paul also caused James, Peter, and John to *recognize* the “grace” of Paul’s apostleship, and ministry of the “gospel,” to

the Gentiles. *These too were truths that James, Peter, and John did not previously see or recognize.*

Part XIV reconciles Paul and James, showing that, based on their newly gained understanding, James, Peter, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the “right hands of fellowship” that Paul and Barnabas would take Paul’s “gospel,” with its basic and special truths, to the Gentiles, and James, Peter, and John would take Paul’s “gospel,” with its basic and special truths, to the circumcision. This was not merely a division of labor in the *work* of evangelizing but an agreement concerning the *content* of the “gospel” to be disseminated—both groups of apostles would disseminate Paul’s unadulterated “gospel.”

Accordingly, when James gave the right hands of fellowship, he necessarily abandoned the doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian that he previously had taught in his epistle, and adopted Paul’s “gospel” on the doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian. Paul and James reconciled.

Gal. 2:11-21, and particularly Gal. 2:11-16, confirm that James abandoned his doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. Those verses record an incident that occurred in the church in Antioch, Syria after the giving of the right hands of fellowship. There, Paul directly confronted Peter, and, indirectly, other Jewish Christians present, for their hypocrisy because they had been eating with Gentiles but stopped when certain persons “came from James.” Peter stopped because he feared

“the circumcision,” i.e., he feared the circumcision would judge him for not complying with the law of Moses.

Paul withstood Peter to his face, confidently implying that all Jewish Christians present, *including the circumcision from James*, knew that (1) Christians are “justified by faith” and not “justified by works of the law” (as Paul used those phrases) and (2) Christians are free from the obligations of the law and free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law and its commandments for any purpose.

Paul could confidently imply that the circumcision from *James* knew this because he knew that they had been taught Paul’s “gospel” after the right hands of fellowship. This confirms that at the right hands of fellowship, James abandoned his doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, and adopted Paul’s “gospel” on these issues.

Moreover, there is no record that any of the Christians present, including the circumcision from James, *disputed* Paul’s confident declaration. This provides additional evidence that the circumcision from James had been taught Paul’s “gospel” on these issues. This in turn provides evidence that the right hands of fellowship occurred before that teaching, and that at the right hands of fellowship James abandoned his doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, and adopted Paul’s “gospel” on these issues.

Further, if James did not abandon his doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, then the doctrines of Paul and James on these issues must be taught today, and the resulting teaching is contradictory.

The fact that Paul teaches that Abraham was *not* “justified by works” and James teaches that Abraham *was* “justified by works” is not contradictory. Those teachings would be contradictory only if the two apostles meant the same thing by the phrase “justified by works.” But the apostles do not mean the same thing by that phrase.

However, if the doctrines of Paul and James on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian must be taught today, the contradiction is more fundamental. For example, Paul has one essential meaning for “faith,” James has another, *and each apostle received his respective meaning from Jesus Christ. Yet Paul, declaring that his essential meaning for “faith” is that part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true, would deny James’s teaching that the essential meaning of “faith” is simply belief inside a person that what God says is true. James, declaring that his essential meaning of “faith” is simply belief inside a person that what God says is true, would deny Paul’s teaching that the essential meaning of “faith” is part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true.*

Similarly, Paul has one meaning for “justified by works,” James has another, *and each apostle received his respective meaning from Jesus Christ. However, Paul, maintaining that “justified by works” means his two contract processes, would deny that*

that phrase means James's four processes. James, maintaining that "justified by works" means his four processes, would deny that that phrase meant Paul's two contract processes. If the doctrines of Paul and James on justification and the role of the law must be taught today to Christians, the resulting purported Biblical teaching is contradictory. However, "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33).

The reconciliation, as previously discussed, is to view James's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian as transitional. It should be no surprise, then, that Paul's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian are taught in various New Testament books, but the only New Testament book containing James's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian is the Epistle of James.

In **part XV**, the essay focuses on the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. There, the apostles and elders came together to consider the role of the law in the lives of Gentile Christians. Acts 15 teaches, for Jewish and Gentile Christians alike, salvation by grace; Gentile Christians are free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes compliance with the law; and it is futile for Jewish Christians to try to bear the yoke of obligation to the law. Moreover, part XV demonstrates that, as a matter of sequence, (1) Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26; (2) later, Paul's trip to Jerusalem and the giving of the right hands of fellowship occurred as recorded at Gal. 2:1-9; (3) the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21 followed; and (4) subsequently, the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 occurred.

Part XVI considers a later incident recounted at Acts 21:17-26. There, Paul came to Jerusalem and James asked Paul to “keep the law” for the sake of the Jewish Christians there who were “zealous of the law.” Paul did so, participating in a ceremony based on the law of Moses. Paul thus made clear that Jewish Christians (such as those in Jerusalem) were free to enjoy a lifestyle that included a nonobligatory compliance with the law to honor God in accord with preference or conscience. Paul also made clear that a Christian (such as Paul), interacting with people such as the Jewish Christians “zealous of the law,” was free to engage in a nonobligatory compliance with the law simply to avoid offending them and to respect Jewish traditions and culture.

The essay in **part XVII** reviews the timing of the writing of the Epistle of James, the events of Galatians 2, and Paul’s writing of the Epistle to the Galatians. The essay establishes James wrote his letter before Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians; this is evidence that Paul was aware of James’s letter when Paul wrote his Galatian letter.

This awareness may explain why: (1) of the four times that Paul refers to James in Paul’s letters, three of the four are found in the first and second chapters of Paul’s Galatian letter, where Paul establishes the independence of his apostleship and of the source of his doctrine, including his independence from *James*, (2) when identifying the three apostles who were “reputed to be pillars,” Paul put James’s name *first* at Gal. 2:9, (3) Paul teaches in Gal. 2 that God *entrusted* Paul’s “gospel” to *Peter* for him to take it to the circumcision, and did not record that God entrusted it to *James* for that purpose; and (4) when Paul identifies Jewish Christians wavering from the “truth of the gospel” and

implicated in hypocrisy during the confrontation at Antioch, Paul names not only Peter and Barnabas, but makes a point of saying that “certain came from *James*.” (Italics added.) This suggests James too had wavered from Paul’s “gospel,” even if neither the circumcision from James, nor James himself, joined Peter’s hypocrisy.

In **part XVIII**, the essay discusses why James taught in his epistle his doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. James, an apostle, received them from Jesus Christ. They were correct at the time that James taught them in his epistle but were no longer correct and no longer to be taught to Christians after the right hands of fellowship of Gal. 2:9. This is not to say that James’s entire epistle was transitional but that his doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian were transitional. **Part XIX** contains a conclusion.

Appendix A discusses in detail the point made in part IV that Romans 13 teaches that the Christian’s love already has fulfilled the law. **Appendix B** proves the point noted in part VII, i.e., that James was writing to “the twelve tribes,” some of whom were Christians and some of whom were not.

II. PAUL'S MINISTRY TO GENTILES AND TO JEWS AMONG THE GENTILES

The apostle Paul wrote his letters to *Christians*.² As mentioned, in this essay, we use the term “Christian,” whether in the context of discussing Paul’s epistles or the Epistle of James, to refer a person who believes in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16; Jas. 2:12) and is *saved* (Acts 16:31; Jas. 5:20), and is therefore a member of His Church (see 1 Cor. 1:2; Jas. 5:14).³ Before we look at what Paul taught Christians concerning justification and the role of the law of Moses in the life of the Christian, we should discuss Paul’s ministry.

A. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES

The conversion of Paul, also known as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11; 13:9), is recorded at Acts 9. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles. (Rom. 11:13.) The word “apostle” means “messenger.”⁴ Gentiles are basically all persons not Jews. Paul was also a teacher of the Gentiles. (1 Tim. 2:7.)

² Rom. 1:1, 7 [writing “to . . . saints”]; 1 Cor. 1:1-2 [writing “unto the church”]; 2 Cor. 1:1-2 [same]; Gal. 1:1-2 [“unto the churches”]; Eph. 1:1; Philip. 1:1; Col. 1:1-2 [“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ”]; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1-2 [“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith”]; 2 Tim. 1:1-2; Titus 1:1, 4 [“To Titus, mine own son after the common faith”]; Philem. 1 [“unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer”].)

³ The “disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26.)

⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; revised & augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) (hereafter, BAGD), p. 99.

The Book of Acts highlights Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. Acts 9:15 records that about the time that Paul became a Christian, God said that he was “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the *Gentiles*[.]” (Italics added.) Acts 22:6-21 make clear that when Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, God told him, “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the *Gentiles*.” (Acts 22:21; italics added.) The church in Antioch, Syria, a Gentile region, consisted in part of Gentile Christians. (Acts 11:19-21.)⁵ That church was started by the preaching of others; Barnabas, a Christian, later brought Paul there (Acts 11:19-26); and only then did Paul teach there. So even though Paul did not start the church in Antioch, he ministered to the Gentile Christians there.

Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians evidences his ministry to Gentiles. The Galatian churches themselves, part of modern Turkey, were comprised in part of Gentile Christians. This is evident from, e.g., the fact that certain persons were teaching adult Galatian Christians that they had to be circumcised pursuant to the law of Moses. (Gal. 1:7; 3:1; 5:2-3, 12; 6:12-13.) (As mentioned, any reference in this essay to “the law” is a reference to the law of Moses.) If these particular Galatian Christians had been Jewish, they already would have been circumcised, i.e., eight days after birth, in accord with the law. (Lev. 12:1-3.) To these Galatian Christians, including *Gentile* Christians, who had received the gospel from Paul, he writes at Gal. 1:8:

⁵ At Acts 11:20, the word “Grecians” refers to Greeks (George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear KJV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1897), p. 347, fn. x.), who were, of course, Gentiles.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which *we have preached unto you*, let him be accursed.”

(Italics added.)

Gal. 2:1-2 record that subsequent to Paul’s conversion, he went to Jerusalem and shared with certain persons the “gospel which I preach among *the Gentiles*[.]” (Italics added.) Moreover, Paul makes the point at Gal. 2:3-5 that it was he who successfully resisted the efforts of certain persons in Jerusalem to have a Gentile Christian, Titus, circumcised in accord with the law. Paul said he resisted so “that the truth of the gospel might continue with you[.]” i.e., with the Galatian churches, that were comprised in part of Gentile Christians. Further, Gal. 2:9 records that Paul and Barnabas would take the gospel to the “heathen,” i.e., to the Gentiles.

Paul’s Epistle to the Romans demonstrates his ministry to Gentiles. Paul did not start the church in Rome. It had existed for “many years” before Paul first visited it. (Rom. 15:20-24.) His Romans letter was his last epistle of his third missionary journey. Paul begins his epistle by speaking of his “apostleship, for obedience to the faith among *all nations*[.]” (Rom. 1:5; italics added). The Greek word translated “nations” is elsewhere translated, based on the context, “Gentiles.”⁶ He also writes, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; . . . to the *Greek*.” (Rom. 1:16, italics added.)

⁶ BAGD, p. 218.

Later in his epistle, Paul teaches that all, including Gentiles, are guilty before God (Rom. 3:9, 19) and need justification by faith. (Rom. 3:21-24, 29-30.) He concludes his epistle referring to the gospel as “my gospel,” teaching that it and other things would establish Roman Christians according to God’s commandment “made known to all *nations* for the obedience of faith.” (Rom. 16:25-26, italics added.) These verses show that Paul intended the scope of his ministry to extend to Gentiles in a church that he did not start, as was the case in Antioch.

B. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO JEWS AMONG THE GENTILES

But Paul did not minister to Gentiles only. He ministered to Jews, especially, to Jews among the Gentiles. And much of what we have said as to Paul and the Gentiles applies to Paul and the Jews.

Accordingly, Acts 9:15 records that God said Paul was “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before . . . *the children of Israel.*” (Italics added.) And the Book of Acts repeatedly reflects that when Paul initially preached in a town in a Gentile region, he first went to the synagogue to do so. (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10, 16-17; 18:4; 19:8.)

Thus, the church in Antioch, a Gentile region, consisted in part of Jewish Christians. (Acts 11:19-21; Gal. 2:13.) As we have discussed, that church was started by the preaching of others. So even though Paul did not start that church, he ministered to Jewish Christians there.

Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians evidences his ministry to Jewish Christians who lived among the Gentiles. The Galatian churches, though located in a Gentile region,

were comprised in part of Jewish Christians. Many of Paul’s arguments in his Epistle to the Galatians assume a reader of Jewish background.⁷

Paul’s Epistle to the Romans confirms Paul’s ministry to Jews among the Gentiles. Again, the church in Rome had existed for “many years” before Paul first visited it. Yet Paul speaks of his “apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations[.]” (Rom. 1:5.) “Among all nations” indicated that Paul’s ministry indirectly extended to Jews among the nations. He later writes, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the *Jew first*[.]” (Rom. 1:16, italics added.) Later in his epistle, he teaches that all, including Jews, are guilty before God (Rom. 3:9, 19), and need justification by faith. Again, Paul intended the sphere of his ministry to encompass Jews, and to encompass Jewish Christians in a church that he did not start.

As an apostle to the Gentiles and Jews, Paul’s impact was profound. The New Testament contains 27 books. About half were written by Paul. The Book of Acts, the historical record of the early church, contains 28 chapters. More than half pertain to

⁷ At Gal. 3:13, Paul says Christ “redeemed *us* from the curse of the law.” (Italics added.) At Gal. 3:23, Paul says, “before faith came, *we* were kept under the law.” (Italics added.) These things are true of Jews, but Gentiles are without, and do not have, the law of Moses as such. At Gal. 5:1, Paul says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled *again* with the yoke of bondage.” (Italics added.) In context, the yoke of bondage is the yoke of obligation to the law (Gal. 4:21, 24-25), to which Jews were in bondage once before, i.e., before they became Christians. (Gal. 4:24-25.) These verses, in context, pertain to Jewish Christians who, before their conversion to Christianity, were Jews under the law (although, of course, Christ has redeemed and called to liberty Gentiles as well; Titus 2:11, 14; Gal. 5:13).

Paul's dissemination of the gospel. Paul wrote, "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10.)

III. PAUL'S TERMINOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION

A. THE ESSENTIAL MEANING OF "FAITH"

Having looked at the Scriptural evidence of Paul's ministry, we may now examine his doctrine of justification by faith. To understand that doctrine, we must understand the essential meaning of the word "faith" in his phrase, "justified by faith."

First, for Paul, "faith" involves *belief*. "Faith" is a translation of the Greek word "pistis."⁸ Accordingly, at 2 Thess. 2:13, "pistis" is translated "belief" in the phrase "*belief* of the truth."⁹ (Italics added.)

That "faith," a noun, involves belief is also evident from how Paul uses the verb "believed." Gen. 15:5 records that God said to Abram (later, Abraham) that his seed would one day be as numerous as the stars in heaven. Gen. 15:6 says, "And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness." At Rom. 4:3, Paul cites Gen. 15:6, saying "Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Italics added.) Referring to this, Paul says at Rom. 4:5,

⁸ George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter, *The Word Study Concordance* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978), pp. 624-625 (see entries for Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16).

⁹ Wigram and Winter, pp. 624-625 (see entry for 2 Th. 2:13).

“*faith* is counted for righteousness” and, at Rom. 4:9, “*faith* was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” (Italics added.) Paul treats *believing* God as “faith.”

Second, for Paul, when a person has “faith,” it involves belief *that what God says is true*. At Gen. 15:5, God said to Abraham that his seed would one day be as numerous as the stars in heaven. Gen. 15:6 reports that Abraham “believed in the Lord.” Alluding to this verse, Paul wrote at Rom. 4:3 that Abraham “believed God.” Abraham *believed God* because Abraham *believed what God said was true* about Abraham’s seed. And Paul said at Rom. 4:9 that “*faith* was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” (Italics added.) “Faith” is a noun, and “believe” is a verb but, for Paul, those who have “faith” *believe* that what God says is true.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, for Paul, “faith” *is part of the “fruit of the Spirit.”* (Gal. 5:22.) Paul says at Gal. 5:22, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*, meekness, temperance[.]” (Italics added.) At Gal. 5:22, “faith” is, again, a translation of the Greek word “*pistis*.”¹⁰ “Faith” for Paul is not some commodity on the shelf of merely human virtues available to all. The Spirit Himself produces “fruit” (not “fruits”) and part of that fruit is “faith.” *Paul thus invests the word “faith” with a special meaning; in that sense it is a technical term.*

Fourth, for Paul, “faith” is also the “faith” of a *Christian*. For example, Paul, speaking to Christians in Rome (Rom. 1:1, 7), said “*your faith* is spoken of throughout

¹⁰ Wigram and Winter, pp. 624-625 (see entry for Gal. 5:22).

the whole world.” (Rom. 1:8, italics added.) Writing to the Thessalonian church, Paul stated, “*your faith* groweth exceedingly.” (2 Thess. 1:3, italics added.)

Fifth, for Paul, “faith” is something inner, i.e., *inside* the Christian. There are several evidences of this. Of course, a person believes with the *mind*; this is an inner event.

Moreover, at 2 Tim. 1:4-5, Paul told Timothy that Paul was:

“filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned *faith* that is *in* thee, which dwelt first *in* thy grandmother, Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that *in* thee also.”

(Italics added.)

Thus, contrary to some teaching, “faith” is not “work,” if by “work” we mean outward conduct. Accordingly, Paul told Titus to affirm constantly that “they which have *believed* in God might be *careful* to maintain good *works*.” (Titus 3:8, italics added.)

Paul distinguished believing from good works.

Finally, for Paul, those who have “faith” believe *with the heart*. He wrote at Romans 10:10, “*with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness[.]” (Italics added.)

What, then, is the essential meaning of “faith” for Paul when he maintains that a person has “faith” or is “justified by faith”? For Paul, “*faith*” is *that part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true*. See Chart One.

CHART ONE

**PAUL'S
ESSENTIAL MEANING
OF FAITH**

**That Part of the *Fruit of the Spirit*
Consisting of the *Belief Inside The Christian,*
And With The Heart,
That What God Says Is True**

B. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY FAITH”

What does Paul mean when he says Christians are “*justified by faith*?” The phrase “justified by faith” tells us only so much. The word “justified” is passive. We are not justifying; we are being justified. But how? Even if we say we are “justified *by faith*,” this tells us only so much. All that phrase essentially tells us is that if we have “faith,” we are “justified.” But what is the underlying process?

At Rom. 3:21-28, Paul teaches that we are “justified by faith.” Later, he writes at Rom. 4:1-5:

“¹ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ² For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ³ For what saith the scripture? *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* ⁴ Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith is counted for righteousness.*”

(Italics added.)

Paul refers to Gen. 15:6 when he writes at Rom. 4:3: “Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” (Italics added.) Paul uses Abraham’s belief to illustrate “faith” as Paul uses that term. Thus, Paul says at Rom. 4:5, “*faith* is counted for righteousness.” (Italics added.) And again at Rom. 4:9, Paul states, “*faith* was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” The Greek word translated “counted” at Rom.

4:3 and 4:5 is the same Greek word translated “reckoned” at Rom. 4:9. It is the Greek word “logizomai.”¹¹

What does Paul mean by “counted”? Paul uses the term “counted” at Rom. 2:26 when he writes:

“Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?”

Again, the word “counted” here is a translation of “logizomai.”¹² Circumcision under the law symbolized the putting off of the flesh as part of having a right relationship with God. Here, Paul teaches that if, hypothetically, a man who was not a Jew kept the righteousness of the law, that man, who *in fact* was uncircumcised, would be *counted* as circumcised.

Similarly, when God sees “faith,” *God counts that “faith” as righteousness.*

Indeed, He counts it as righteousness from God Himself. Therefore, at Philippians 3:8-9, Paul declared that he wanted to be found in Christ, “not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God by faith[.]*” (Italics added.) And this righteousness is always a *gift*. (Rom. 4:5, 5:17.)

After discussing that “faith is counted for righteousness” at Rom. 4:5, and “faith was reckoned . . . for righteousness” at Rom. 4:9, Paul proclaims at Rom. 5:1 that we are

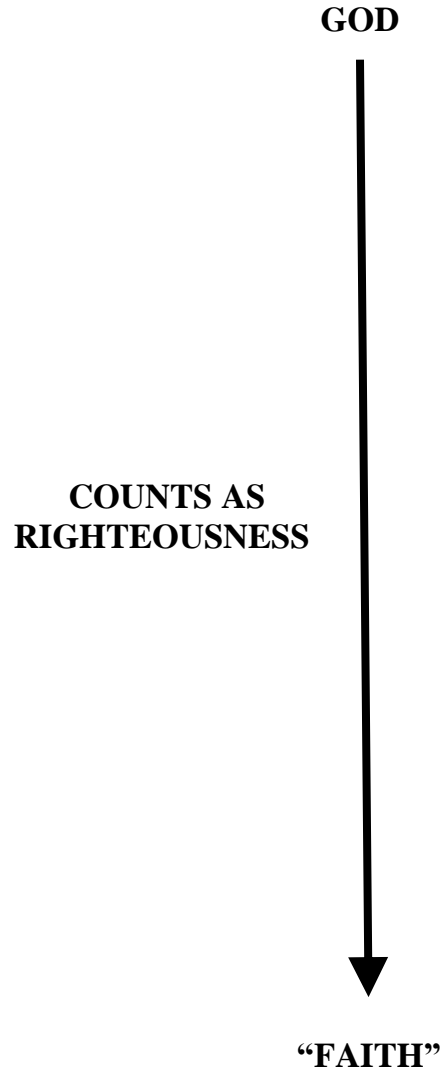
¹¹ Wigram and Winter, p. 461.

¹² Wigram and Winter, p. 461.

“justified by faith.” For Paul, who teaches that Christians are “justified by faith,” *faith counted for righteousness* is the process by which Christians are justified. See Chart Two. Moreover, this justification is by God’s grace. (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7.)

CHART TWO

PAUL'S JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH



A change in the Christian's *legal* status before God has occurred. Whereas we were once, as unbelievers, guilty before Him (Rom. 3:19), righteousness is now "imputed" (another word for "counted") to Christians by means of "faith." If we feel righteous, our "faith" is counted for righteousness. If we do not feel righteous, our "faith" is counted for righteousness. The matter is not dependent upon our feelings.

We note the following for later discussion. Gen. 15:6 records that Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." At least 13 years after this event, Abraham was circumcised. (Gen. 17:24.)¹³ But Paul teaches that Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness at Gen. 15:6, i.e., "[n]ot in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." (Rom. 4:10.) That is, Abraham's circumcision at Gen. 17 added nothing to the righteousness that already had been counted to him at Gen. 15:6 by his "faith." Instead, circumcision was a mere sign, a seal "of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised[.]" (Rom. 4:11.) We will later discuss the significance of the fact that, for Paul, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness when he was uncircumcised.

Not only are Christians "justified by faith," but Christians by definition *continue* to be "justified by faith." For example, when Romans 4:5 says "his faith is counted for

¹³ Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness at Gen. 15:6. Gen. 16:16 affirms he was 86 years old at the time of the events of Gen. 16:16. That means he was at least 86 years old at the time of Gen. 15:6. He was 99 years old when he was circumcised (Gen. 17:24). So at least 13 years passed from the time Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness at Gen. 15:6 to the time he was circumcised at Gen. 17:24.

righteousness,” and Gal. 2:16 explains “a man is . . . justified by . . . faith,” the verbal phrases “is counted” and “is . . . justified” are each translations of a Greek word in the Greek present tense.¹⁴ As one well-known commentator on Greek observes generally, “The present tense’s portrayal of an event ‘focuses on its *development or progress* and sees the occurrence in regard to its internal make-up, without beginning or end in view.’ [Fn. omitted.] It is sometimes called *progressive*: It ‘basically represents an activity *as in process (or in progress)*.’ [Fn. omitted.]”¹⁵ Another such commentator states: “The fundamental significance of the present tense is the idea of *progress*. It is the *linear* tense.”¹⁶

According to Paul, “faith” is *continually* being counted for righteousness; Christians are continually “justified by faith.” He wrote at Rom. 3:23-24:

“²³ For all have sinned, and *come short* of the glory of God; ²⁴

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus[.]”

¹⁴ Barbara and Timothy Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 478 (Rom. 4:5), 578 (Gal. 2:16).

¹⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 514, different italics.

¹⁶ E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1955), p. 181, first italics added.

(Italics added.) The phrase “come short” is a translation of a Greek word in the Greek present tense.¹⁷ Similarly, the phrase “[b]eing justified” is a translation of a Greek word in the Greek present tense.¹⁸ Paul is conveying that Christians are continually coming short, continually being justified.

C. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”

Paul instructs that we are *not* “justified by works.” He says at Rom. 4:2: “For if Abraham were *justified by works*, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” (Italics added.) But, like the phrase “justified by faith,” the phrase “justified by works” tell us only so much. What is the underlying process?

At Rom. 4:2, Paul maintained that Abraham was not “justified by works,” then, at Rom. 4:4, Paul wrote: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

The word “worketh” at Rom. 4:4 is a translation of the Greek word “ergazomai.”¹⁹ Paul always uses it to refer to outward conduct.²⁰ The word “reward” in verse 4 is a

¹⁷ Wigram and Winter, p. 477.

¹⁸ Wigram and Winter, p. 477.

¹⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 298.

²⁰ See Wigram and Winter, p. 298. Paul uses “ergazomai” only at Rom. 2:10; 4:4, 5; 13:10; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6, 13; 16:10; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:23; 1 Th. 2:9; 4:11; and 2 Th. 3:8, 10-12.

translation of the Greek word “misthos.”²¹ It is also translated “reward” when Paul says at 1 Tim. 5:18, “The labourer is worthy of his *reward*.”²² (Italics added.)

Further, “misthos” may be translated “wage.” Accordingly, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates Rom. 4:4: “Now to the one who works, his *wage* is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.” (Italics added.) The New International Version says, “Now to the one who works, *wages* are not credited as a gift but as an obligation.” (Italics added.) And Paul insists at Rom. 4:4 that to him that works, the reward is reckoned “of debt.” “Debt” implies obligation.

Paul utilizes the phrase “justified by works” at Rom. 4:2, and later says at Rom. 4:4 that “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Why? Because it is the man who is “justified by works” to whom Paul is referring when he says, “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

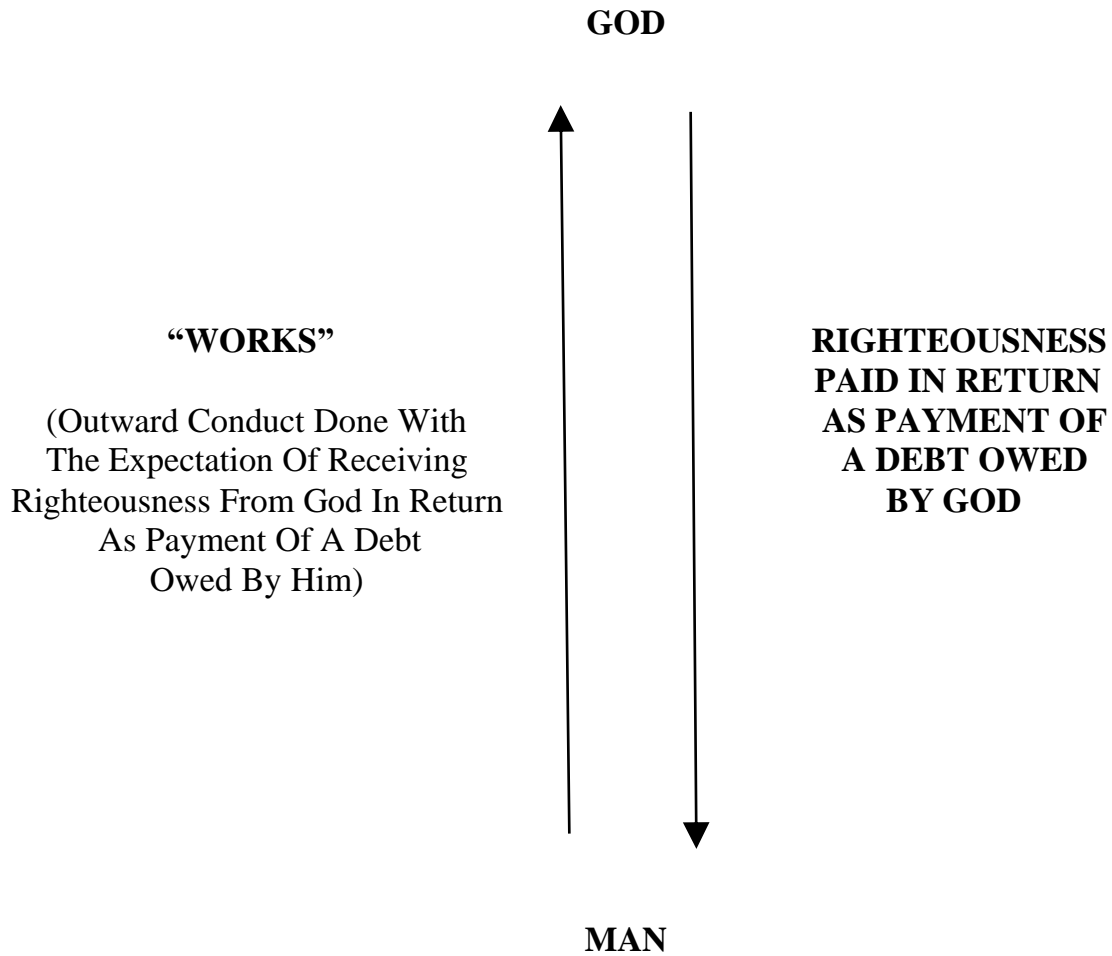
When Paul uses the phrase “justified by works,” he refers to *two processes that a person engages in pursuant to a contract: (1) a person engages in “works” and (2) in return God “pays” that person with righteousness as a debt God owes for the “works.”* Note that the word “works” in this context does not mean merely outward conduct but *outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him.* See Chart Three.

²¹ Wigram and Winter, p. 502.

²² Wigram and Winter, p. 502.

CHART THREE

PAUL'S JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS



But since Paul teaches we are *not* “justified by works,” these two contract processes are hypothetical only, i.e., no one actually obtains righteousness by this process. For in God’s eyes, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” (Isa. 64:6.)

D. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS OF THE LAW”

Discussing Abraham at Rom. 4:1-2, Paul rejects the notion that Abraham was “justified by works.” Paul does not in those verses use the phrase “justified by works of the law.” One does “works of the law” when one does things *because they are required by the law of Moses*. Paul had no occasion to refer to “works of the law” in Rom. 4:1-2, because the law of Moses came centuries after Abraham.

Nonetheless, Paul rejected the notion that a person was “justified by works of the law.” Therefore, he wrote at Gal. 2:16 that “a man is not justified by works of the law[.]” And, at Rom. 3:28, Paul declared that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” That is, Paul denied that a person was justified by outward conduct done *because it is required by the law* and with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him. Paul observed at Gal. 3:10, “as many as are of the *works of the law* are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them.” (Italics added.)

Like justification by works, justification by works of the law is only hypothetical because, in fact, permanent condemnation comes to those seeking justification by law and not being “justified by faith” as Paul employs those concepts. (Gal. 2:16; 3:10-12; 5:1-

4.) The law requires a person to demonstrate the person's own righteousness (Rom. 10:3; Php. 3:8-9) by *perfectly* doing "works of the law" all of the person's life; otherwise the person is cursed. (Gal. 3:10.) For Paul, the Christian is, by definition, "justified by faith." The one who is not "justified by faith" and purports to be "justified by works of the law," as Paul used those phrases, is an unbeliever.

IV. PAUL AND THE ROLES OF THE LAW AND GOOD WORKS

A. THE ROLE OF THE LAW

What does Paul teach about the roles of the law and good works in the life of the Christian? Briefly, for Paul, the law of Moses was simply a schoolmaster to lead persons to Christ. (Gal. 3:24.) "But after that faith is come, *we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*" (Gal. 3:25, italics added.)

When a person becomes a Christian, the person shares in Christ's death and resurrection. Thus, Paul teaches at Gal. 2:19 (NASB) that he can say of himself, "*I died to the law*, so that I might live to God." (Italics added.) Similarly, Paul tells Christians at Rom. 7:4-6 (NASB):

"you also were made to *die to the Law* through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. [¶] . . . [¶] . . . now we have been *released* from the Law,

having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

(Italics added.)

But if Christians are *dead* to the law, they are not subject, or under obligation, to the *law of Moses* or *its* commandments, whether ceremonial, judicial, or moral.

Therefore, Paul proclaims at Rom. 6:14 (NASB), “*for you are not under law* but under grace.” (Italics added.) And, under grace, Christians are to pursue a Scriptural way of life.

Christians sometimes sin and offend God. However, since Christians are dead to, and not under, the law, their sins do not break that law, i.e., Christians’ sins are not transgressions. This is consistent with Paul’s statement that “where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). The law of Moses has no hold on the dead; as a practical matter, to the dead there is no such law. And because Christians cannot transgress the law, they cannot be found guilty of violating it. Consequently, Paul writes, “Therefore there is now no *condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1, NASB.)

Finally, according to Paul, love—one of the nine parts of the fruit of the Spirit—*already has fulfilled* the law of Moses. Paul instructed at Rom. 13:8-10:

“⁸Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another *hath* fulfilled the law. ⁹For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying,

namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

(Italics added.)

As we will discuss in Appendix A, at Rom. 13:8, Paul *in his apostolic authority* is commanding the Roman Christians to *love* one another. He is not directing them to comply with the commandment *of the law of Moses* found at Lev. 19:18, i.e., “Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*.” (Italics added.) Indeed, this would be inconsistent with Jesus’s statement at Jn. 13:34 that “A *new* commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another.” (Italics added.)

Instead, Paul quotes Lev. 19:18 simply to show that all of the commandments of the *law* are summed up in Lev. 19:18. Then, focusing on the word “love” in that commandment, he relies, *not* on Lev. 19:18 or the quotation of it found in Rom. 13:9, but on his *own* apostolic authority when *he* commands the Roman Christians at Rom. 13:8 to “love one another.” For Paul, love is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), love is the fulfilling (literally, “fulness”) of the law (Rom. 13:10), and the Christian who loves *already has* fulfilled the law (Rom. 13:8). The Christian who loves *already has* fulfilled any moral, ceremonial, or judicial laws of the law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments. Since the law has been fulfilled by love, there is no need to comply with the law or its commandments, including the Ten Commandments.

B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO DO GOOD WORKS

Outward conduct has no role in Paul's conception of justification by faith. That is not however to say that outward conduct has no role in Paul's teaching to the church. He clearly taught that Christians are to do "works." But these "works" are not outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him.

Instead, Paul commended to the church "works" in the context of "good works." At Ephesians 2:10, he said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, which God had before ordained that *we should walk in them.*" (Italics added.) At 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he stressed, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, . . . That the man of God may be . . . thoroughly furnished unto all *good works.*" (Italics added.) As mentioned, Paul instructed Titus to affirm constantly that "they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain *good works.*" (Titus 3:8, italics added.) Paul told King Agrippa I at Acts 26:20 that people "should repent and turn to God, and *do works* meet for repentance." (Italics added.)

But if you have "faith" as Paul uses that term, "works"—whether in the sense of outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him, or in the context of "good works"—have no role in justification according to Paul. "Faith," as Paul uses that term, need not be continuously accompanied by "good works" in order to be "faith." Titus 3:8 above presupposes that those who "believe" must be *encouraged* to do "good works." The encouragement would

be unnecessary if Paul were teaching that “good works” necessarily and continuously accompany “faith.”

The account of Abraham’s faith at Gen. 15:5-6 demonstrates this as well. At Gen. 15:5, God said to Abraham, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he [God] said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” Gen. 15:6 immediately follows and simply records, “And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness.” Gen. 15:6 does not say that Abraham did any “work.” The verse does not say whether Abraham did so much as look towards heaven or “tell the stars.” Paul never wrote that “works”—in the context of “good works”—must continuously accompany “faith” in order for “faith” to be counted for righteousness.

V. JAMES’S MINISTRY TO JEWS AND JEWISH CHRISTIANS

With the above as background, we may now turn to James. There are many persons named James in the New Testament. When we refer to James in this essay, we refer to James, the half-brother of the Lord. (Mt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19.)

James was an apostle (Gal. 1:19) and ministered to Jews, including those in Jerusalem. James’s epistle presents evidence of his ministry to Jews. First, at Jas. 1:1, James expressly states he is writing to the “twelve tribes” of Israel, i.e., to the Jews. This point bears emphasis. As mentioned, Paul’s letters were written to *Christians*. But

James's letter was written to *Jews*, some of whom were Christians, *and some of whom were not*. (See Appendix B.)

Second, at Jas. 2:1-2, James notes that his audience was meeting in an “assembly.” The Greek word for “assembly” may be translated “synagogue.”²³ Third, at Jas. 2:19, James asserts, “Thou believest that there is one God[.]” James is referring to the “Shema” of Deut. 6:4, which taught that “The Lord our God is one Lord.” The “Shema” was the *Jewish* confession of faith, the creed that affirmed the oneness of God.²⁴ Fourth, James and Paul *agreed* that James, Peter, and John would take the gospel to the “circumcision” (Gal. 2:9). The circumcision were Jews or Jewish Christians (depending on the context) who emphasized compliance with the law as a way of life.

James especially ministered to the Jews in Jerusalem. He is mentioned three times in the Book of Acts and, each time, he is in or near Jerusalem (Acts 12:1, 17; 15:4, 13; 21:17-18),²⁵ the holy city for the Jews.

At Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council convened so that the Jerusalem church could address the issue of whether Gentile Christians had to comply with the law and its commandments. James's judgment [“my sentence”] at Acts 15:19 was that “we trouble

²³ BAGD, pp. 782-783.

²⁴ “The Book of Deuteronomy,” *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), II, p. 372.

²⁵ Wigram and Winter, p. 832.

not them,” the Gentile Christians, with this requirement. His judgment settled the matter for the Jerusalem church, which consisted mainly of *Jewish* Christians.

During a later meeting referred to at Acts 21:17-25, James asked Paul, for the benefit of the *Jewish* Christians in Jerusalem, to “keep the law” while Paul was there. Moreover, it is noteworthy that at the beginning of this meeting Paul “*went in . . . unto James; and all the elders were present.*”²⁶ (Acts 21:18; italics added.) This indicates that by this time James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the leading figure in the Jerusalem church, which consisted mainly of *Jewish* Christians. (We discuss this meeting further in part XVI.)

James’s ministry was narrower than Paul’s ministry. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, James wrote only one, the Epistle of James. In the 28 chapters of the historical record of the church, the Book of Acts, James is mentioned only three times.

VI. SAME TERMS, DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Before we turn to James’s doctrine of justification by works, an observation is appropriate. Sometimes in the Bible the same term can have different meanings. For example, Luke 18:18-19 record that a ruler once asked Jesus, “*Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” (Italics added.) Jesus replied, “*Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God.*” (Italics added.) The ruler used “good” with its

²⁶ Compare the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, where “*the apostles and elders came together*” (Acts 15:6, italics added).

ordinary, common meaning; Jesus used it with a special or technical meaning that made “good” an exclusive attribute of Deity. Jesus was teaching the ruler not to call Him good unless he acknowledged, correctly, that Jesus was God.

Similarly, Luke 6:32 records that Jesus said, “sinners also *love* those that love them.” (Italics added.) Jesus used the word “love” with its ordinary meaning; even sinners could “love.” But when Paul uses the word “love” as part of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22), Paul’s meaning of the word is technical and an unbelieving sinner cannot have this kind of “love,” because it is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Likewise, when, for example, Paul speaks of “faith” in the context of one being “justified by faith,” “faith” has a special meaning; it is a technical term referring to the “fruit of the Spirit” and belief “with the heart.”

Previously, we have examined what Paul means when he uses the terms “faith,” “works,” “justified by faith,” and “justified by works.” Below, we will examine what James means by the terms “faith,” “works,” “justified . . . by faith only,” and “justified by works.” But we should not simply assume that, because Paul and James use the same or similar terms, the apostles must mean the same or similar things by those terms.²⁷

For example, Paul uses the phrase “justified by faith” at Rom. 5:1 and Gal. 3:24.²⁸ James uses the phrase “justified . . . by faith only” at Jas. 2:24. In each verse, the word

²⁷ This may partially explain why Peter said that Paul’s writings, while Scripture, contained some things which were “hard to be understood.” (2 Pet. 3:15-17.)

²⁸ Wigram and Winter, p. 157.

“justified” is a translation of a form of the Greek word “dikaioo,”²⁹ and the phrase “by faith” is a translation of the Greek words “ek pisteos.”³⁰ Similarly, Paul employs the phrase “justified by works” at Rom. 4:2, and James does so at Jas. 2:21 and 25. In each verse, the word “justified” is a translation of a form of the Greek word “dikaioo,” and the phrase “by works” is a translation of the Greek words “ex ergon.”³¹

In other words, Paul and James use the terms “faith,” “works,” and “justified by works.” Paul employs the phrase “justified by faith” while James employs the phrase “justified . . . by faith” when he speaks of “justified . . . by faith only.” But the differences that we will demonstrate exist between the two apostles’ doctrines on justification and the role of the law are not attributable to any differences in the Greek words underlying these terms.

VII. JAMES’S TERMINOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION

A. TWO KINDS OF “FAITH”

When teaching his doctrine of justification by works, James teaches on “faith” in two contexts. The first is “*faith without works.*” (Jas. 2:20, 26, italics added.) The second is what we will call “*faith with works.*” This is based upon Jas. 2:22, where

²⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 157.

³⁰ <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/5-1.htm>; <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/galatians/3-24.htm>; <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2-24.htm>.

³¹ <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/4-2.htm>; <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2-21.htm>; <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2-25.htm>.

James says that Abraham’s “faith wrought *with* his works.” (Italics added.) We will see below that there are two kinds of “faith” for James. We will refer to James’s “*faith without* works” (italics added) as his “first kind of faith” and his “*faith with* works” as his second kind of “faith.” When we compare James’s two kinds of “faith,” a number of points emerge.

First, James’s first and second kinds of “faith” involve *belief that what God says is true*. Let us initially focus on James’s first kind of “faith.” At Deut. 6:4, part of the “Shema,” Scripture teaches that “God is one.” James refers to Deut. 6:4 when James stresses at Jas. 2:19 that even demons “believe” that “God is one” (NASB). That is, the demons *believe what God says is true* when He teaches that “God is one.” However, the demons believe what God says is true, and tremble. (Jas. 2:19.) And, using the demons’ belief as an example, James explains that “faith without works” is dead. (Jas. 2:20.) Therefore, James’s first kind of “faith” involves belief that what God says is true, but such “faith” is without “works.”

We turn to James’s second kind of “faith.” As background, God had promised at Gen. 15:5 that Abraham’s seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, but at Gen. 22:1-2 God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham nonetheless “believed God,” i.e., he *believed what God said was true* about the number of Abraham’s seed. Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, concluding that God would raise Isaac from the dead and fulfill His promise. (Gen. 22:5, 10; Heb. 11:17-19.)

At Jas. 2:21, James cites Abraham's offering of his son Isaac on the altar to illustrate that Abraham was "justified by works." Jas. 2:22-23 then state that Abraham's "*faith* wrought with his works, and by works was *faith* made perfect, and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham *believed God*, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." (Italics added.) Abraham's "faith" illustrates James's second kind of "faith," because it involves *belief that what God says is true*, but such "faith" works with "works," i.e., the work of offering Isaac.

Second, in James's discussion of justification (like the case in Paul's discussion) "faith" is the noun and "believe(d)" is the verb, but those who have (Jas. 2:14) "faith" *believe what God says is true*.

Third, for James, like Paul, "faith" *is something inner, i.e., it is belief inside a person*. At Jas. 2:18, James pens, "I will *shew thee my faith by my works*." (Italics added.) James's first kind of "faith" has no "works" to *show* that "faith." It is therefore something inner. On the other hand, James's second kind of "faith" requires "works" to *show* that "faith," because that "faith" too is something inner.

Fourth, for James, like Paul, "faith" is *not "work"* in the sense of outward conduct. This is true of James's first kind of "faith." "Faith without works" distinguishes "faith" from "works." As to James's second kind of "faith," Jas. 2:22 refers to "*faith . . . working with . . . works*." (Italics added.) He again distinguishes "faith"

from the “works” with which “faith” is working. Moreover, “faith” is “working” but the “faith” is distinguishable from its activity of “working.”³²

With the above as background, we may now contrast James’s two kinds of “faith.”

1. “Faith” That Does Not Save Versus Saving “Faith”

At Jas. 2:14, James asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” James clearly implies by his question that his first kind of “faith,” “faith without works,” does not save. He also implies that his second kind of “faith,” “faith *with* works,” does save. If it does not, there is no point to his distinguishing between his first and second kinds of “faith,” because neither kind would save. James never says that even though “faith” is working with “works,” “faith” does not save.

It is sometimes taught that the “man” of verse 14 *says or claims* he has “faith,” but does not *actually* have “faith.” But verse 14 does not teach this. An analogy may help. If a man says he has an inflatable lifeboat, but has no air, can the lifeboat save him? No. The problem is not that the man claims that he has a lifeboat but does not actually have one. The man claims he has a lifeboat, and actually has one, but, without air, it is just not a *saving kind* of lifeboat.

Similarly, the “man” of verse 14 claims he has “faith,” and actually has “faith.” However, it is just not a *saving kind* of “faith.” At Jas. 2:17 and 26, James teaches that

³² We will later discuss the word “working,” which conveys the idea of “cooperating.”

“faith without works” (italics added) is dead. James does not say that this is not “faith”; it is an actual “faith.” It is just an actual “faith” that is dead. At Jas. 2:14, James refers to a man who says he has “faith” but does not have “works,” then James asks, “Can *faith* save him?” (Italics added.) James is referring to an *actual* “faith” (“faith without works”) but teaching that it is not a saving “faith.” James does not ask, “Can *claimed* faith save him?” James does not say that “faith without works” is a nonexistent “faith”; he teaches that this existing “faith” does not save.³³

2. Profitless “Faith” Versus Profitable “Faith”

At Jas. 2:14, James writes, “What doth it *profit*, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” (Italics added.) James’s first kind of “faith” is profitless; his second kind is profitable.

3. Dead Versus Living “Faith”

James says at Jas. 2:17, “Even so *faith*, if it hath not works, *is dead*, being alone.” (Italics added.) He is highlighting that his first kind of “faith” is dead, but his second kind is living. Otherwise there is no point in distinguishing the two.

At Jas. 2:26, James underscores, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so “*faith*” without works *is dead* also.” (Italics added.) *James’s metaphor is an important key to an understanding that there are two kinds of “faith” for James.* James compares a

³³ Part of the difficulty in grasping the idea of an actual “faith” that is not a saving “faith” comes from the fact that we are used to Paul’s “faith,” which is an actual *and* saving “faith.” The difficulty is eliminated once it is recognized that, as we will see, Paul and James have different essential meanings for the term “faith” (and James’s essential meaning was transitional).

body without a spirit to “faith” without “works,” and says such a body and such a “faith” are dead. The body without a spirit is an actual body. It is just an actual body that is dead. So too, according to James, “faith” without “works” is an actual “faith.” It is just an actual “faith” that is dead. The person with this kind of “faith” believes what God says is true, but does no “works.” James also *implies* that a body with a spirit may be compared to “faith” *with* “works,” and such a body and such a “faith” are *living*.

4. “Faith” That Is Alone Versus “Faith” That Is Not Alone

Jas. 2:17 states, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being *alone*.” (Italics added.) James is indicating that his first kind of “faith” is *alone* because it lacks “works.” The implication is that his second kind is *not alone* because it has “works.”

5. “Unshown “Faith” Versus Shown “Faith”

At Jas. 2:18, James insists, “*shew* me thy faith without thy works, and I will *shew* thee my faith by my works.” James rhetorically points to the impossibility of a person *showing* “faith” when it is without “works;” there are no “works” that can show the “faith.” In contrast, James urges that he can *show* his “faith” by his “works.” James’s first kind of “faith” is *unshown* “faith,” but his second kind is *shown* “faith.” Moreover, it is important to observe that this defines “works” for James: *for him, “works” are outward conduct that shows “faith.”*

6. “Faith” That A Demon Has, Versus “Faith” That A Demon Does Not Have

At Jas. 2:19-20, James protests, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils^[34] also *believe*, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that *faith* without works is dead?” (Italics added.) James is teaching that his first kind of “faith” is (when not limited to humans) the kind of “faith” a demon has. He implies his second kind is not the kind of “faith” a demon has.

7. “Faith” Of A Vain Man Versus “Faith” Not Of A Vain Man

James says at Jas. 2:20, “But wilt thou know, O *vain man* [NASB: “foolish fellow”], that faith without works is dead?” (Italics added.) James’s first kind of “faith” is the “faith” of a vain or foolish person. James’s second kind is not such “faith.”

8. Lessons From Abraham

For the next points we rely on Jas. 2:21-23. At those verses, James states:

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”

The Scripture that James quotes at verse 23 is Gen. 15:6. “Imputed” is simply another word for “counted.” At Jas. 2:21, James refers to the phrase “justified by works”

³⁴ The word “devils” is a translation of a Greek word that means “demons.” Berry, p. 588.

and, as an example of “works,” alludes to Abraham’s work of offering Isaac. This work was an act of worship. Finally, Abraham’s work could not be called a “work of the law” because the law of Moses would come only centuries later.

In order to grasp James’s concepts of “faith,” it is also crucial to understand Jas. 2:21-23.

a. “*Faith*” not cooperating with “works” versus “*faith*” cooperating with “works”

James states at Jas. 2:22, “Seest thou how faith *wrought* [NASB: “was working”] with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (Italics added.) This is James’s second kind of “faith.” It is not merely “with works”; instead, this “faith” itself *works with* “works.” Again, “works” *show* “faith.” James’s first kind of “faith” does not work with “works”; it has no “works” with which it can work.

The phrase “wrought with” is a translation of the Greek verb “sunergeo,” which means “work (together) with,” “cooperate (with),” or “help.”³⁵ “Sunergeo” is related to our word “synergy.”³⁶ James’s second kind of “faith” is *cooperating* with or *helping* “works.” James’s first kind of “faith” is not cooperating with “works.”

³⁵ BAGD, p. 787.

³⁶ “Sunergeo” comes from the Greek words “sun,” which means “with,” and “ergon,” which means “work.” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/sunergeo.html>; <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/sunergos.html>; <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/sun.html>; <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/ergon.html>.) So does “synergy.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 2nd College Ed. (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1986), p. 1444.

Three other observations are appropriate. First, Abraham’s “faith” is cooperating with “works” when James first discusses that “faith.” James never says that Abraham had a first kind of “faith”—one not cooperating with “works”—that later became a second kind of “faith”—one cooperating with “works.” Second, James is commending Abraham’s “faith” as a *model* of “faith,” i.e., James is commending it as part of a way of life. Third, the fact that James’s second “faith” *cooperates* with “works” confirms that such “faith” is *living*. If “faith” is cooperating, it is in that sense living and energetic.

b. *Unperfected “faith” versus perfected “faith”*

Jas. 2:22 states, “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was *faith made perfect?*” (Italics added.) James’s first kind of “faith” has no “works” that can perfect that “faith.” On the other hand, James’s second kind of “faith” is made perfect, and he implies that his second kind of “faith” is perfected because it is *living* and it is *cooperating* with “works.” James’s first kind of “faith” is unperfected “faith,” while his second kind of “faith” is perfected “faith.”

It is noteworthy that James never says that Abraham had a “faith” that was not perfected by “works” that later became a “faith” perfected by “works.” Abraham’s “faith” is being perfected by “works” when James first discusses it, and James is commending this “faith” as part of a way of life.

c. *“Faith” that does not fulfill Gen. 15:6 versus “faith” that fulfills Gen. 15:6*

James pens, “And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” This is a reference to Gen. 15:6. And James is teaching that his second kind of “faith” fulfills Gen. 15:6. It follows that his first kind of “faith” does not fulfill Gen. 15:6; if it did James would have no need to commend the second kind.

d. *“Faith” not counted for righteousness versus “faith” counted for righteousness*

It also follows that James’s first kind of “faith” is *not* counted for righteousness, but his second kind of “faith” is counted for righteousness. It is only in the context of James’s second kind of “faith” that James says Gen. 15:6 was fulfilled; it is only in this context that James says that “faith” is counted for righteousness. He thus implies that his first kind is not counted for righteousness.

Additional observations are appropriate. First, James never says that Abraham had a “faith” that was not counted for righteousness that later became a “faith” counted for righteousness. Abraham’s “faith” is counted for righteousness when James first discusses it, and he is commending this “faith” as part of a way of life.

Second, we should note *when* Abraham’s “faith” was counted for righteousness according to James. Abraham was circumcised at Gen. 17:24, and he took in hand the knife to slay Isaac as a sacrifice at Gen. 22:10. Therefore, Abraham was still circumcised

when he offered Isaac. And it was Abraham's "faith" (the second kind) at the time that he offered Isaac that James declares was counted for righteousness. This means that, for James, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness at a time when Abraham was circumcised. We will return to this point later.

e. *"Faith" that is not the "faith" of a friend of God versus the "faith" of a friend of God*

In Jas. 2:22-23, James emphasizes that his second kind of "faith" is the "faith" of a friend of God. This implies that James's first kind of "faith" is not the "faith" of a friend of God.

9. Concluding Observations

To summarize the contrasts between James's first and second kinds of "faith": James's first kind does not save; is profitless; is dead; is alone; is unshown; is the kind that a demon has; and is the "faith" of a vain or foolish man. James's discussion of Abraham shows that James's first kind of "faith" is not a cooperating "faith"; is unperfected; does not fulfill Gen. 15:6; is not counted for righteousness; and is not the "faith" of a friend of God.

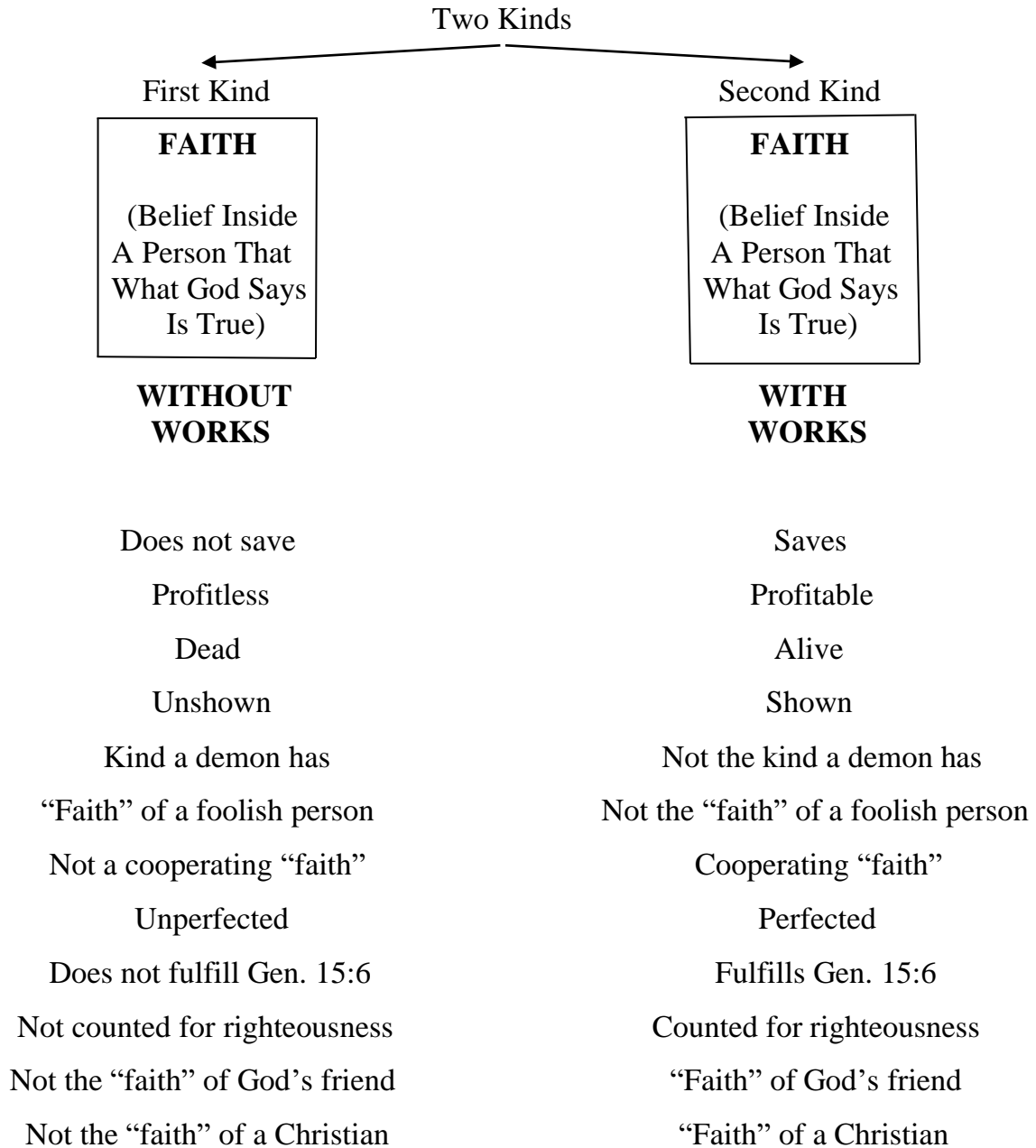
On the other hand, James's second kind of "faith" saves; is profitable; is alive; is not alone; is shown; is not the kind that a demon has; and is not the "faith" of a vain or foolish man. Moreover, it is a cooperating "faith"; is perfected; fulfills Gen. 15:6; is counted for righteousness; and is the "faith" of a friend of God.

In light of the facts that James’s first kind does not save, is dead, is the kind of “faith” (when not limited to humans) that a demon has, and is not the “faith” of a friend of God—it is clear that James is commending his second kind, not his first kind, *because his first kind is not the “faith” of a Christian, but his second kind is the “faith” of a Christian.*

Finally, James *never says that his second kind of “faith” is part of the “fruit of the Spirit” or is belief “with the heart.”* And James never discusses the role, if any, of the Holy Spirit in the production of his second kind of “faith.” That is not to say that there is no such role but only that James does not reveal what, if anything, that role is. See Chart Four.

CHART FOUR

JAMES'S
TWO KINDS OF FAITH



B. THE ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH”

As we have seen, there are two kinds of “faith” for James. But what is his *essential* definition of “faith” such that there can be two kinds?

1. James And “The Body”

At Jas. 2:26, James likens “faith” to a body, and “works” to a spirit. Moreover, James teaches that in the same way that a body without a spirit is dead, so “faith” without “works” is dead. Further, James implies that as a body with a spirit is living, so “faith” with “works” is living. James’s comparison can help us identify what his essential meaning of “faith” is.

This leads to our first point. According to James, if the body is without a spirit, the “body” is dead. If the “body” is with a spirit, the “body” is living. What this means is that it is *possible* for a “body” to be dead *or* living, depending on whether it has a spirit. Phrased differently, *the mere term “body” does not tell you whether the “body” is dead, or whether the “body” is living, but there are only two possibilities, i.e., the body must be one or the other.* That is, on the issue of whether a “body” is dead or living, the mere term “body” is *neutral*. There must be an additional fact—that the “body” does not have a spirit—in order for the “body” to be dead. Alternatively, there must be an additional fact—that the “body” has a spirit—in order for the “body” to be living.

Thus, if you came upon a body that was not obviously dead, you might check for life signs, see if the person was breathing, call for a paramedic, etc. The mere fact that

the body existed would not tell you whether it was dead or alive; you would have to know more. *The mere term “body” does not indicate whether it is dead or living.*

This, in turn, leads to our second point. The mere term “body” indicates only that the “body” must be dead or alive but, either way, the definition of the term “body” remains the same.

When we determine that a “body” is dead, or that it is living, we are describing the “body” based on the absence or presence of an *additional* fact that is not a part of the definition of the term “body” itself. That additional fact is the absence or presence of a spirit.

For example, let’s define “body” for James to mean *the physical part of the human*. If the physical part of the human is dead, it lacks a spirit. If the physical part of the human is alive, it has a spirit. Either way, the definition of “body”—the physical part of the human—remains unchanged. *Thus, whether a “body” is dead or living, the definition of “body” remains the same.*

2. James and “Faith”

Let’s apply the above discussion. First, according to James, if “faith” is without “works,” “faith” is dead. If “faith” is with “works,” “faith” is living. What this means is that it is *possible* for “faith” to be dead *or* living, depending on whether it works with “works.” Phrased differently, for James, *the mere term “faith” does not tell you whether “faith” is dead, or whether “faith” is living, but there are only two possibilities, i.e., “faith” must be one or the other.* That is, on the issue of whether “faith” is dead or

living, the mere term “faith” is *neutral*. There must be an additional fact—that the “faith” does not work with “works”—in order for the “faith” to be dead. Alternatively, there must be an additional fact—that “faith” works with “works”—in order for the “faith” to be living.

Second, the mere term “faith” indicates only that the “faith” must be dead or alive *but, either way, the definition of the term “faith” remains the same*. When we determine that “faith” is dead, or that it is living, we are describing “faith” based on the absence or presence of an *additional* fact that is not a part of the definition of the term “faith” itself. That additional fact is the absence or presence of “works” with which “faith” can work.

For example, when James indicates that a person has “faith,” let’s define “faith” to mean *belief inside a person that what God says is true*. If the belief inside a person that what God says is true is dead, it lacks “works.” If the belief inside a person that what God says is true is living, it has “works.” Either way, the definition of “faith”—belief inside a person that what God says is true—remains unchanged. *Thus, for James, whether “faith” is dead or living, the definition of “faith” remains the same.*

What is James’s *essential* meaning of “faith,” such that there can be two kinds of it? James leaves us to deduce it from his two kinds of faith and his comparison of “faith” to a “body.” For James, the essential meaning of “faith” (in the context of humans) is: *belief inside a person that what God says is true*. See Chart Five.

CHART FIVE

**JAMES'S
ESSENTIAL MEANING
OF FAITH**

**Belief Inside A Person That
What God Says Is True**

It is useful to consider James’s essential meaning of “faith” in light of the contrasting possibilities of his first and second kinds of “faith.” In particular, James’s *essential* meaning of “faith”—belief inside a person that what God says is true—*does not tell you which one of the two possibilities applies*. That is, his essential meaning of “faith” does not tell you whether “faith”: does not save or does save; is profitless or profitable; is dead or alive; is alone or not alone; is unshown or shown; is (when not limited to humans) the kind of “faith” a demon has or the kind a demon does not have; or is the “faith” of a foolish man or not the “faith” of a foolish man.

Similarly, James’s essential meaning of “faith” does not tell you whether “faith”: is not cooperating or is cooperating; is unperfected or perfected; does not fulfill Gen. 15:6 or does fulfill Gen. 15:6; is not counted for righteousness or is counted for righteousness; is not the “faith” of a friend of God or is the “faith” of a friend of God; or is not the “faith” of a Christian or is the “faith” of a Christian.

Thus, James’s *essential* meaning of “faith” *remains unchanged and is neutral*, whether he uses it in the context of his first or second kind of “faith,” and you have to know an additional fact—whether “faith” does not or does have “works”—to know whether the “faith” is the first or second kind, and therefore to know which of the two possibilities, i.e., which of the contrasting truths, applies.

But what else must be true of James’s essential meaning of “faith”? If James’s *essential* meaning of “faith” is neutral and does not itself tell you which of the contrasting possibilities applies, *then “faith” as a term reflecting this neutral meaning is a*

nontechnical term. For example, James (unlike Paul) is not teaching that “faith” in its essential meaning is the “fruit of the Spirit,” a belief “with the heart,” or the “faith” of a Christian. Indeed, one cannot know from the word “faith” with its essential meaning for James whether the person who has it is or is not a Christian; one must know whether that “faith” is or is not with “works.”

Finally, it follows that *the essential meaning of “faith” for James is its ordinary, common meaning among the Jews to whom he was writing.*

Again, at Luke 18:18-19, a ruler asked Jesus, “*Good* Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God.” (Italics added.) The ruler used “good” with its *ordinary, common meaning*; Jesus used it with a special and technical meaning making it an exclusive attribute of Deity. At Luke 6:32, Jesus said, “sinners also *love* those that love them.” (Italics added.) Jesus used the word “love” with its *ordinary, common meaning*; even unbelieving sinners could “love.” Paul’s meaning of “love” is special and technical, it is part of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22), and an unbelieving sinner cannot have this kind of “love.”

Similarly, for James, the essential meaning of “faith” is belief inside a person that what God says is true, and he is using the term with its ordinary, common meaning and not as a technical term. He is using the term “faith” as the Jewish people would ordinarily use it. *It must be remembered that James said he was writing “to the twelve tribes.” He did not say that he was writing to a church or saints (as Paul did). In other*

words, James was writing to *Jews*, some of whom were Christians, and some of whom were not. James naturally expected these Jews to invest “faith” with its ordinary meaning among Jews—Christians and unbelievers alike. Jews who did not believe in Christ did not impute to the word “faith” a technical meaning applicable only to Christians, and nothing in James limits the meaning of that word itself to apply only to Christians. Based on the Jews’ usage of the word, James was basically telling them: “if we start with your ordinary, common meaning for the word “faith,” I want to see it working with works.”

C. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”

We discuss below what James means when he says a person is “justified by works.”

James says at Jas. 2:21-24:

²¹ Was not Abraham our father *justified by works*, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. ²⁴ Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

(Italics added.) According to James, what is the underlying process by which a person is justified?

Verse 21, by means of a rhetorical question, teaches that Abraham was “justified by works” when he offered Isaac. The verse does not identify the underlying process.

But Jas. 2:22 begins, “Seest thou.” *After that*, James identifies in Jas. 2:22-23 four processes:

(1) faith wrought with Abraham’s works,

(2) by works was Abraham’s faith made perfect,

(3) the Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and

(4) Abraham was called the friend of God.

Subsequently, Jas. 2:24, says, “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified[.]*” (Italics added.)

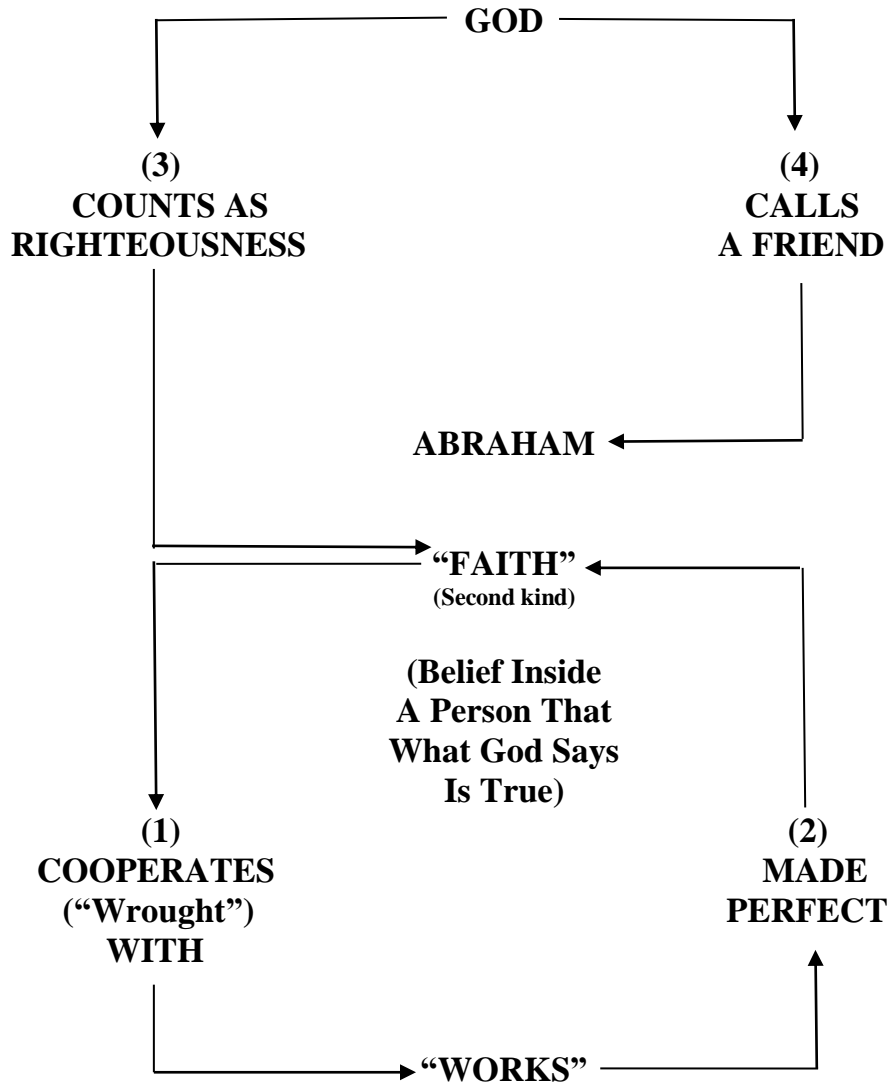
Where do we “see” this? *James is directing our attention to the four processes that he has just written about in Jas. 2:22-23.* The first two involve Abraham’s “faith” and “works”: “faith” works with “works,” and by “works” “faith” is perfected. The second two involve what God does. God imputes Abraham’s “faith” unto him for righteousness. God calls him a friend (Isa. 41:8).

When James says that Abraham was “justified by works,” James refers to the above four processes. These are the four processes by which any person, not just Abraham, is “justified by works” as James uses that phrase. See Chart Six.

CHART SIX

JAMES'S JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

(Four Processes)



1. Observations

A number of observations are appropriate. First, the fulfillment of Gen. 15:6, i.e., faith being counted for righteousness, is only one of four processes of justification for James. Second, “works” are a part of justification for James; as mentioned, they show “faith.” (Jas. 2:18.) Third, one of the processes is that God calls Abraham a friend. This implies closeness in God’s attitude towards Abraham.

Fourth, James concludes at James 2:24 that, “by works a man is justified[.]” The phrase “is justified” is a translation of a word in the Greek present tense.³⁷ As discussed, the Greek present tense generally indicates activity *in progress*.³⁸ This goes beyond the single event of the offering of Isaac and focuses on the four processes as a way of life. Fifth, Abraham’s “work” of offering Isaac was outward conduct that showed his “faith” and constituted an act of worship.

Sixth, it is sometimes argued that when James says a man is “justified by works,” James is saying that by works a man is justified *before men*. However, nowhere in Jas. 2:21-24, does James use the phrase “before men” or say that Abraham was “justified before men.”

Moreover, when Abraham offered Isaac, God was there, but the only person present other than Abraham was Isaac, and it is not clear whether he was a “man” (an adult) when Abraham offered him. In any event, there were no “men” (plural) present

³⁷ Friberg and Friberg, p. 696.

³⁸ Wallace, p. 514.

“before” whom Abraham could have been justified when he offered Isaac. Further, Jas. 2:23 says Abraham was “called the Friend of God.” By whom? God. At Isa. 41:8, God, speaking through Isaiah the prophet, referred to “Abraham my friend.” If it is God Who is calling Abraham His friend at Jas. 2:23, this suggests that it is God Who is justifying at Jas. 2:21 and 24.

Further still, the words “justified” (Jas. 2:21, 24) and “righteousness” at Jas. 2:23 are completely different in appearance. But the underlying Greek words are clearly related. The word “justified” at Jas. 2:21 is a translation of “*edikaiothe*.”³⁹ The word “justified” at Jas. 2:24 is a translation of “*dikaoutai*.”⁴⁰ “Righteousness” at Jas. 2:23 is a translation of “*dikaiosunen*.”⁴¹ All of these Greek words share the root “*dike*” which pertains to a judicial verdict.⁴²

Thus, a person reading Jas. 2:21-24 in the Greek would associate the Greek words underlying “justified” at verses 21 and 24 with the Greek word underlying “righteousness” at verse 23. And it is God, not men, Who counted Abraham’s “faith” for righteousness at verse 23. After all, Gen. 15:6 says, “And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; *and he [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness.*” (Italics added.)

³⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 696.

⁴⁰ Wigram and Winter, p. 696.

⁴¹ Wigram and Winter, p. 696.

⁴² <https://biblehub.com/greek/1344.htm> re “justified” at Jas. 2:21;
<https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2-24.htm> re “justified” at Jas. 2:24;
<https://biblehub.com/greek/1343.htm> re “righteousness” at Jas. 2:23.

Accordingly, the reader of Jas. 2:21-24 would reasonably infer that “justified by works” for James means justified by God, not justified “before men,” and that God justified Abraham when he offered Isaac.

Indeed, if “justified by works” for James meant justified “before men,” that would suggest (contrary to Gen.15:6) that men, not God, are imputing righteousness to Abraham. Beyond that, if James were teaching that justification by “works” meant justification before men, this would suggest that you could have all the “faith with works” you wanted but, if those “works” were not done before men, you would not be justified. “Faith with works,” with “works” that only God could see, would not count, even though they showed your “faith.” That is not James’s teaching.⁴³

Our seventh and final observation is that James never discusses the role, if any, of the Holy Spirit in how a person is “justified by works” as he uses that phrase. That does not mean that there is no such role but only that James does not tell us what, if anything, it is. Starting where the Jewish people are, James takes the ordinary, nontechnical meaning of “faith” as the Jews understand that term and teaches that he wants “faith” to have “works” if a person is to be justified.

2. Lessons From Rahab

James also uses an incident in the life of Rahab the harlot as an example of justification by works. When Joshua and the Israelites took the land of Canaan, the city

⁴³ And even if, when James used the phrase “justified by works,” he were referring to justified “before men,” his doctrine would be transitional for the reasons discussed later in this essay.

of Jericho was the first city they would conquer. Before Joshua took Jericho, he sent spies to view the land. (Jos. 2:1.) The king of Jericho began looking for the spies, but Rahab received and hid them (Jos. 2:1, 4, 6), and later sent them away, helping them escape. (Jos. 2:15-16, 22-23.) Rahab did these things, telling Joshua's spies, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land" (Jos. 2:9) and "the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." (Jos. 2:11.) The spies agreed that when Joshua conquered the city, the lives of Rahab and those in her house would be saved because she had helped the spies. (Jos. 2:9-14; 17-21.) Joshua later honored the agreement, sparing the life of Rahab when Joshua destroyed Jericho. (Jos. 6:24-25.)

James refers to this incident as an example of justification by works. After concluding that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24), James writes at Jas. 2:25 (NASB):

"In the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?"

Several points should be noted. First, Rahab believed what God said was true, i.e., she knew that the Lord had given the land to the Israelites, and that the Lord was God in heaven and earth. Motivated by that belief, she did the works of receiving the spies and sending them out another way. Second, Rahab's "faith" exemplified James's second kind of "faith." Third, Rahab's works were outward conduct that showed her "faith" and that benefitted others, i.e., Joshua's spies.

Fourth, James maintains that “in the same way” Rahab was “justified by works.” In the same way as what? In the same way that Abraham was “justified by works,” i.e., by the four processes.

Fifth, Rahab received and hid the spies (Jos. 2:1, 4) and later sent them out another way (Jos. 2:15-16, 22) but, in the interim, she lied. Even though the spies were in her house, she falsely told the king of Jericho that the spies had come and gone. (Jos. 2:4-6.) Nonetheless, throughout this event Rahab had James’s second kind of “faith” and was “justified by works.”⁴⁴

Sixth, Rahab was not an Israelite; she lived in Jericho in the land of Canaan. In other words, she was a Gentile. *James was teaching the Jews to whom he was writing that even Gentiles were “justified by works” as he used that term to refer to his four processes.*

D. THE MEANING OF “JUSTIFIED . . . BY FAITH ONLY”

As we have seen, James says at Jas. 2:24, “Ye see then that by works a man is *justified*, and *not by faith only*.” (Italics added.) What does James mean when he relates that a man is not “justified . . . by faith only”? *When James declares that a man is not “justified . . . by faith only,” James is teaching that a man is not justified by James’s first kind of faith, i.e., “faith without works.”*

⁴⁴ Finally, although Rahab was a harlot, God honored this woman, not only by saving her life but by making her a direct ancestor of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 1:1, 5, 16.)

This is why James wrote at Jas. 2:17, “Even so faith, *if it hath not works*, is dead, being *alone*.” “Faith” is *alone* for James because it lacks “works”; this is what James means by the phrase “faith only” at Jas. 2:24.

Note that when James speaks of “faith” “being alone,” or when he uses the phrase “faith only,” he is not referring simply to his essential meaning of “faith.” One cannot know, from James’s *essential* meaning of the term “faith,” whether it is (1) with “works” or (2) “without works” and therefore alone. For James, “faith” “being alone,” or “faith only,” refers to “faith without works.”

VIII. JAMES AND THE ROLES OF LAW AND WORKS OF THE LAW

Below we discuss the roles of the law of Moses and works of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian according to James. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider James’s various references to the law in his epistle.

A. THE “WORD” INCLUDES THE “PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY,” I.E., THE LAW OF MOSES

At James 1:22-25, James states,

“²² But be ye doers of the *word*, and not *hearers only*, deceiving your own selves.

²³ For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵ But whoso

looketh into the *perfect law of liberty*, and continueth therein, he being not a *forgetful hearer*, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

(Italics added.)

Here, James says that his readers are to be doers of the “word,” and “not hearers only.” He later insists that his reader is to continue in the “perfect law of liberty,” “being not a forgetful hearer.” The parallel of “*word*/not hearers only” and “*perfect law of liberty*/not a forgetful hearer” is evidence that the “word” at least includes the “perfect law of liberty.”

Moreover, to the Jews to whom James was writing, the “word” would consist at least of the Old Testament, including the law of Moses. This too is evidence that the “perfect law of liberty” is the law of Moses. Further, Jews reading about a “law” of liberty would naturally think of the “law” of Moses. Further still, if the phrase “perfect law of liberty” is not the law of Moses, then James has introduced a phrase found nowhere else in the Bible to refer to an important concept without clearly explaining what it is or how it differs from the law of Moses.

The above facts indicate that the “perfect law of liberty” is the law of Moses and, if so, imply that James wants Jewish Christians to “continu[e]” in the “perfect law of liberty” and be a “*doer* of the work.” (Italics added.) That is, James wants Jewish Christians to do works of the law of Moses.

B. THE “ROYAL LAW,” THE “LAW,” AND THE “LAW OF LIBERTY” ARE THE LAW OF MOSES

At Jas. 2:1-7, James denounces having faith with “respect of persons,” i.e., preferring the rich over the poor. He then states at Jas. 2:8-13:

“⁸ If ye fulfil the *royal law* according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye *do well*: ⁹ But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are *convinced* [NASB and NIV: “convicted”] of the *law as transgressors*.

¹⁰ For whosoever shall *keep the whole law*, and yet offend in one point, he is *guilty* of all. ¹¹ For he that said, *do not commit adultery*, said also, *do not kill*. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a *transgressor of the law*. ¹² So speak ye, and so *do*, as they that shall be judged by the *law of liberty*.

¹³ For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

(Italics added.)

These verses are divisible as follows. Verses 8 and 9 contrast (1) fulfilling the “royal law” according to “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” and (2) having respect of persons and being convicted of the “the law as transgressors.” Verses 10 and 11 explain why those having respect of persons are convicted of the law as transgressors. Verse 12 is an admonition of future judgment. Verse 13 explains, discussing the relationship between, on the one hand, that future judgment and, on the other, the presence or absence of mercy. As discussed below, these verses demonstrate that James

is telling the Jews to whom he is writing that *they are under obligation to the law of Moses and must comply with it.*

First, at James 2:8-9, James contrasts fulfilling the “royal law” according to “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” and (2) having respect of persons and being convicted of the “the law as transgressors.” “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” is *unmistakably a commandment of the law of Moses found at Lev. 19:18.* That shows that the “royal law” to be fulfilled according to Lev. 19:18 is the law of Moses. Moreover, the Jewish reader would understand being convicted of the “law” as transgressors as being convicted *of the law of Moses* as transgressors or *breakers* of the law of Moses. That in turn, again, shows that the “royal law” is the law of Moses. Further, James says that if you fulfill the “royal law,” “*ye do well.*” (Italics added.) He clearly wants his Jewish reader to *comply* with the “royal law,” i.e., law of Moses.

Indeed, if “the royal law” is not the law of Moses, then James has introduced a phrase—“the royal law”—found nowhere else in the Bible, to refer to an important concept without clearly explaining what it is or how it differs from the law of Moses referred to multiple times in Jas. 2:9-13, as discussed below.

Second, James 2:10-11 explain verse 9. Verse 10 teaches that whoever will keep “the *whole law*” (italics added)—an undeniable reference to the law of Moses—and offend “in one point”—an obvious reference to a single point in the law of Moses—is *guilty* of all—a clear reference to being “guilty” of all points in the law of Moses. Verse 11 further explains, referring to two of the *Ten Commandments* of the law of Moses,

“Thou shall not kill [murder]” (Ex. 20:13) and “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14). One who breaks one commandment of the law of Moses but not another is nonetheless a transgressor of the law of Moses. Thus, having respect of persons makes one a transgressor of the law. James implicitly teaches his Jewish readers that their sin of having respect of persons makes the readers transgressors of the law, *which presupposes they are under obligation to it*.

Third, Jas. 2:12 implicitly admonishes the Jewish readers to not have respect of persons and to “do” as people who will be judged by the *law of liberty*. In the context of Jas. 2:8-11 and *its multiple references to the law of Moses* discussed above, James at Jas. 2:12 is warning his readers that what they “do” will be judged by “the law of liberty,” *which is the law of Moses*.

If the “law of liberty” is not the law of Moses, then James has introduced a phrase—the “law of liberty”—found nowhere else in the Bible (except at Jas. 1:25, which we have discussed) to refer to an important concept without clearly explaining what it is or how it differs from the law of Moses referred to multiple times in Jas. 2:9-13, of which Jas. 2:12 is a part. And James, telling them to “do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (italics added) *is telling them to do works of the law of Moses*.

Finally, James is teaching at Jas. 2:13 as follows. All Jews—Christian or not—will be judged by the law of liberty, i.e., the law of Moses. All Jews (certainly having offended at least in one point) will be guilty under the law. The Jewish unbeliever, having shown no mercy (e.g., having respect of persons), will be judged guilty and shown

no mercy by God. Indeed, such a judgment is consistent with the harsh provisions of punishment under the law of Moses. Thus, Hebrews 10:28, referring to Jewish unbelievers, says, “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses[.]” (See also Heb. 2:2-3.) However, the Jewish Christian, having shown mercy, will be judged guilty but will be shown mercy by God. *The teaching of James that his Jewish readers will be judged guilty under the law of Moses presupposes that they are subject to it.*

C. A “DOER OF THE LAW” IS A DOER OF THE LAW OF MOSES

At Jas. 4:11, James admonishes,

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, *thou art not a doer of the law*, but a judge.”

Again, the Jewish reader would understand James’s references to “law” in this verse to be references to the law of Moses. The reader would also understand James to be enjoining him or her to be a “*doer of the law*” (italics added)—a *doer of the law of Moses*—and not a judge of the law. This reflects that James wanted his Jewish reader *to do works of the law*.

IX. PAUL AND JAMES CONTRASTED

As part of our reconciling of the doctrines of Paul and James on justification and the role of the law of Moses, we are showing that these two apostles sometimes use the

same terms with different meanings. One way to do this is to contrast the apostles' usage of those terms.

Before we do so, however, we remind the reader that the differences in how the apostles employ the terms “faith,” “works,” and “justified by works,” and the differences in how Paul uses the phrase “justified by faith” and James uses the phrase “justified . . . by faith” when he says we are not “justified . . . by faith only,” are not attributable to any difference in the underlying Greek words themselves.

A. CONTRASTING PAUL’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH” WITH JAMES’S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF “FAITH”

For Paul and James, the essential meaning of “faith” in the context of justification involves belief inside a person that what God says is true. But there the similarity ends. Let’s contrast the essential meaning of Paul’s “faith” with the essential meaning of James’s “faith.”

For Paul, the essential meaning of “faith” is: that part of the *fruit of the Spirit* consisting of the belief inside *the Christian*, and *with the heart*, that what God says true. For James, “faith” is belief inside a *person* that what God says is true.

Paul’s “faith” saves; Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (see also Acts 16:27-31). For James, “faith” may or may not save, depending upon whether it has “works.” Paul says “faith” is part of the fruit of the Spirit; therefore, “faith” could never be the “faith” of a demon. For James, “faith” may or may not be the “faith” of a demon, depending on whether the “faith” has “works.”

Continuing, we note Paul's "faith" fulfills Gen. 15:6. James's "faith" may or may not fulfill Gen. 15:6, depending upon whether the "faith" has "works." Paul's "faith" is counted for righteousness. James's "faith" may or may not be counted for righteousness. Paul's "faith" is the "faith" of a Christian. James "faith" may or not be the "faith" of a Christian. Paul's "faith" is a technical term. James uses "faith" with its ordinary, nontechnical meaning among the Jews.

B. CONTRASTING PAUL'S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF "FAITH" WITH JAMES'S "FIRST KIND OF FAITH"

We may also contrast Paul's essential meaning of "faith" with James's first kind of "faith," i.e., "faith without works." Paul's "faith" may or may not be accompanied by good works at a particular time. James's first kind of "faith" must be without "works" that show that "faith." Paul's "faith" saves. James's first kind does not. Paul's "faith," part of the fruit of the Spirit, could never be the "faith" that a demon has. James's first kind is the kind a demon has. Paul's "faith" fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness. James's first kind neither fulfills Gen. 15:6 nor is counted for righteousness. Paul's "faith" is that of a Christian. James's first kind is not that of a Christian.

C. CONTRASTING PAUL'S ESSENTIAL MEANING OF "FAITH" WITH JAMES'S SECOND KIND OF "FAITH"

Let's continue, contrasting Paul's essential meaning of "faith" with James's second kind of "faith." Paul's "faith" may or may not be accompanied by good works at

a particular time. James's second kind of "faith" must be shown by works. Paul's "faith" need not be always "working (cooperating) with" "works." James's second kind must be cooperating with "works." Paul's "faith" need not be "perfected" by "works." James's second kind of "faith" is "perfected" by "works." Paul's "faith" fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness whether or not that "faith" is accompanied by "works" at a given instant. James's second kind of "faith" fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness, but only when that "faith" is "working with works." Paul's "faith" is counted for righteousness without "works" of any kind. James's second kind of "faith" is counted for righteousness only if it is "working with works" and, for Jewish Christians, these "works" include works of the law.

For Paul, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness, "[n]ot in circumcision" (Rom. 4:10), i.e., at the time of Gen. 15:6. That is, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness at a time when he was uncircumcised. For James, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness when he offered Isaac, i.e., at the time of Gen. 22. In other words, for James, Abraham's "faith" was counted for righteousness at a time when he was circumcised.

D. CONTRASTING PAUL'S "WORKS" WITH JAMES'S "WORKS"

Paul and James differ concerning the meaning of the word "works" in the phrase "justified by works." Paul uses "works" to refer to outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him. James uses "works" to refer to outward conduct that shows "faith."

E. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

Paul and James differ concerning the relationship of justification and faith. Paul teaches a person is “justified by faith” (Rom. 3:28, 5:1; Gal. 2:16) as he uses that phrase. James teaches a person is not “justified . . . by faith only” (Jas. 2:24) (i.e., by his first kind of “faith”) as he uses that phrase.

F. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON “JUSTIFIED BY WORKS”

The two apostles also differ concerning the significance of the phrase “justified by works.” Paul teaches Abraham was not “justified by works” (Rom. 4:2), while James teaches Abraham was “justified by works” (Jas. 2:21).

Paul uses the phrase “justified by works” to refer to two processes that a person engages in pursuant to a contract: (1) a person engages in “works” (outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him) and (2) in exchange, God “pays” that person with righteousness as a debt owed by Him. “Faith,” as Paul uses that term, is not part of these processes.

James utilizes the phrase “justified by works” to refer to four processes: (1) “faith” works with “works,” (2) by “works” “faith” is made perfect, (3) the person believes God and it is imputed unto the person for righteousness, and (4) the person is called the friend of God. James’s second kind of “faith” is part of these processes.

Paul taught that Gentiles are “justified by faith,” as he employed that phrase. James, using the example of Rahab, taught that Gentiles are “justified by works” as he used that phrase.

G. CONTRASTING PAUL AND JAMES ON THE CHRISTIAN AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW

Paul proclaims that Christians are not under obligation to the law of Moses. James proclaims to Jewish Christians that they are under obligation to the law of Moses. Paul teaches that Christians sometimes sin, but they cannot transgress the law or be found guilty under it. James teaches Jewish Christians sometimes sin, that when they do they transgress the law, and that they will be found guilty under it. Paul maintains there is “no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1) for the Christian. James maintains Jewish Christians receive mercy despite guilt.

H. CONCLUSION

Paul and James have different definitions for the terms “faith,” “works,” and “justified by works,” and the apostles mean different things when Paul uses the phrase “justified by faith” and James uses the phrase “justified . . . by faith only.” Thus, it is important to *get behind the labels* of these terms to understand the different *meanings* that each apostle has for these terms.

A number of things follow from this. First, if one starts with the assumption that Paul and James have the same meanings for the terms “faith,” “works,” and “justified by works” or if one begins with the premise that Paul’s phrase “justified by faith” is the same as James’s phrase “justified . . . by faith only,” *the respective discussions of Paul and James on justification cannot be reconciled.*

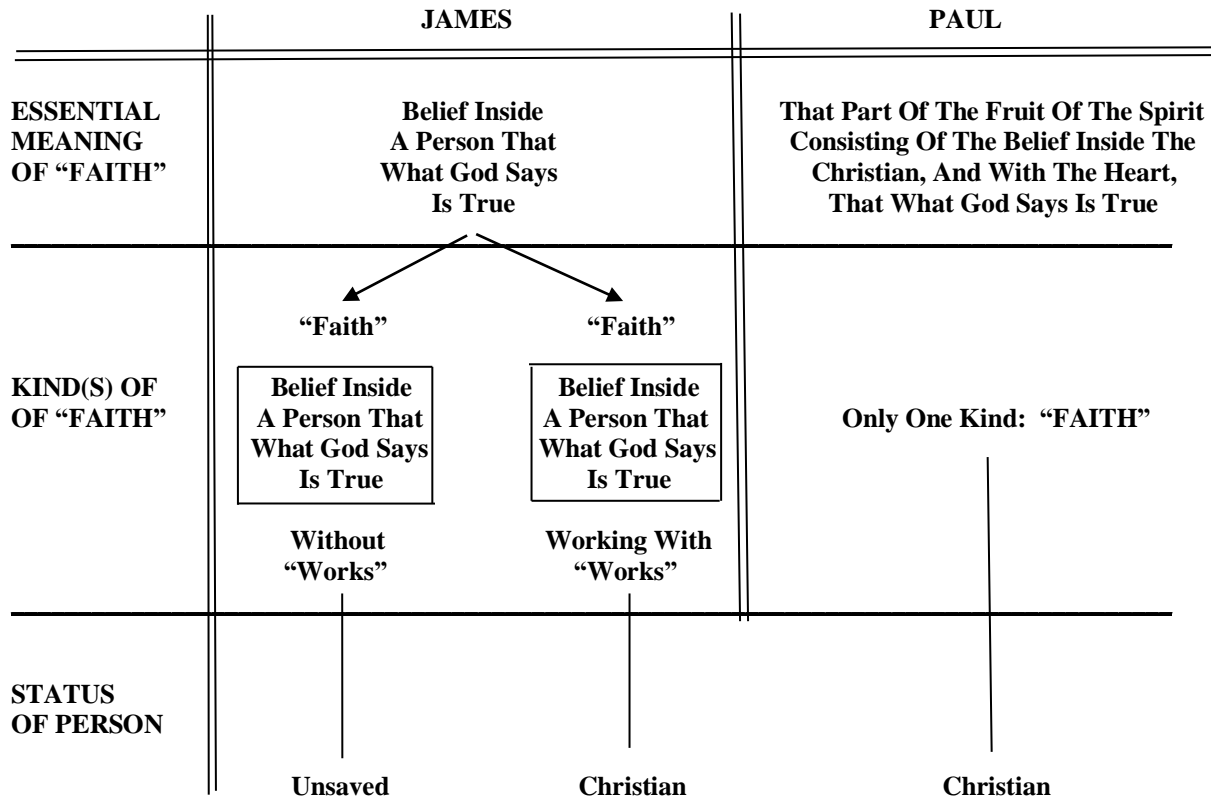
Second, if the doctrines of Paul and James on justification apply today to Christians, then *both* doctrines must be taught, and Christian teaching on these issues is contradictory. We discuss this in detail later.

Third, simply using the terms “faith,” “works,” “justified by faith,” “justified . . . by faith only” or “justified by works” can cause confusion unless we are clear whose terminology we are using. For example, earlier in this essay we observed that some have tried to reconcile Paul and James on justification by claiming that Paul instructs that we are “justified by faith,” but James instructs that this justifying “faith” that Paul is talking about will do “works.” This teaching is well-meaning but erroneous; Paul and James start with two different essential meanings of “faith,” and the “faith” that Paul refers to differs from James’s second kind of “faith.” See Chart Seven.

This leads, then, to the next questions: how do we reconcile what Paul and James taught on justification? And how should man be just with God?

CHART SEVEN

PAUL AND JAMES CONTRASTED



X. THE TERM “GOSPEL” REFERS TO WHAT PAUL PREACHED

In the first and second chapters of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, Paul sets forth the proofs of the independence of his apostleship, and independence of the source of his doctrine. Paul started the Galatian churches, and at Gal. 1:6-9 he writes:

“⁶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the *gospel* of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

(Italics added.)

The word “gospel” means “good news.” It is of course a term used throughout the New Testament, by such persons as Jesus, Mark, Peter, and John.⁴⁵ But when Paul uses the word “gospel” in his Epistle to the Galatians, he, as we will see, is referring to the “gospel” that *he* preached.

The reason Paul is adamant that the Galatian Christians adhere to the “gospel” which *he* preached is revealed at Gal. 1:11-12. There, Paul writes,

⁴⁵ BAGD, p. 317; Mt. 26:13; Mk. 1:1; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 14:6.

“¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that *the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.* ¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (Italics added.)

Paul did not receive the “gospel” he preached from *any* man. And while Paul received his “gospel” from Jesus Christ, Paul was not *taught* that “gospel” by Jesus Christ. Instead, Paul received that “gospel” by a *revelation* from Jesus Christ; it was unveiled to Paul’s mind without his having to deduce through study the truths of that “gospel.” Even Paul was not to be praised as if, by his great intellect, he came to understand the “gospel.” Paul’s “gospel” was “not after man.”

The phrase “revelation of Jesus Christ” is used four times in the Bible.⁴⁶ One is at Rev. 1:1, where John refers to a “*revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass[.]*” (Italics added.)

Another is here at Gal. 1:12, where Paul says he received his “gospel” by a “revelation of Jesus Christ.” In other words, Paul’s “gospel” was as much a “revelation of Jesus Christ” to Paul as the Book of Revelations was to John.

Thus, because Paul received his “gospel” by revelation, his Epistle to the Galatians focuses on the “gospel” *he* preached. We have seen this in the above quotes of Gal. 1:8 and 11. At verse 8, Paul refers to the “*gospel . . . we have preached.*” (Italics added.) At

⁴⁶ Gal. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:7 (NASB), 13; Rev. 1:1. Wigram and Winter, p. 70. The Greek word translated “revelation” in these verses is “apokalupsis” (*ibid.*), the basis of the English word “apocalypse.” (The word “revelation” at 1 Pet. 1:7 (NASB) and 1 Pet. 1:13 refers to the return of Jesus Christ, not to a revelation of doctrine.)

verse 11, Paul refers to the “*gospel which was preached of me.*” (Italics added.) The next time Paul uses the word “gospel” is at Gal. 2:2. There, Paul teaches that he went to Jerusalem and communicated the “*gospel which I preach among the Gentiles[.]*” And, at Gal. 4:13 (NASB), Paul tells the Galatian Christians, “. . . *I preached the gospel to you[.]*” (Italics added.)

Indeed, Paul referred to the “gospel” as “my gospel.” He told the Roman Christians that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to *my gospel.*” (Rom. 2:16, italics added.) Paul said God was able to establish the Roman Christians “according to *my gospel.*” (Rom. 16:25, italics added.) He told Timothy to “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to *my gospel.*” (2 Tim. 2:8, italics added.)

Paul was not taught by Jesus when He was personally on earth, i.e., before His resurrection. But Paul received by revelation from Jesus everything Paul needed to know about the “gospel” that Jesus commissioned him to preach. Thus, Paul could write at 2 Cor. 11:5-6:

“For I suppose *I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.* But though I be rude in speech, *yet not in knowledge[.]*”

(Italics added.) Similarly, Paul wrote at 2 Cor. 12:11: “in *nothing* am I behind the very chiefest apostles[.]” (Italics added.)

Indeed, Paul received numerous revelations on a variety of subjects. God gave to Paul the task of revealing to the church such mysteries as Israel’s temporary blindness

(Rom. 11:25); the mystery of the rapture and translation of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54); and the mystery of the Gentiles being fellow heirs and of the same body of Christ. (Eph. 3:1-6.)

Paul wrote that he received so many revelations from God that, because of the “abundance of the revelations,” God permitted a Satanic messenger to buffet Paul to keep him from being exalted (2 Cor. 12:7). It is Paul who is an apostle to Gentiles, and ministered to Jews among the Gentiles. It is Paul who writes about half the New Testament, and who is the subject of about half of the Book of Acts, the historical record of the church. Peter acknowledged that Paul’s letters were Scripture and contained some things that were “hard to be understood.” (2 Pet. 3:15-16.) This suggests Paul introduced these “things” to Peter, whether personally or by Paul’s letters.

When Paul uses the term “gospel” in his Epistle to the Galatians to refer to a “gospel” believed by Christians, he is referring to the “gospel” he received by revelation: the “gospel” preached by him. We will establish the significance of this in our later demonstration that there were aspects of this “gospel” that the other apostles did not know and that Paul had to introduce to them.

XI. THE “GOSPEL” PAUL PREACHED: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND NOT BY WORKS, FREEDOM TO LIVE A SCRIPTURAL LIFESTYLE EXCLUDING THE LAW OF MOSES AND ITS COMMANDMENTS

A. THE BASIC TRUTHS

Paul’s “gospel” included basic truths of Christianity that every apostle, indeed every Christian, would know. An example is found at 1 Cor. 15:1-4. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said:

“¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the *gospel which I preached unto you*, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand; ² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what *I preached unto you*, unless ye have believed in vain.^[47] ³ For *I delivered unto you* first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*; ⁴ *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*[.]”

(Italics added.) Similarly, Paul told Timothy, “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was *raised from the dead according to my gospel*.” (2 Tim. 2:8, italics added.)

⁴⁷ The phrase “believed in vain” at 1 Cor. 15:2 is not referring to a Christian losing his or her salvation. Thus, the phrase does not refer to a Christian who initially believed and was saved but later “*believed in vain*” in the sense that *the Christian stopped believing and therefore was no longer saved*. Christians continue believing and cannot lose their salvation, although that topic is beyond the scope of this essay. Paul’s point is that a Christian has “believed in vain” in the sense that *the Christian’s belief, initial and later, is pointless*—“in vain”—if, as *erroneously* asserted by some, there is no *resurrection* of the dead. (Compare 1 Cor. 15:2 with 1 Cor. 15:14 (“if Christ be not *risen*, . . . *your faith is also vain* (italics added).) Because there is a resurrection of the dead, the Christian does not believe “in vain.”

B. THE “TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL”

But Paul’s “gospel” went beyond these truths. Thus, twice in his Epistle to the Galatians, at Gal. 2:5 and 2:14, Paul uses the phrase “the truth of the gospel.” What was that “truth”? We first discuss “the truth of the gospel” at Gal. 2:14, which is part of Gal. 2:11-21. We then discuss that phrase as it is found in Gal. 2:5.

At Gal. 2:11-21, including particularly Gal. 2:11-16, Paul recorded a confrontation that he had with Peter in Antioch, Syria. Paul confronted Peter because Peter had engaged in hypocrisy. Peter had been eating with Gentiles until certain persons came from James but, when they came, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles, fearing “them which were of the circumcision.” The circumcision were, in this case, Jewish Christians from James and they emphasized compliance with the law of Moses. The other Jewish Christians from Antioch, and Barnabas, joined Peter in his hypocrisy. Peter’s withdrawal implicitly taught Gentiles that, before they could associate with Jewish Christians, Gentiles had to comply with the law.

At Gal. 2:14-16, Paul records:

¹⁴ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the *truth of the gospel*, I said unto Peter before them all, *If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* ¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by*

the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

(Emphasis added.)

According to these verses, the “truth of the gospel” includes the following. First, neither Jewish nor Gentile Christians can be *compelled* to live as do the Jews. *The issue is one of obligation.* In other words, *Jewish and Gentile Christians are free from the obligations of the law; they are free to live a Scriptural lifestyle “after the manner of Gentiles” that excludes complying with the law of Moses and its commandments for any purpose.* Second, *Jewish and Gentile Christians are “justified by faith” and are not “justified by works of the law”* (italics added) as Paul uses those phrases (with “justified by works” bearing Paul’s meaning for that phrase).

The other time Paul uses the phrase “the truth of the gospel” is at Gal. 2:5. Gal. 2:5 is part of Gal. 2:1-5. In those verses, Paul teaches that, among other things, he went to Jerusalem with Titus, a Gentile Christian, and, while they were there, certain “false brethren” maintained that Titus *had* to be circumcised.

The law required that Gentile males keeping the Passover had to be circumcised. (Ex. 12:48.) Indeed, a Gentile who was circumcised thereby signaled his agreement to comply with all of the laws of Moses. (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10, 5:3.) Titus was a Greek and, therefore, was a Gentile. Titus was also a Christian. (Titus 1:1, 4.)

Paul wrote at Gal. 2:3-5:

“³ But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was *compelled* to be circumcised: ⁴ And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: ⁵ To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that *the truth of the gospel* might continue with you.”

(Italics added.)

What else did “the truth of the gospel” include? “The truth of the gospel” included the principle that Gentile Christians cannot be *compelled* to be *circumcised*. Again, the issue is one of obligation. *Gentile Christians are free from any obligation to be circumcised in compliance with the law of Moses.*

But circumcision was only one work of the law and, according to Paul, a person who was circumcised based on obligation to the law had to do *all* the works of the law, i.e., the person had to comply with the *whole* law perfectly throughout the entirety of the person’s life. Thus, Paul said at Gal. 3:10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them.” (Italics added.) At Gal. 5:3, he wrote, “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the *whole* law.” (Italics added.)

Thus, this incident, like the confrontation at Antioch, also taught the principle that *Gentile Christians are free from the obligation of the law; they are free to live a*

Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law of Moses and its commandments for any purpose.

But Gal. 2:3-5 teach more than this. For Titus was with Paul. (Gal. 2:3.) Paul was a *Jewish* Christian. And Paul did not write that the false brethren came to spy only on the liberty of Titus. Paul wrote that the false brethren came to spy on “*our* liberty which *we* have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring *us* into bondage[.]” (Gal. 2:4, italics added.) Paul further wrote at Gal. 2:5 (NASB) that “*we* did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour[.]”

Thus, Paul was teaching that he, a *Jewish* Christian, had the same liberty as Titus, a Gentile Christian. The “truth of the gospel” pertained to the Jewish Christian as well: *Jewish Christians were free from any obligation to the law, and were free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded complying with the law of Moses or its commandments for any purpose.* This is why Paul, a Jewish Christian, would *associate* with Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile Christian, in Jerusalem, the center of Judaism and practitioners of the law of Moses, and the home of the Jerusalem church.

We will later discuss that Paul also taught that Christians are free to engage in a *nonobligatory* compliance with the law of Moses (1) as a way of life to honor God in accord with their preferences or consistent with the dictates of their consciences and/or (2) to avoid offending people who comply with the law as a way of life.

Paul’s “gospel” clearly emphasized that a person was “justified by faith” as he used that phrase. Paul teaches that even the Old Testament foresaw a “gospel” that taught justification by faith. For he declares at Gal. 3:8 (NASB):

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would *justify* the Gentiles by *faith*, preached *the gospel* beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed in you.”

(Italics added.) The connection between the “gospel” and justification by faith is repeated at Rom. 1:16-17, where Paul proclaims:

“(16) For I am not ashamed of *the gospel* of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

(17) For therein is the *righteousness of God* revealed from *faith to faith*: as it is written, The *just* shall live by *faith*.” (Italics added.)

XII. PAUL INTRODUCES HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM

As mentioned, the truths of Paul’s “gospel” included the facts that a person is “justified by faith” and not “justified by works,” as Paul uses those phrases, and that Christians are free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law or its commandments for any purpose. In this part we will demonstrate that the other apostles did not know these truths of Paul’s “gospel” until he introduced them.

A. PAUL’S INDEPENDENCE FROM THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM, INCLUDING JAMES

In the first and second chapters of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, Paul sets forth the proofs of the independence of his apostleship, and the independence of the source of his doctrine. This includes independence in those matters from the other apostles, *including James*. The beginning of Paul’s epistle hints of his intent to discuss this. Paul writes at Gal. 1:1 that he is “an apostle, (*not of men, neither by man*, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father[.]).” (Italics added.)

Paul proves this independence by reciting his history. He starts at Gal. 1:11-12, saying,

“¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the *gospel* which was preached of me is *not after man*. ¹² For I neither received it *of man*, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

(Italics added.) If this “gospel” was not “after man,” or received “of man,” but instead was given to Paul by a revelation of Jesus Christ, then Paul did not receive his “gospel” from the other *apostles or from the apostle James in particular*.

The verses that follow, Gal. 1:13-2:21, are divisible into sections. At Gal. 1:13-14, Paul demonstrates that, before he became a Christian, he certainly did not get his “gospel” as a follower of Judaism; at that time he was ravaging the church.

At Gal. 1:15-17, Paul pens that when it pleased God

“¹⁶To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: ¹⁷Neither went I up to *Jerusalem* to them which were *apostles* before me; but I went into Arabia,^[48] and returned again unto Damascus.”

(Italics added.)

Paul announces that when it pleased God that Paul preach among the heathen, he did not immediately go to *the apostles* in *Jerusalem*. Paul did not get his “gospel” from the apostles in Jerusalem or James in particular.

Gal. 1:18-19 then records:

“¹⁸Then after *three years* I went up to *Jerusalem* to see *Peter*, and abode with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But *other of the apostles* saw I none, save *James* the Lord’s brother.”

(Italics added.)

Paul stayed with Peter 15 days; this minimized Paul’s time with Peter. Peter’s traditional Jewish background and Paul’s minimal stay with him precluded Paul from obtaining his “gospel” as taught in his epistles from Peter. Concerning James, Paul at Gal. 1:19 reports only that Paul “saw” him. Paul therefore did not obtain his “gospel”

⁴⁸ Some commentators suggest that Paul’s travel to Arabia was in the nature of a retreat permitting him to spend time alone with God and/or to contemplate his revelation. But Paul explained that that travel occurred after God revealed His Son in Paul that he “might *preach* among the heathen.” (Gal. 1:16, italics added.) This suggests he preached in Arabia.

from James. Paul also reveals that he saw no *other* apostles; he therefore could not have received at that time his “gospel” from them.

At Gal. 1:20, Paul affirms he is not lying in what he writes. This suggests he thought that what he was writing, especially concerning his independence from other apostles, including James, would be surprising, even shocking, to the Galatian Christians. At Gal. 1:21-23, Paul explains that the churches of Judea did not know him by face but “only heard” that he was preaching the “faith” he once destroyed. The fact that the Judean churches “only heard” this shows Paul’s independence from them; he did not get his “gospel” from them.

And the Galatian Christians might find even more surprising what Paul was about to write at Gal. 2:1-9 concerning his independence from the apostles. He was about to explain that *he introduced his “gospel” to the apostles in Jerusalem, including James.*

B. PAUL COMMUNICATES HIS “GOSPEL” TO “THEM”: THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM

At Gal. 2:1-2, Paul continues his proofs of the independence of his apostleship and of the source of his doctrine, including his independence from the *apostles in Jerusalem*, and the *apostle James* in particular. At Gal. 2:1-2, Paul writes:

“¹ Then *fourteen years* after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ² And I went up by revelation, and *communicated* unto *them*

that *gospel* which *I preach* among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were *of reputation*, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”

(Italics added.)

According to Gal. 2:1-2, Paul went to Jerusalem and communicated the “gospel” to “them.” Who are the persons referred to by the term “them”? *The term “them” refers to the apostles in Jerusalem.* A number of facts evidence this.

First, as we have seen, up to this point, particularly, at Gal. 1:17 and 1:18-19, whenever Paul mentions the issue of his going (or not going) *to Jerusalem*, the only group of people he references in connection with Jerusalem are *the apostles in Jerusalem*. This maintains the continuity of Paul’s discourse as he proves from his history the independence of his apostleship, and of the source of his doctrine. *For that history includes his independence from the apostles in Jerusalem, and the apostle James in particular.*

Thus, Paul wrote that when it pleased God for Paul to preach to Gentiles, he did not “immediately” (Gal. 1:16) go up “*to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me[.]*” (Gal. 1:17, italics added.) Paul later wrote, “[t]hen *after three years* I went up to *Jerusalem*” (Gal. 1:18, italics added), visited the apostle Peter, saw the apostle James, “[b]ut other of the *apostles* saw I none[.]” (Gal. 1:19, italics added.) Each reference to time and Jerusalem is associated with a reference to the apostles. Now, at Gal. 2:1-2, Paul writes, “[T]hen *fourteen years after* I went up again to *Jerusalem*,” and “I went up

by revelation, and communicated unto *them* that gospel[.]” (Italics added.) This indicates that “them” refers to the apostles.

Second, grammatically, “them” at Gal. 2:2 must refer to the “apostles.” The word “them” is a plural personal pronoun. As a pronoun, it substitutes for a noun. That noun is the “antecedent” of the pronoun. The antecedent must agree with the pronoun *in number*; i.e., just as the word “them” is a *plural* personal pronoun, so too, its antecedent must be *plural*. The plural noun which (1) is nearest to the word “them,” (2) comes *before* the word “them,” and (3) may properly serve as its antecedent is the word “apostles” at Gal. 1:19.⁴⁹

And the nearest plural noun that comes *after* the word “them” at Gal. 2:2 is the word “Gentiles” at Gal. 2:2. But Paul did not go to Jerusalem to communicate *to* Gentiles; instead, his point is that he went to Jerusalem to communicate to persons *about* the “gospel” he preaches *to* the Gentiles. As we will later see at Gal. 2:9, Paul and Barnabas agreed with James, Peter, and John in Jerusalem that Paul and Barnabas would go in the future to the heathen, implying that the Gentiles to whom Paul would preach would be *outside* of Jerusalem.

⁴⁹ Are there other possible antecedents for the word “them” at Gal. 2:2, which occur before the word “them” at Gal. 2:2, but after the word “apostles” at Gal. 1:19? The possible plural nouns are “things” at Gal. 1:20; “regions” at Gal. 1:21; “churches of Judea” at Gal. 1:22; “times” at Gal. 1:23; and “years” at Gal. 2:1. Barnabas and Titus are another possible antecedent at Gal. 2:1. But it makes no sense to say that Paul went to Jerusalem to communicate his “gospel” to any of these. For example, if *Barnabas and Titus* were “them,” who were the later “them” of reputation of Gal. 2:2? And why would Paul go to *Jerusalem* to preach to *churches outside* of Jerusalem, i.e., to the churches of Judea (Gal. 1:22)?

A third evidence that the word “them” at Gal. 2:2 refers to the apostles in Jerusalem is the Greek word translated “them” at that verse. That Greek word is “autois.”⁵⁰ Like the English word “them,” the Greek word “autois” is a plural personal pronoun,⁵¹ i.e., it is plural in number. But the Greek word “autois” is further classified in Greek grammar as masculine *in gender*.⁵² And in Greek, the “pronoun agrees with the antecedent *in gender* and number[.]”⁵³ Therefore, the Greek word that is the antecedent of “autois” must be *masculine in gender* and plural in number.

Why is this important? The nearest Greek noun which comes *before* “autois” and which is *masculine in gender* and plural in number is the Greek noun “apostolon” at *Gal. 1:19*,⁵⁴ which refers to the “apostles”⁵⁵ in Jerusalem. And the nearest Greek noun which comes *after* “autois” and which is *masculine in gender* and plural in number is the Greek noun “pseudadelphous,” referring to the “false brethren” of Gal. 2:4.⁵⁶ But it makes no sense to say that Paul went to Jerusalem to communicate his “gospel” to false brethren. Therefore, grammatically, in context in the *Greek*, the word “them” at Gal. 2:2 refers to

⁵⁰ Berry, p. 491.

⁵¹ Friberg and Friberg, p. 577; Summers, pp. 42-43.

⁵² Friberg and Friberg, p. 577.

⁵³ Summers, p. 43 (italics added).

⁵⁴ Friberg and Friberg, pp. 576-577.

⁵⁵ Berry, p. 491.

⁵⁶ Friberg and Friberg, p. 577.

the “apostles” of Gal. 1:19. When Paul says he “communicated unto *them* that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (italics added), Paul is saying that he communicated to the *apostles in Jerusalem*, including the *apostle James*, the “gospel” Paul was preaching among the Gentiles.

A fourth evidence that the word “them” at Gal. 2:2 refers to the apostles in Jerusalem is found at Gal. 2:9. Gal. 2:2 is part of an account of what occurred when Paul went to Jerusalem and communicated the “gospel” to “them.” That account begins at Gal. 2:1, and ends at Gal. 2:10. And Gal. 2:9, part of that account, records that James, Peter (Cephas), and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship so that Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, and James, Peter, and John would go to the circumcision. However, James, Peter, and John were three of the *apostles in Jerusalem*. If, after Paul communicated his “gospel” to “them,” three *apostles in Jerusalem* responded, this is evidence that “them” refers to the apostles in Jerusalem. Paul does not refer in Gal. 2:1-10 to a response from anyone else.

Therefore, when Paul says at Gal. 2:1-2 that he went to Jerusalem and “communicated unto *them* that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (italics added), Paul was saying that he communicated unto *the apostles in Jerusalem, including the apostle James*, the “gospel” that Paul preaches among the Gentiles.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ It is sometimes argued that the word “them” at Gal. 2:2 refers to the entire Jerusalem church, and not just the apostles. However, there are problems with this argument. First, it is inconsistent with the four points discussed above that demonstrate that Paul is referring to the apostles in

C. PAUL “COMMUNICATES” HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM

Gal. 2:1-2 teach that Paul went to Jerusalem and “communicated” his “gospel” to the apostles. What is the significance of the fact that he “communicated” it?

The word “communicated” at Gal. 2:2 is a translation of a form of the Greek word “*anatithemi*.”⁵⁸ One well-known Greek lexicon observes that “*anatithemi*” means “to explain something, presumably by *putting forward additional or different information*—‘to explain, to make clear.’”⁵⁹ Another such work states that “*anatithemi*” at Gal. 2:2 means “*declare, communicate, refer* [with] the added idea that the [person] to whom a thing is [referred] is asked his opinion[.] *lay some[thing] before someone for consideration.*”⁶⁰

A form of “*anatithemi*” is used only one other time in the New Testament, i.e., at Acts 25:14.⁶¹ That verse records an incident in which governor Festus spoke to King Agrippa II about Paul. The verse says Festus “declared” Paul’s cause to Agrippa. The

Jerusalem. Second, in Gal. 2:6-9, Paul discusses how three of the *apostles in Jerusalem* reacted to his “gospel,” *but Paul never refers to the entire Jerusalem church or, therefore, how it reacted.*

⁵⁸ Wigram and Winter, p. 45.

⁵⁹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament[:] Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), I, p. 406, sec. 33.151, italics added.

⁶⁰ BAGD, p. 62.

⁶¹ Wigram and Winter, p. 45.

word “declared” is a translation of a form of “anatithemi.”⁶² The premise of Festus’s explanation to Agrippa was that Agrippa did not know everything about Paul’s cause.

Similarly, Paul went to Jerusalem and “communicated” his “gospel” to the apostles. Paul had no need to “communicate” to them what they already knew. The fact that he “communicated” it to them—implying that he “explained” it to them by “putting forward additional or different information,” that he laid his “gospel” before them “for consideration,” asking for their “opinion”—demonstrates that the apostles did not know everything about Paul’s “gospel.”

Paul did not communicate his “gospel” to the apostles so that they would understand that he was a Christian; they already knew that he was a Christian from his earlier first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian. (Acts 9:26-28; Gal. 1:18-24.) Paul did not communicate his “gospel” to the apostles so that they could decide for him whether his “gospel” was true. He already knew his “gospel” was a “revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 1:12.)

Paul “communicated” his “gospel” to the apostles in Jerusalem, explaining it to them and laying it before them for their consideration, because previously they had not known various aspects of his “revelation of Jesus Christ”: the “gospel” that he preached. He was introducing his “gospel” to them, explaining it in the hope of securing their agreement to it.

⁶² Wigram and Winter, p. 45.

D. PAUL “COMMUNICATES” HIS “GOSPEL” “PRIVATELY” TO THE APOSTLES “OF REPUTATION”

At Gal. 2:1-2, Paul writes:

“¹ Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, *but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*”

(Italics added.)

Who were those “of reputation?” They were the apostles “of reputation” in Jerusalem. We will identify them later.

Paul said he communicated the “gospel” privately to the apostles “of reputation” “*lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*” What does Paul mean by this?

Paul sometimes compares progress in the “gospel” to the running of a race. (1 Cor. 9:24-26; Gal. 5:7.) He also compares his progress in the dissemination of the “gospel” to the running of a race. (Php. 2:14-16.) At Gal. 2:2, Paul is teaching that he went privately to the apostles “of reputation” in Jerusalem, fearing that if he did not do so, he might in the future be disseminating the “gospel” in vain, and might in the past have disseminated the “gospel” in vain.

Jerusalem was the center of Judaism and Jews who observed the law, and the Jerusalem church consisted largely of *Jewish* Christians. Paul was communicating to the apostles a “gospel” which taught that a person was “justified by faith” and not “justified

by works” or “works of the law” as Paul used those terms, and that Christians were free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded complying with the law or its commandments for any purpose.

Paul feared that if he communicated this “gospel” *publicly* to the apostles “of reputation,” their fame among the Jews and the *Jewish* Christians of the Jerusalem church would have caused the apostles “of reputation,” which we will see included James, to reject Paul’s “gospel.” Such a rejection would have severely damaged, if not thwarted, Paul’s past and future efforts to disseminate his “gospel,” and would have put those apostles in conflict with Paul’s “revelation of Jesus Christ.” Thus, Paul went to the apostles “of reputation” privately. This is evidence that there were truths of Paul’s “gospel” that the apostles “of reputation” did not know, and this in turn indicates that the apostles in Jerusalem did not know these truths.

The fact that Paul communicated his “gospel” “privately” to the apostles “of reputation” provides another evidence that there were aspects of that “gospel” that the apostles in Jerusalem did not know.

E. PAUL DEFENDS HIS “GOSPEL” AGAINST THE FALSE BRETHREN

Paul later continues the proofs of the independence of his apostleship and of the source of his doctrine. But he suddenly shifts his thought from the “gospel” he

communicated to those “of reputation” to another important issue. At Gal. 2:3-5, Paul writes:

“³ But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: ⁴ And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: ⁵ To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Gal. 2:1-2 show that Paul was deferential when it came to *how* to communicate the “gospel.” There, Paul spoke privately to the apostles “of reputation,” fearing his success with them was dependent upon this procedure. But Gal. 2:3-5 show that Paul was inflexible when it came to adhering to the *content* of the “gospel”; he would change it for no one. Paul took his stand that the “truth of the gospel” might continue with the Galatian churches. (Gal. 2:5.) This highlights the independence of Paul’s apostleship and of the source of his “gospel,” a “gospel” which, as a matter of procedure, he would deferentially explain to the apostles of reputation in Jerusalem during the same trip in which, as a matter of substance, he inflexibly took his stand.

F. THE APOSTLES “OF REPUTATION” “ADDED NOTHING” TO PAUL’S “GOSPEL”

At Gal. 2:6, Paul returns to what occurred when he went to Jerusalem and communicated to the apostles “of reputation” the “gospel” he preached. He says:

“But of *these who seemed to be somewhat*, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for *they who seemed to be somewhat* in conference *added nothing* to me[.]”

(Italics added.)

The phrase “them which were of reputation” which we saw at Gal. 2:2 is a translation of forms of the same Greek words that are here at Gal. 2:6 translated “these who seemed to be somewhat” and “they who seemed to be somewhat.”⁶³ Paul, stressing the independence of his apostleship and of the source of his doctrine, declares that when he conferred with the apostles “of reputation,” they *added nothing* to him.⁶⁴

The NASB states that they “contributed nothing” to Paul.

Why is this important? It means that in conference the apostles “of reputation” added nothing to Paul concerning what he taught about his “gospel,” including the facts that (1) a person is “justified by faith” and not “justified by works,” as Paul uses those terms, and (2) Christians are free to enjoy a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law or its commandments for any purpose. *Paul’s “gospel” was the same before and after he conferred with the apostles “of reputation.”*

⁶³ Each of these phrases is a translation of a form of a Greek definite article and the Greek word “dokeo.” Wigram and Winter, p. 160.

⁶⁴ The word “added” is a translation of the Greek word “prosanatithemi.” “Prosanatithemi” means to “add,” “contribute,” “lay before,” or “submit.” It can also mean to consult with someone. (BAGD, p. 711.)

Indeed, we will shortly consider Gal. 2:7-9, including verse 9 that says that *James*, Peter (Cephas), and John were “reputed to be *pillars*” (NASB, italics added). If they were “reputed to be *pillars*” (NASB, italics added), they were certainly apostles “of reputation.” If James, as one of the apostles “of reputation,” “added nothing” to Paul, *then James did not add to Paul the doctrines of James that a person was “justified by works” and not “justified . . . by faith only,” as James used those terms. And James did not add to Paul the doctrines of James that (1) Jewish Christians are under obligation to the law of Moses, (2) Jewish Christians can transgress, and be found guilty under, the law, and (3) Jewish Christians will receive mercy despite guilt. See Chart Eight.*

CHART EIGHT

“THEY . . . ADDED NOTHING TO ME”

PAUL

**“ADDED
NOTHING”**



**THE APOSTLES
“OF REPUTATION”
(including *James*)**

XIII. THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

A. “BUT ON THE CONTRARY”

Continuing his account of what occurred when he went to Jerusalem and communicated to the apostles “of reputation” the “gospel” he preached, Paul related at Gal. 2:7-9 (NASB):

“⁷ But on the contrary, *seeing* that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised
⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),
⁹ and *recognizing* the grace that had been given to me, *James* and Cephias and John, *who were reputed to be pillars*, gave to me and Barnabas *the right hands of fellowship*, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”

(Italics added.)

Gal. 2:7-9 are a single sentence. Verse 8 is a like a parenthesis in Paul’s thought. At verse 7, Paul uses the word “seeing” and, at verse 9, he uses the word “recognizing.” Who are the persons “seeing” and “recognizing?” Verse 9 provides the answer: “James and Cephias and John, who were reputed to be pillars.” (NASB.) “Cephias” is Aramaic for “Peter.”⁶⁵

Earlier, we observed that the Greek words translated “them which were of reputation” at Gal. 2:2 are forms of the same Greek words translated “these who seemed

⁶⁵ BAGD, p. 431.

to be somewhat” and “they who seemed to be somewhat” at Gal. 2:6. Forms of those same Greek words at Gal. 2:2 are also translated “who were reputed” in the phrase “*who were reputed to be pillars*” (italics added) here at Gal. 2:9 (NASB). This indicates that the apostles “of reputation” at Gal 2:2 were, or included, the persons “reputed to be pillars” (NASB) at Gal 2:9—James, Peter, and John.⁶⁶

Gal. 2:7-9 teach a truth beyond the truth that James did not add to what Paul preached. Verse 7 begins with the phrase, “But on the contrary.” By that phrase, Paul suggests that not only did the apostles “of reputation,” including James, reputed to be a pillar, add nothing to Paul *but, on the contrary, something else happened: Paul “added” to them.*

B. THOSE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “SEE” THAT PAUL WAS ENTRUSTED WITH HIS “GOSPEL” TO THE UNCIRCUMCISED

Again, at Gal. 2:7 (NASB), Paul writes:

“⁷ But on the contrary, *seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised*, just as Peter had been to the circumcised[.]”

(Italics added.)

Paul recited that he communicated his “gospel” to the apostles of reputation, including James, and they added nothing to Paul. At Gal. 2:7 (NASB), Paul proclaimed,

⁶⁶ Paul does not expressly say whether the apostles “of reputation” were those “reputed to be pillars” or whether the latter were a subset of the former. The relatively small number (12) of Jesus’s apostles during His ministry, coupled with the fact that, among them, Peter and John had favored positions (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 5:37, 13:3, 14:33; Lk. 8:51, 9:28, 22:8) suggest the apostles “of reputation” were those “reputed to be pillars”—James, Peter, and John.

“But on the contrary,” the apostles “reputed to be pillars” including James, saw that Paul had been entrusted with the “gospel” to the uncircumcised.

Importantly, when Paul uses the word “gospel” here, he is referring to his “gospel” that taught that a person was “justified by faith” and not “justified by works” as Paul used those terms, and that Christians were free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded complying with the law or its commandments for any purpose. Paul was implying that not only did the apostles of reputation, including James, add nothing to Paul but, on the contrary, Paul added something to the apostles “reputed to be pillars,” including James: Paul caused them to “see” that God had entrusted Paul to take his “gospel” to the uncircumcised.

C. THOSE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “SEE” THAT PETER WAS ENTRUSTED WITH PAUL’S “GOSPEL” TO THE CIRCUMCISION

But more than that, Paul wrote at Gal. 2:7 (NASB): “*But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised[.]*” (Italics added.) The KJV reads at Gal. 2:7: “*But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter[.]*” (Italics added.)

Paul taught that he “communicated” his “gospel” to the apostles of reputation, including James, and they added nothing to Paul. Paul also taught, “But on the contrary” (Gal. 2:7, NASB), the apostles “reputed to be pillars” (Gal. 2:9, NASB), including James,

“saw” that Peter had been entrusted with the “gospel” to the circumcised. *Paul was implying that not only did the apostles of reputation, including James, add nothing to Paul but, on the contrary, Paul added something to the apostles “reputed to be pillars,” including James: Paul caused them to “see” that God had entrusted Peter to take Paul’s “gospel” to the circumcised, i.e., the Jews who emphasized compliance with the law of Moses as a way of life.*

Why is it important that “But on the contrary,” Paul “added” to the apostles “reputed to be pillars,” causing them to “see” that Paul and Peter had been entrusted with the same “gospel”—Paul’s “gospel”—to take it to the Gentiles and circumcision, respectively? *It provides still another evidence that those “reputed to be pillars,” including James, did not previously know all that pertained to Paul’s “gospel.” In particular, they had not previously known that God had entrusted Paul to take his “gospel” to the uncircumcision, and God had entrusted Peter to take Paul’s “gospel” to the circumcision.*

D. THOSE WHO WERE “REPUTED TO BE PILLARS,” INCLUDING JAMES, “RECOGNIZE” THE GRACE OF PAUL’S APOSTLESHIP, AND MINISTRY OF HIS “GOSPEL,” TO THE GENTILES

Let’s now explore another important aspect of Gal. 2:7-9. Remember, those verses (NASB) read:

“⁷ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),

⁹ and *recognizing the grace* that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”

(Italics added.)

Verses 7 and 9 teach that James, Peter, and John were “recognizing” that God had given to Paul a “grace.”

Sometimes when Paul uses the word “grace,” he means God’s general undeserved favor. For example, Paul said at Rom. 3:24 that Christians are “justified freely by His [God’s] *grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Italics added.) At Eph. 1:7 (NASB), Paul declared: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His *grace*.” (Italics added.) Paul penned at Eph. 2:5, “by *grace* you are saved.” (Italics added.)

But other times Paul uses the word “grace” to refer to a *specific* favor or benefit. In particular, sometimes Paul uses the term “grace” to refer to his apostleship and ministry of the “gospel,” particularly to the Gentiles. Thus, at 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, he said, “⁹ For *I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* ¹⁰*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly*

than they all: yet not I, but *the grace of God* which was with me.” Paul, discussing his apostleship and labor, described each as a “grace.”

At Rom. 15:15-16 (NASB), Paul referred to “¹⁵ . . . the *grace* that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a *minister* of Christ Jesus to the *Gentiles*, *ministering* as a priest the *gospel* of God[.]” (Italics added.) At Ephesians 3:6-8 (NASB), he referred to “⁶ the *gospel*, ⁷ of which I was made a *minister*, according to the *gift of God’s grace which was given to me* according to the working of His power. ⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, *this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles* the unfathomable riches of Christ[.]” (Italics added.)

Gal. 2:8 indicates that God effectually worked for Paul in his apostleship to the Gentiles. Thus, Paul implied at Gal. 2:9 (NASB) that the apostles “reputed to be pillars,” including James, “recognized” that God had given to Paul the “grace” of his (1) apostleship to the Gentiles and (2) ministry of Paul’s “gospel” to the Gentiles. *This provides evidence that those “reputed to be pillars,” including James, did not previously know all that pertained to the “gospel,” in particular, that God had given to Paul the “grace” of his apostleship, and ministry of Paul’s “gospel,” to the Gentiles. See Chart Nine.*

CHART NINE
“BUT ON THE CONTRARY”

PAUL

“ADDED NOTHING”



**JAMES DID NOT ADD
HIS DOCTRINES THAT:**

**A. A Person Is “Justified By Works”
(James’s Four Processes)**

**B. A Person Is Not
“Justified . . . By Faith Only”
(By James’s First Kind Of “Faith”)**

**C. Jewish Christians Must
Comply with the Law**

“BUT ON THE CONTRARY”

**PAUL CAUSED JAMES
(AND THE OTHER APOSTLES
“REPUTED TO BE PILLARS”)**

**A. TO SEE THAT GOD HAD
ENTRUSTED PAUL TO TAKE
TO THE GENTILES, AND
PETER TO TAKE TO THE
CIRCUMCISION,
PAUL’S “GOSPEL,”
WHICH TAUGHT:**

**1. A Person Is
“Justified By Faith”
 (“Faith Counted for
Righteousness”)**

**2. A Person Is Not
“Justified By Works”
(Paul’s Two Contract
Processes)**

**3. Christians Are Free to
Live A Scriptural Lifestyle
That Excludes The Law,
Or Includes Nonobligatory
Compliance With The Law**

**B. TO RECOGNIZE THE
“GRACE” OF PAUL’S
APOSTLESHIP, AND
MINISTRY OF THE
“GOSPEL,” TO THE
GENTILES.**

**THE APOSTLES
“OF REPUTATION”
(including *James*)**

XIV. PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED

A. THE RECONCILIATION

As discussed, James wrote to the “twelve tribes of Israel” (Jas. 1:1), i.e., to Jewish Christians and to Jews who were not Christians. His epistle contained the doctrines that (1) a person was “justified by works” and not “justified . . . by faith only” as James used those phrases, (2) Jewish Christians are under obligation to the law and (3) when Jewish Christians sin, they transgress, and will be found guilty under, the law, but Jewish Christians will receive mercy despite guilt. His epistle, using Rahab as an example, also contained the doctrine that Gentile Christians were “justified by works” as James used that phrase.

However, during Paul’s trip to Jerusalem recorded in Gal. 2, he introduced the revelation of his “gospel” to the apostles in Jerusalem, including James. That “gospel” included truths that James previously did not know, including the truths that Christians were “justified by faith” and not “justified by works” as Paul used those terms, and that Christians were free to enjoy a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded complying with the law or its commandments for any purpose.

Four points show that at Gal. 2, Paul introduced to the apostles his “gospel” and/or caused them to know things about it that the apostles did not know previously. First, Paul “communicated”—explained with additional or different information—his “gospel” to the apostles. Second, he did so *privately* to the apostles “of reputation,” fearing they might otherwise reject his “gospel”; his fear would have been unwarranted if they already

had known his “gospel.” Third, he caused the apostles who were “reputed to be pillars” to *see* that God had entrusted Paul’s “gospel” to Paul to take it to the Gentiles, and God had entrusted Peter to take it to the circumcision. Fourth, Paul caused James, Peter, and John to *recognize* the “grace” of Paul’s apostleship, and ministry of the “gospel,” to the Gentiles.

When Paul introduced his “gospel” to James, James “added” nothing to it. James did not therefore add to Paul’s “gospel” the doctrines in James’s epistle regarding justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. And Paul had never taught those doctrines previously.

And how did James and the others “reputed to be pillars” react in light of their newly gained understanding? At Gal. 2:9 (NASB), Paul says they “gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of *fellowship*, so that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.” (Italics added.) The Greek word translated “fellowship” here is “*koinonia*,” which generally means “communion, fellowship, sharing in common.”⁶⁷

James (with Peter and John) gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, *sharing in common Paul’s “gospel.”* They all agreed that Paul and Barnabas would take Paul’s “gospel” to the Gentiles, and James (with Peter and John) would take Paul’s “gospel” to the circumcised. That is, in the future these would be the main foci of these apostles’ respective ministries. James then knew that none of those apostles would

⁶⁷ Vine’s New Testament Expository Dictionary.
<https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/ved/f/fellowship.html>.

thereafter teach the doctrines in James's epistle regarding justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. Instead, James knew that thereafter they would all teach Paul's "gospel" on the issues of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian. *James, therefore, giving the right hands of fellowship, necessarily abandoned the doctrines in his epistle regarding justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. Paul and James reconciled.*

B. CONFIRMATION OF THE RECONCILIATION

The facts that James accepted Paul's "gospel" and abandoned James's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian are confirmed by the confrontation at Antioch referred to at Gal. 2:11-21, and particularly Gal. 2:14-16 (NASB). Again, those verses read:

"¹⁴ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them *all*, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? ¹⁵ *We who are Jews by nature*, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

(Emphasis added.)

According to Gal. 2:14, Paul rebuked Peter “before them all.” “All” included the certain persons who “came from James,” and they in turn were or included members of the “circumcision,” i.e., Jewish Christians who emphasized compliance with the law as a way of life.

Additionally, Paul withstood Peter “to the face.” (Gal. 2:11.) But Barnabas and the Jewish Christians of Antioch had joined Peter in his hypocrisy. And the hypocrisy began when certain came from James, including the circumcision. When Paul therefore referred to “We who are Jews by nature,” he was directly addressing Peter and indirectly addressing all other Christians present who were born Jews. This included Barnabas, the Jewish Christians of Antioch, and the certain persons from James, including the circumcision. It cannot be reasonably inferred that Paul, who made a point of saying what he said “before them all,” and in the context of mass hypocrisy concerning an issue fundamental to his “gospel,” intended that the Jewish Christians present limit to Peter the application of Paul’s doctrinal protest during the confrontation.

Thus, Paul confidently implied during the confrontation that the *circumcision from James* (among others) *knew* that (1) Christians are “justified by faith” and not “justified by works of the law” (as Paul used those phrases) and (2) Jewish and Gentile Christians are free from the obligations of the law and free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law and its commandments for any purpose.

The fact that Paul confidently implied that the circumcision from James knew these things is evidence that James previously had taught Paul’s “gospel” to the

circumcision. This occurred after the right hands of fellowship but before the confrontation at Antioch. And evidence that James taught Paul's "gospel" to the circumcision is in turn evidence that, even earlier, i.e., at the right hands of fellowship, James had accepted Paul's "gospel" and had abandoned James's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian.

And how did the circumcision from James *react*? The circumcision from James did not dispute Paul's declaration (nor did anyone else). If, after the right hands of fellowship, but before the confrontation at Antioch, the circumcision from James had not been taught Paul's "gospel," then during the confrontation the circumcision from James should have been among the first to deny vehemently Paul's confident declaration. They should have confronted Paul with James's doctrines on the eternally important issues of justification, salvation, and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, doctrines previously taught in a letter written by James himself, an apostle and half-brother of Jesus Christ.

But the circumcision from James did not dispute Paul. *Their failure to dispute Paul indicates that they knew that what Paul was implying was true—that they were "justified by faith" and not "justified by works of the law" as he used those terms—because they previously had been taught Paul's "gospel."*⁶⁸ This again indicates that the circumcision from James had been taught Paul's "gospel" after the right hands of

⁶⁸ It is a noteworthy axiom of evidence that when an individual hears and understands a statement and a *reasonable* person in the individual's shoes would deny the statement, the individual's failure to deny it is evidence that the statement is true.

fellowship but before the confrontation at Antioch, and that even earlier, i.e., at the right hands of fellowship, James had accepted Paul's "gospel" and had abandoned James's doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian.

C. IF JAMES DID NOT ABANDON HIS DOCTRINES ON JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW, THEN CHRISTIANITY'S TEACHING ON THESE ISSUES IS CONTRADICTORY

And what if James did not, when he gave the right hands of fellowship, abandon his doctrine of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, as set forth in his epistle? *In that event, the doctrines of both Paul and James on these issues must be taught, and the resulting purported Biblical teaching is contradictory.*

Thus, if James did not abandon his doctrines on these issues, then, when it comes to *the essential meaning of "faith,"* the church must teach that: (1) for Paul, "faith" is: that part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true; but, for James, "faith" is simply: belief inside a person that what God says is true; (2) for Paul, "faith" saves; but, for James, "faith" may or may not save, depending on whether it has "works"; (3) for Paul, "faith" is part of the fruit of the Spirit, therefore, "faith" could never be the "faith" of a demon; but, for James, "faith" may or may not be the "faith" of a demon, depending on whether it has "works"; (4) for Paul, "faith" fulfills Gen. 15:6; but, for James, "faith" may or may not fulfill Gen. 15:6; (5) for Paul, "faith" is counted for righteousness; but, for James, "faith" may or may not be counted for righteousness; (6) for Paul, "faith" is the "faith" of a Christian; but, for

James, “faith” may or not be the “faith” of a Christian; and (7) for Paul, “faith” is a technical term; but, for James, “faith” has its ordinary, nontechnical meaning among the Jews.

If James did not abandon his doctrines as discussed, the problems multiply upon consideration of *Paul’s essential meaning of “faith” and James’s “first kind” of faith*. That is, the church must teach that: (1) for Paul, “faith” may or may not be accompanied by good works; but James’s first kind of “faith” must be without “works,” (2) for Paul, “faith” saves; but James’s first kind of “faith” does not save, (3) for Paul, “faith” is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore could never be the “faith” that a demon has; but James’s first kind of “faith” is the kind a demon has, (4) for Paul, “faith” fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness; but James’s first kind of “faith” neither fulfills Gen. 15:6 nor is counted for righteousness; and (5) for Paul, “faith” is that of a Christian; but James’s first kind of “faith” is not that of a Christian.

Problems similarly abound with *Paul’s essential meaning of “faith” and James’s “second kind” of faith*. Thus, the church must instruct that: (1) for Paul, “faith” may or may not be accompanied by “good works”; but James’s second kind of “faith” must be shown by “works,” (2) for Paul, “faith” need not be “working (cooperating) with” “works”; but James’s second kind of “faith” must be cooperating with “works,” (3) for Paul, “faith” need not be “perfected” by “works”; but James’s second kind of “faith” must be “perfected” by “works,” and (4) for Paul, “faith” fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness whether or not that “faith” is accompanied by “works”; but James’s

second kind of “faith” fulfills Gen. 15:6 and is counted for righteousness only when that “faith” is “working with works.”

The problems are compounded because the church must teach that, for Paul, Abraham’s “faith” was counted for righteousness at Gen. 15:6 when he was “[n]ot in circumcision” (Rom. 4:10), i.e., when Abraham was uncircumcised; but, for James, Abraham’s “faith” was counted for righteousness when he offered Isaac at Gen. 22, i.e., at a time when Abraham was circumcised.

The problems are virtually unending if James did not abandon his doctrines as discussed. The church is obligated to teach that: for Paul, “justified by works” refers to two “contract” processes in which (1) a person engages in “works” (where “works” means outward conduct done with the expectation of receiving righteousness from God in return as payment of a debt owed by Him) and (2) in exchange, God “pays” that person with righteousness as a debt owed by Him (and “faith” is not involved); but, for James, “justified by works” refers to four processes: (1) “faith” works with “works” (where “works” means outward conduct that shows “faith”), (2) by “works” “faith” is perfected, (3) “faith” is counted righteousness, and (4) a person is called the friend of God. Church doctrine must also include the fact that, for Paul, a person is “justified by faith”; but, for James, a person is not “justified . . . by faith only.”

The teachings of Paul and James on the role of the law present a similar morass for church teaching, for the church must maintain that for Paul, Christians are not under obligation to the law of Moses; but, for James, Jewish Christians are under obligation to

the law. The church must also maintain that (1) for Paul, Christians' sins offend God but, because Christians are not under the law, their sins are not transgressions, they cannot be guilty under the law and, therefore, there is no condemnation for Christians; but (2) for James, Jewish Christians' sins are transgressions, Jewish Christians will be found guilty under the law, but Jewish Christians will receive mercy despite their guilt.

In other words, if James did not abandon his doctrines as discussed, Christianity's teachings on justification, and on the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, are contradictory. However, this cannot be, because "God is not the author of confusion[.]" (1 Cor. 14:33.)

The mere fact that Paul and James each use the phrase "justified by works," with Paul maintaining that Abraham *was not* "justified by works" (Rom. 4:2) and James maintaining Abraham *was* "justified by works" (Jas. 2:21) is not contradictory. It would be contradictory only if the two apostles meant the same thing by the phrase "justified by works." For example, there would be a contradiction if Paul maintained that Abraham *was not* "justified by works," *meaning Paul's two contract processes*, and James maintained Abraham *was* "justified by works," *meaning Paul's two contract processes*. But that is not what James means by "justified by works"; he is referring to his four processes. The two apostles are using the same phrase, "justified by works," with different meanings.

However, there is a more fundamental contradiction if James did not abandon his doctrines as discussed. For example, *Paul has one essential meaning for "faith," James*

has another, and each apostle received his respective meaning from Jesus Christ.

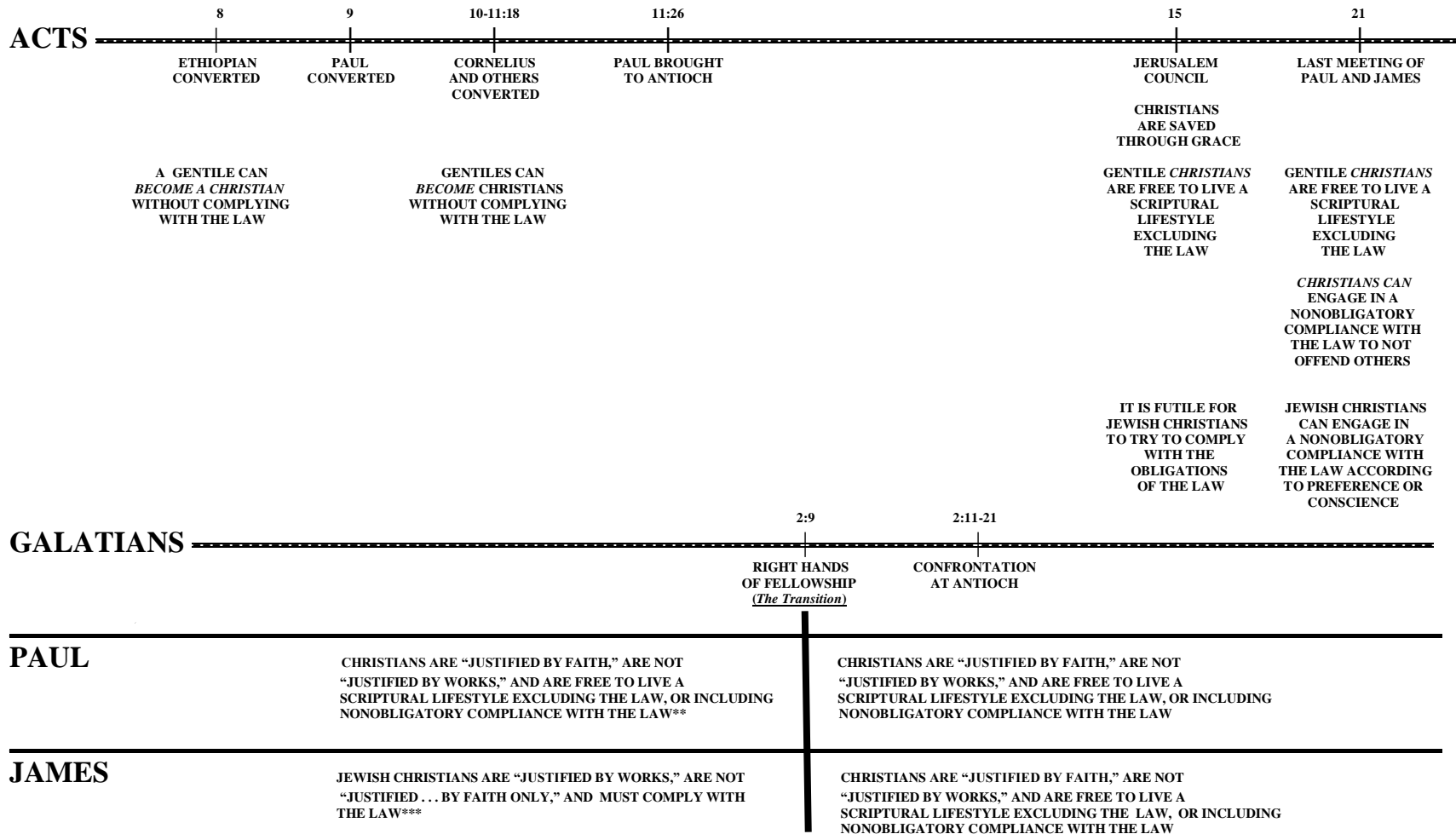
However, Paul, declaring that his essential meaning is that part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true, would *deny* that his essential meaning was simply belief inside a person that what God says is true. James, declaring that his essential meaning of “faith” was simply belief inside a person that what God says is true, would *deny* that his essential meaning was part of the fruit of the Spirit consisting of the belief inside the Christian, and with the heart, that what God says is true.

Similarly, *Paul has one meaning for “justified by works,” James has another, and each apostle received his respective meaning from Jesus Christ.* However, Paul, maintaining that “justified by works” means his two contract processes, would *deny* that that phrase means James’s four processes. James, maintaining that “justified by works” means his four processes, would *deny* that that phrase meant Paul’s two contract processes.

The reconciliation, as previously discussed, is to view James’s doctrine on justification, as well as his doctrine concerning the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, as transitional and no longer to be taught to Christians after the right hands of fellowship of Gal. 2:9. Unsurprisingly, Paul’s doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian are taught in various New Testament books, *but the only New Testament book containing James’s doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian is the Epistle of James.* See Chart Ten.

CHART TEN

THE TRANSITION*



* Not to scale chronologically. **This chart does not indicate for *how long* Paul was preaching his "gospel" *before* the right hands of fellowship. ***This chart does not indicate for *how long* James was teaching his doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, contained in his epistle, *before* the right hands of fellowship.

XV. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL OF ACTS 15

A. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

At Acts 15, the apostles and elders in the Jerusalem church convened in what is commonly referred to as the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council reached a decision for the Jerusalem church concerning issues related to what we have discussed, including the issue of whether Gentile Christians were obligated to comply with the law.

When did the right hands of fellowship and the confrontation at Antioch occur in relation to the Jerusalem Council? We will address that issue in section B below. But first we discuss here what the Jerusalem Council was, its decision, and its aftermath, i.e., letters that the Jerusalem church wrote to Gentile Christians in other churches.

Acts 15:1 teaches that “certain” persons came from Judea to Antioch and erroneously taught Gentile Christians that “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” The Jerusalem church, later writing to the Gentile Christians, said persons “went out from us” and “troubled you.” (Acts 15:24.)

Paul and Barnabas went to the Jerusalem church to obtain a formal pronouncement by that church on the issue. Paul did not need this to establish for him that what the “certain” persons were teaching was false. He knew from his “revelation of Jesus Christ”—the “gospel”—that what the “certain” persons were teaching was false. Paul wanted a decision by the Jerusalem church to silence the “certain” persons from that church, and any of their potential followers.

After Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, certain “Pharisees which believed,” i.e., Christian Pharisees, spoke up. They declared, as to the Gentile Christians, that “it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” (Acts 15:5.) The Christian Pharisees did not expressly say why. But they were claiming that Gentile Christians were required to comply with the law like Jews. In effect, this presented Christianity, for Jewish and Gentile Christians alike, as less a new teaching from God, and more like an extension of Judaism. The “apostles and elders” came together to consider the matter (Acts 15:6) at what is commonly called the Jerusalem Council.

At the Jerusalem Council, Peter testified that Jewish and Gentile Christians were *saved* through grace. (Acts 15:11.) This amounted to a rejection of the claim made by the “certain” men to Gentile Christians that “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1.)

Moreover, Peter demanded to know of the “Men and brethren” (Acts 15:7), “why tempt ye God, *to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples*, which neither our fathers nor *we* were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10; italics added.) Peter thereby proclaimed that it was a *sin* to try to put on Gentile Christians the “yoke” of the law. Peter’s proclamation about the “yoke” occurred in the context of claims that Gentile Christians *had* to be circumcised under the law to be saved, and Gentile Christians *had* to be circumcised and keep the law. In other words, the “yoke” was the burden of the *obligation* to comply with the law.

Peter's proclamation was a rejection of the claims of the certain persons from Judea and the Christian Pharisees. But if Gentile Christians were free from the yoke of the law, they would naturally continue to live a Gentile (though now Scriptural) lifestyle that did not include compliance with the law.

And Peter told the Jewish Christians present that "we" were not "able to bear" the yoke of the law. Peter was teaching that it was futile for Jewish Christians to try to bear that yoke.

Peter's testimony compels the conclusions that Jewish and Gentile Christians were saved through grace; Gentile Christians were free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded compliance with the law; and it was futile for Jewish Christians to try to bear its yoke.

The *decision* of the Jerusalem Council was left to James, who apparently headed the Jerusalem Council. He declared, "Wherefore *my sentence* is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God[.]" (Acts 15:19, italics added.) The Jerusalem church then sent letters to the Gentile Christians outside Jerusalem. (Acts 15:22-29.) The letters stated that the Jerusalem church was sending Paul, Barnabas, and others (Acts 15:23-27) to the Gentile Christians because

"certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment[.]*"

(Acts 15:24, italics added.)⁶⁹ All the Gentile Christians had to do, as far as the Jerusalem church was concerned, was to “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.” (Acts 15:29.) James’s earlier “sentence” called for this as well. (Acts 15:20.) However, these four requirements were not based on the law of Moses. (Acts 15:19, 21, 24; 21:24-25 [James acknowledges to Paul that Gentiles do not have to “keep the law”].)⁷⁰

In light of the above, a number of observations concerning the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 are appropriate. First, Acts 8:26-39 recounted the conversion of the Ethiopian. Acts 10 recounted the conversion of Cornelius and those in his house. Those accounts presented the issue of whether a Gentile (the Ethiopian) and Gentiles (Cornelius and those in his house) were required to comply with the law in order to *become* Christians.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The NASB ends this verse with the word “souls.”

⁷⁰ Paul would teach the Christian doctrine on these issues at, e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 and 6:9-10, 18 (fornication prohibited); and at Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, 9:19-22, and 10:31-33 (how to handle debatable things such as eating meats offered to idols and related issues).

⁷¹ The conversion of the Ethiopian at Acts 8 highlights the breadth of God’s love as against narrower misconceptions. The word “Ethiopia” comes from two Greek words: “aitho,” which means “to burn,” and “ops,” which means “the face.” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* <https://biblehub.com/thayers/128.htm>.) That is, the Ethiopian was Black (Jer. 13:23). He was also a foreigner and a eunuch. As a eunuch he could not be part of the “congregation of the Lord” (Deut. 23:1), i.e., the religious assembly of Israel. Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would have had difficulty accepting his conversion.

God used Philip the Evangelist, a Hellenistic Jewish Christian who spoke and read Greek (the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah out loud from the Greek Septuagint; note the differences between Isa. 53:7-8 and Acts 8:32-33) to convert the Ethiopian as he was moving *away* from Jerusalem (returning to Ethiopia). After the Ethiopian’s conversion, God supernaturally transported Philip to the Palestinian coast, again, *away* from Jerusalem, and Philip continued north, preaching. In other words, *God did not have Philip or the Ethiopian go to Jerusalem and announce to Jewish Christians*

The answer in both cases was a decisive no. At Acts 15, the issue presented to the Jerusalem Council was whether Gentiles who were *already* Christians were required to comply with the law; the answer again was a resounding no.

Second, at Acts 15, the issue presented was whether Gentile Christians had to comply with the law. But Peter's testimony went beyond that: he testified that Jewish Christians could not bear the yoke of the law. Third, the concept of justification was not expressly referred to in Acts 15. The words "just," "justified," "justification," or "righteousness" nowhere appear in Acts 15. But salvation was referred to; Peter testified that Christians were saved through grace. (Acts 15:11.)

B. THE TIMING OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

As we show below, Paul's trip to Jerusalem and the giving of the right hands of fellowship at Gal. 2:1-9, as well as the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21, occurred prior to the convening of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

First, Acts 10 and Acts 11:1-18 record events pertaining to (1) Peter converting Cornelius and those in his house and (2) the Jerusalem church learning of this. In

in Jerusalem that a Gentile could become a Christian without complying with the law. God left that task to the more traditional Peter (who told Cornelius that God had to overcome Peter's reluctance to associate with a Gentile (Acts 10:28)) and used Cornelius, who was already well respected by the Jews (Acts 10:1-2, 22).

Parenthetically, the Ethiopian was reading the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 55, and Philip, using it, preached Jesus to the Ethiopian. One wonders whether the Ethiopian, continuing "on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39) after his conversion which followed his providential reading of that passage, might have continued providentially reading Isaiah, in particular Isaiah 56:3-8. Those verses would have given him cause to rejoice again, as they prophesied that God would include foreigners (NASB; KJV: "strangers") and eunuchs in His "house."

particular, Peter learned by a vision from God, and from events orchestrated by God leading to and including the conversion of Cornelius and those in his house in Caesarea, that Gentiles could *become* Christians without complying with the law. Peter later returned to Jerusalem to inform the Jerusalem church about what had happened.

On the other hand, during Paul's trip to Jerusalem leading to the giving of the right hands of fellowship as discussed in Gal. 2:1-9, Paul took Titus with him. Titus was a Gentile Christian and Paul refused to have him circumcised under the law of Moses. *Paul's trip must therefore have occurred after the conversion of Cornelius and those in his house as recounted in Acts 10.* Otherwise Peter would have learned that a Gentile Christian (Titus) did not have to comply with the law before Peter learned that Gentiles (Cornelius and those in his house) could *become* Christians without complying with the law.

Second, Acts 9:29-30 (NASB) record that Hellenistic Jews sought to kill Paul, and he was sent to Tarsus. We next see him at Acts 11:25-26, which record that Barnabas left for Tarsus, found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. If Paul was in Tarsus from Acts 9:30 through Acts 11:26, *his trip to Jerusalem leading to the giving of the right hands of fellowship as discussed in Gal. 2:1-9 must have occurred after Acts 11:26, i.e., after Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch.*⁷²

⁷² *After* Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26, but *before* Acts 15, there are four times in Acts during which Paul's trip to Jerusalem at Gal. 2:1-2 *could* have occurred. First, Paul's trip at Gal. 2:1-2 could have occurred after Paul was brought to Antioch at Acts 11:26, but before he was sent to Judea with money for the Judean Christians at Acts 11:30. Second, Paul's trip at Gal.

And when did the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21 occur vis-a-vis the events recorded in the Book of Acts? First, as mentioned, Paul's trip to Jerusalem leading to the giving of the right hands of fellowship as discussed in Gal. 2:1-9 must have occurred after Acts 11:26. The confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21, occurred after Paul's Gal. 2:1-9 trip. Therefore, the confrontation must have occurred after Acts 11:26, i.e., after Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch.

Second, Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26, and the context implies that this was Paul's first visit to Antioch as a Christian. This provides independent evidence that the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21, must have occurred after Acts 11:26.⁷³ *In sum, Paul's trip to Jerusalem leading to the giving of the right hands of*

2:1-2 could have occurred when Paul was sent from Antioch to Judea with money for the Judean Christians at Acts 11:30; he returned from Jerusalem at Acts 12:25. (Note, however, that according to Gal. 2:1-2, Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem, but Acts 11:30 does not refer to Titus.) Third, Paul's trip at Gal. 2:1-2 could have occurred after Paul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem at Acts 12:25, but before the Antioch church sent him on his first missionary journey at Acts 13:3. (According to Acts 13:39, it was later during this first missionary journey that Paul taught justification by "faith," as he used that term, in a Gentile region and to Jews among the Gentiles.) Fourth, Paul's Gal. 2:1-2 trip could have occurred after he returned to Antioch at Acts 14:27 following his first missionary journey, but before he went to Jerusalem at Acts 15. A fact suggesting that this fourth scenario is what occurred is that Gal. 2:1-2 say that Paul made his trip to Jerusalem and communicated privately to the apostles of reputation the "gospel which I preach among the Gentiles" "lest by any means I . . . *had* run, in vain" (italics added). His concern over the possibility that he "had" run in vain suggests he *already* had been preaching his "gospel" to the Gentiles. He already had been preaching his "gospel" to the Gentiles during his first missionary journey.

⁷³ *After* Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26, but before Acts 15, there are two times during which the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21 could have occurred. First, the confrontation could have occurred after Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26, but before Herod arrested Peter at Acts 12:4. Second, the confrontation could have occurred after Peter was released from prison and, as recorded at Acts 12:17, "went into another place," but before Acts 15 when Peter attended the Jerusalem Council.

fellowship as referenced in Gal. 2:1-9, and the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21, must have occurred after Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch as recorded at Acts 11:26.

Did Paul's trip to Jerusalem leading to the right hands of fellowship at Gal. 2:1-9 occur *after* the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15? The following evidence indicates no.

Gal. 2:1-9 teach that Paul, during his trip to Jerusalem, *introduced* to the apostles his "gospel," including its truth that Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law. But Acts 15 teaches that during the Jerusalem Council, the apostles accepted the truth that Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law. Therefore, Paul's above trip to Jerusalem must have occurred before Acts 15, otherwise, the events of Acts 15, and not Paul's trip at Gal. 2, would have "introduced" the apostles to the doctrine that Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law.

Did the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21 occur *after* the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15? Again, the evidence indicates the answer is no. First, Peter boldly rose to the occasion at Acts 15 and *testified* in Jerusalem, the stronghold of Judaism and the law of Moses, and in front of *the apostles, elders, and James, and with James's agreement*, that *it was futile for Jewish Christians to try to bear the yoke of the law*. It is therefore highly unlikely that Peter would *later* waver on this issue in fear of the circumcision who came *from* James in Jerusalem, to Peter in Antioch, a *Gentile* city. This indicates that Peter's wavering and the confrontation at Antioch occurred prior to the Jerusalem Council.

Second, the confrontation at Antioch occurred because Peter feared that the circumcision from James would judge him because he had been eating with Gentiles who were not complying with the obligations of the law of Moses. If the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 had occurred *before* the confrontation at Antioch, Peter would have had no need to fear the judgment of the circumcision, at least on the issue of whether it was permissible for Peter to teach Gentiles that they did not have to comply with the law. For Acts 15 indicates that the entire Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22-23), *including therefore the circumcision, accepted* that Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law. These facts indicate that the confrontation at Antioch recorded at Gal. 2:11-21 occurred *before* the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

Third, as a result of the Jerusalem Council, the Jerusalem church sent letters to the Gentile Christians, including the Gentile Christians in Antioch. (Acts 15:22-23.) These letters taught that Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law. (Acts 15:24, 28-29; 21:24-25.) Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas went to the church in Antioch and confirmed the contents of the letters. (Acts 15:30-32.)

Once the Antioch church received the letters from the Jerusalem church, the Antioch Christians would have known that, according to the Jerusalem church, Gentile Christians did not have to comply with the law. But during the confrontation at Antioch, Paul did not refer to those letters. This is evidence that the confrontation occurred before the sending of those letters at Acts 15. And if the meeting of the Jerusalem Council, and

the sending of those letters, were contemporaneous, this indicates that the confrontation occurred before the Jerusalem Council did.

In light of the above, (1) Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch at Acts 11:26; (2) later, Paul's trip to Jerusalem and the giving of the right hands of fellowship occurred as recorded at Gal. 2:1-9; (3) the confrontation at Antioch at Gal. 2:11-21 followed; and, (4) subsequently, the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 occurred.⁷⁴

It must be remembered that during Paul's trip to Jerusalem at Gal. 2:1-2, he "communicated" his "gospel" to the apostles in Jerusalem but, in Gal. 2:1-9, Paul does not record that any apostles gave to him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship other than James, Peter, and John. This suggests that the remaining apostles' acceptance of Paul's "gospel," such as, e.g., his teaching that Gentile Christians are not obligated to comply with the law of Moses, may not have been forthcoming until the Jerusalem Council.

⁷⁴ It is sometimes taught that Paul's trip to Jerusalem at Gal. 2:1-2 was the same as Paul's trip to Jerusalem at Acts 15. The above discussion indicates that that teaching is incorrect. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in the Galatian 2:1-9 account, Paul dealt only with apostles, Barnabas, Titus, and false brethren. On the other hand, at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, Paul spoke only to apostles and elders. The Galatian 2 account records that Paul spoke to *some* apostles *privately*. The Acts 15 account shows that Paul spoke openly to all of the apostles and elders.

XVI. ACTS 21 AND PAUL KEEPING THE LAW

Acts 21:17-26 recount the last meeting between Paul and James recorded in the Book of Acts. The meeting occurred in Jerusalem following Paul’s third missionary journey.

At Acts 21:20, James told Paul, “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which *believe*; and they are all zealous of the *law*[.]” (Italics added.) *These were Jewish Christians zealous of the law.* According to Acts 21:21, James told Paul that these Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had been told (erroneously) that Paul

“teachest all the *Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses*, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.” (Italics added.)

James proposed a solution. For the benefit of these Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, James told Paul that “We have four men” taking a vow, and asked Paul to participate in a ritual ceremony. (Acts 21:23-24.) The fact that James said “We” indicates these four men were Christians.⁷⁵ The details of the ceremony make clear that this vow was part of a ritual under the law of Moses, perhaps a Nazarite vow. (See Num. 6:2, 5.) Importantly, James asked Paul to participate in this ceremony so everyone would know that Paul “keepeth the law” (Acts 21:23-24).

⁷⁵ W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., rptd. 1989), p. 573, fn. 2.

James did not, by the phrase “keepeth the law” at Acts 21:24, mean keep it as a matter of *obligation*. First, previously at the right hands of fellowship of Gal. 2:9, James had agreed with Paul’s “gospel” that *Jewish* and Gentile Christians were not under the obligation of the law and were free to enjoy a Scriptural lifestyle that excluded complying with the law of Moses or its commandments for any purpose. Second, at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, James was present and did not dispute Peter’s testimony that Christians were saved by grace and it was futile for Jewish Christians to try to bear the yoke of the law.

Thus here at Acts 21, Paul complied with James’s request. Paul complied with the law as one would keep local customs, not as a matter of obligation, not as a “guideline” from God, or for God’s sake at all. When Paul was in Jerusalem, he would comply with the law of Moses, though not from any obligation based on the law. If Paul were in Rome, he “would do as the Romans do,” as long as that was consistent with God’s Word. (See 1 Cor. 9:19-22.)

There is no record that Paul had been teaching what the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were *hearing* that he had been teaching, but the rumor had impacted them. It was one thing to hear that Paul was teaching that Jewish Christians were not *obligated* to comply with the law. It was another to hear that he was teaching Jews among the Gentiles to “forsake” the law entirely for any purpose, to not circumcise children, and to

not walk after the customs. That Paul never did. He never taught that (1) Jewish Christians could not comply with the law on a nonobligatory basis as a way of life or (2) Jewish Christians were to reject complying with the law for any purpose, even on a nonobligatory basis. The issue for Paul was always compliance based on Mosaic obligation.

For example, as we have seen in the case of Titus, Paul categorically rejected circumcising Christians as a matter of *obligation* based on the law. (Gal. 2:3.) However, before Paul took Timothy with him in Paul's ministry, Paul circumcised him, not based on obligation to the law, but *to avoid offending Jews*, because they knew Timothy's father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1-3.) Similarly here, to quell the false rumor that Paul had been teaching Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not circumcise their children, and not walk after the customs, Paul complied with James's request and "keepst the law."

Paul accomplished two things by doing this. First, he made clear that a *Jewish Christian, such as one in Jerusalem, is free to enjoy a lifestyle that includes a nonobligatory compliance with the law of Moses to honor God in accord with his or her preferences or consistent with the dictates of his or her conscience*. Second, Paul made clear that when a Christian, such as Paul, interacts with people who comply with the law as a way of life, *the Christian is free to engage in a nonobligatory compliance with the*

law to avoid offending such people. Paul complied with the law simply to avoid offending the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and to respect Jewish traditions and culture.

XVII. THE TIMING OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES, THE EVENTS OF GALATIANS 2, AND THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 2 teaches that James gave the right hands of fellowship, accepted Paul's "gospel," and abandoned James's teachings on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. If James had written his epistle containing those teachings after James had given the right hands of fellowship, those teachings would have violated the agreement of the right hands of fellowship. *This means that James wrote the Epistle of James before James gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship referenced at Gal. 2:9.*

On the other hand, Paul's Epistle to the Galatians records the giving of the right hands of fellowship, i.e., Paul wrote that epistle sometime after the right hands of fellowship. If James wrote his epistle before the right hands of fellowship, and Paul wrote his epistle after the right hands of fellowship, then James wrote the Epistle of James before Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. As mentioned, *this provides evidence that Paul was aware of James's teachings in the Epistle of James concerning justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. Beyond that, it is evidence that Paul wrote his Epistle to the*

Galatians in part to demonstrate that James's teachings on these issues were transitional as of the time of the right hands of fellowship.

This may explain why, of the four times that Paul refers to James in Paul's letters,⁷⁶ three (Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12) are found in the first and second chapters of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, where Paul establishes the independence of his apostleship and of the source of his doctrine, including his independence from *James*. It may also help explain why, when identifying the three apostles who were "reputed to be pillars," Paul put James's name *first*. Further, it may clarify why Paul teaches at Gal. 2:7 that *God* entrusted Paul's "gospel" to *Peter* for him to take it to the circumcision, and why Paul did not say that God entrusted it to *James* for that purpose.

Finally, it may reveal why, when Paul "names names"—Peter and Barnabas—of those wavering from the "truth of the gospel" and implicated in the hypocrisy at issue during the confrontation at Antioch, Paul also notes that "certain came from *James*." (Gal. 2:12, italics added.)

Paul never said that the people who came from James, the circumcision from James, or James himself, engaged in Peter's hypocrisy. But Peter's fear of these circumcision from James—Jewish Christians who emphasized compliance with the law as a way of life—was evidence that the circumcision from James *were in fact prepared to*

⁷⁶ Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; 1 Cor. 15:7. Wigram and Winter, p. 832. At 1 Cor. 15:7, Paul simply records that Jesus appeared to James after Jesus's resurrection.

judge Peter for eating with Gentiles. This in turn suggests that *James sent the circumcision there for that purpose.*

If James sent the circumcision to accuse Peter of wrongdoing for eating with Gentiles, this is evidence that James too had wavered from the truth of the “gospel” to which he had agreed by giving the right hands of fellowship. This is true even if neither the circumcision from James, nor James himself, joined Peter in his hypocrisy. Paul, who strived to “giv[e] no offence” (2 Cor. 6:3), could easily have avoided any suggestion of wavering on James’s part when Paul was “naming names,” by simply saying, e.g., that “certain came from *Jerusalem.*” But Paul declared that “certain came from *James.*” (Italics added.)

XVIII. WHY JAMES’S TAUGHT HIS DOCTRINES ON JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW

Why did James in his letter teach his doctrines that a person was “justified by works” and not “justified . . . by faith only,” and that Jewish Christians were obligated to comply with the law? James taught them because they were correct at the time, but he later realized that they were transitional.

That some Scriptural doctrines are transitional is not a novel concept. As we discussed at the beginning of this essay, by some estimates there are 613 commandments of the law. However, most Christians would probably agree that not all 613, such as

those pertaining to mandatory animal sacrifice, apply today to Christians. That does not negate the facts that the entire 613 are part of the Scripture, and “All scripture is given by inspiration of God[.]” (2 Tim. 3:16.) It just means that those portions of the inspired Scripture were transitional in application and are not binding today upon Christians. Moreover, Paul went beyond the issue of animal sacrifice and more broadly focused on the law of Moses as transitional when he said at Gal. 3:24-25:

“²⁴ Wherefore *the law* was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after that faith is come, *we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*”

(Emphasis added.)

James wrote his letter to the “twelve tribes” (Jas. 1:1), i.e., to Jews, some of whom were Christians, and some of whom were not. These were people with a rich history spanning centuries, all steeped in obligatory compliance with the law as a way of life. Moreover, James was an apostle (Gal. 1:19), that is, a messenger. Thus, the message of his letter was a message from God.

However, when it comes to that portion of James’s letter discussing the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, God coordinated that first century message with the centuries old role of the law in the life of the Jewish people. The Old Testament teaching to Jews—have faith in God and comply with the law of Moses—culminated, with the coming of Jesus, in James’s letter’s teaching to Jews—have faith in Jesus and

comply with the law. It should be no surprise then, that just as the law of Moses itself was transitional and does not apply today to the Christian, James's letter's teaching on the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian was transitional and does not apply today.

During Paul's trip to Jerusalem leading to the giving of the right hands of fellowship recounted at Gal. 2:1-9, James realized that his doctrine on the meanings of the terms "faith," "works," "justified by works" and "justified . . . by faith only" was transitional, as was James's doctrine on the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian. This does not mean that the *entirety* of James's letter was transitional. It simply means that James's doctrines on justification, and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, were transitional. Moreover, this does not mean that James concluded that his doctrines on these issues were erroneous at the time that he taught them in his letter. It simply means he realized through the events of Gal. 2:1-9 that his doctrines on these issues were correct at the time he taught them in his letter but were transitional and no longer to be taught after he agreed with Paul's "gospel."

XIX. CONCLUSION

It is error to suggest that we must throw out James's epistle from the Bible. As mentioned, Martin Luther, for example, at one point described James's epistle as a "right strawy epistle." However, all Scripture is given by inspiration from God. (2 Tim. 3:16.)

Nonetheless, it is equally error to throw *together* (1) the doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian as taught in James’s epistle with (2) the doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian as taught in Paul’s epistles. Thus, when today people teach James’s doctrines (1) that a man is “justified by works” and is not “justified . . . by faith only,” (2) on the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian, and/or (3) e.g., that “faith without works is dead,” this is error.

There is no conflict between Paul and James on the doctrines of justification and the role of the law in the life of the Christian. After the right hands of fellowship of Gal. 2:9, Christians—Jewish and Gentile—are “justified by faith” as Paul uses that phrase, and love has fulfilled the law.

For James and Paul, *God the Father* counted “faith” for righteousness. For James and Paul, the Christian was to have “faith” in God’s *Son, Jesus Christ*. But “faith,” with the Jews’ ordinary meaning for that term, gave way at the right hands of fellowship to Paul’s “faith which should afterwards be *revealed*.” (Gal. 3:23; italics added.) Paul’s “gospel,” his “good news,” on the issue of justification reflected a revelation concerning the meaning of the term “faith,” corresponding to a revelation concerning the role of the *Holy Spirit* in justification. For “faith,” according to Paul’s technical meaning for that term, is part of the fruit of the Spirit of God, signaling that the Spirit has made Himself

the very source of “faith,” making it as easy as possible for men to be just before God the Father.

Paul’s “gospel” of justification by faith, in which “faith” is counted as righteousness from God Himself, is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and God’s glorious answer to the question, “*How* should man be just with God?”⁷⁷

APPENDIX A: LOVE HAS FULFILLED THE LAW

We have said that Paul taught that Christians were not obligated to comply with the law, and that “love has fulfilled the law.” What do we mean when we say that love has fulfilled the law? We will first focus on how the person of Jesus Himself was the fulfillment of the law and, having fulfilled it, He made Himself available to us through the Holy Spirit. We will next focus on how, as a result, it is by *love*, part of the fruit of the Spirit, that the law has been, and stands, fulfilled.

A. THE MIRACLE AT CANA

To illustrate how Jesus fulfilled the law, we look to His miracle at the wedding in Cana. When Jesus turned water to wine at the wedding in Cana, He was not simply demonstrating His ability to do miracles. John 2:1-11 records the events concerning the miracle. At the wedding, there were “*six waterpots of stone*, after the manner of the *purifying* of the Jews, containing *two or three firkins* apiece.” (Jn. 2:6, italics added.)

⁷⁷ Similarly, as to salvation, we are saved by faith, without works. (Eph. 2:8-9.)

A firkin was several gallons (about nine). Jn. 2:7 records that Jesus told servants at the wedding to “*Fill the waterpots with water.*” (Italics added.) The verse then records, “*And they filled them up to the brim.*” (Italics added.) Jesus then had the servants draw from the waterpots and take the contents to the governor of the feast; the water turned to fine wine for drinking. (Jn. 2:9-10.)

What was Jesus symbolizing by this miracle? Let’s look at some of the symbolism suggested by this account. The number six in the Bible is frequently associated with man. (Gen. 1:26-27, 31 [man created on sixth day]; Ex. 20:9 [man works six days]; Rev. 13:18 [666: “the number of a man”].) A waterpot contained water. In John’s gospel, water is associated with life (Jn. 4:7-14). Stone is associated with the law of Moses, which was written on stone. (Ex. 24:12; 2 Cor. 3:3.) Purification involved cleansing for use.

The phrase “two or three” is associated with an *adequate* witness. (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1 [“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established]; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28.) Wine is associated with the Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4, 13, 15-18 [effects of wine and Spirit contrasted]; Eph. 5:18 [same].) The receiving of the indwelling Holy Spirit is associated with drinking. (1 Cor. 12:13 (NASB) [we were all made to drink of one Spirit].)

What does the above suggest? *The stone waterpots contained two or three firkins of water that would purify. Similarly, the law of Moses contained an adequate witness to*

a Life that would purify. That *water* was in *six* waterpots. Similarly, that *Life* was in a *Man*.

Moreover, *Jesus Himself* told the servants to *fill* the waterpots with water. Similarly, *Jesus Himself* was *the fullness* of *Life*. The servants *filled the water to the brims* of the *stone waterpots*. Similarly, *Jesus Himself* was the *complete fulfillment* of the *law of Moses*. The *water was turned to wine*, and the wine (with the stone waterpots no longer involved) was made available to others for *drinking*. Similarly, from *Jesus* *proceeded the Holy Spirit* (Jn. 20:22), and the Holy Spirit (with the law of Moses no longer involved) is made available to others *to be received by faith*.

Thus, the miracle of Cana symbolizes many things, including the facts that the person of Jesus Himself was the complete fulfillment of the law and, having fulfilled the law, He was making Himself, the fulfillment of the law, available to us through the Holy Spirit by faith.

And as a result, as discussed below, it is now by *love*, part of the fruit of the Spirit inside the Christian, that the law has been, and stands, fulfilled. An analogy may help illustrate this point.

B. AN ANALOGY

A 200-watt bulb usually has the writing “200 watts” on the surface of the bulb. The writing tells me about the light. But the writing is not the light. What I want is the

light. The light is the fulfillment of the writing. In this sense, the light has fulfilled the writing “200 watts.”

And now that I have the light, do I continue focusing on the writing? No. The light is much too bright. I can barely see the writing, if I can see it at all. The writing “200 watts” dims to insignificance in the presence of the bright light that has fulfilled the writing.

In our analogy, the writing “200 watts” is similar to the law of Moses; the light is similar to love, which is part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22.) The law was a writing. The law, as a writing, tells me about love. But the law, as a writing, is not that love. What I want is the love. Love, as part of the fruit of the Spirit, is the fulfillment of the law. In this sense, love has *fulfilled* the law.

And now that I have the love, do I continue focusing on the writing, i.e., the law of Moses? No. Love is part of the fruit of the Third Person of the Trinity. The law dims to insignificance in the presence of the love which has *fulfilled* the law. Light is the fulfillment of the writing “200 watts”; similarly, love is the fulfillment of the written law of Moses.

C. ROMANS 13:8-10 AND GALATIANS 5:13-14

With the above as background, we turn to Romans 13:8-10. There Paul writes, “⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to *love* one another: for he that *loveth* another *hath fulfilled* the law. ⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill,

Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; *and if there be any other commandment*, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁰ *Love* worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the *fulfilling* of the law.”

(Italics added.) Paul teaches that “love” has fulfilled the law. “Love” is part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22.)

Paul says that love “hath fulfilled” the law. The phrase “hath fulfilled” is a translation of the Greek word “pepleroken,” which is a word in the Greek perfect tense.⁷⁸ Basically, the Greek perfect tense conveys the idea that previous on-going action has culminated in an abiding state.⁷⁹ Paul is teaching that, by love, the law has been fulfilled, and stands fulfilled. And, if the law stands fulfilled by love, nothing but love is necessary, or sufficient, to fulfill the law.

Paul begins Rom. 13:9 with the word “For,” signaling an explanation to come. Paul then lists five commandments based on the law of Moses. Sometimes commentators on the law distinguish between the “moral,” “judicial,” and “ceremonial” commandments of the law. It is important, then, to note that, at Rom. 13:9, Paul lists five “moral” commandments. Four commandments, those involving adultery, killing, stealing, and bearing false witness, are prohibitions involving outward conduct. One commandment, involving coveting, is a prohibition involving inward desire.

⁷⁸ Friberg and Friberg, p. 502.

⁷⁹ Young, p. 126; Summers, p. 103.

Paul teaches that these five moral commandments, and *any other* commandment of the law, is summed up by another commandment of the law. That commandment is “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” found at Lev. 19:18.

Thus, Paul has shifted focus from *several* moral commandments of the law to a *single* moral commandment of the law: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Moreover, Paul has shifted from moral commandments, several of which *prohibit outward conduct*, to a single commandment that *requires an inner virtue*.

But Paul did not tell the Roman Christians to comply with the moral commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁸⁰ That is, Paul did not tell the Roman Christians to comply with the commandment *of the law of Moses* found at Lev. 19:18. Paul’s reference to Lev. 19:18 is part of his *explanation* concerning why Paul has *himself* commanded Christians to “love one another.” The Roman Christians are subject to a commandment based, not on *the law of Moses*, but on *Paul’s independent and personal authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ*. The commandment based on the law is “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Lev. 19:18.) The commandment from Paul the apostle to the Roman Christians is “love one another.” (Rom. 13:8.)

Indeed, John 13:34 records that Jesus Himself said to His disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye

⁸⁰ Contrast, however, James who, in his epistle, taught Jewish Christians, “[i]f ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well[.]” (Jas. 2:8.)

also love one another.” Why did He give a new commandment if the old one (“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18)) applied? Lev. 19:18, referred to in Rom. 13:9, commanded love of one’s neighbor as *one* loves *oneself*. The new commandment commanded love of one another as *Christ* loved *all of His disciples*.

At Rom. 13:10, Paul teaches that love “worketh no ill to his neighbor.” That is, a person motivated by love would never commit adultery, kill,⁸¹ steal, bear false witness, or covet, whether or not these things were specified in the law. Therefore, love itself, an inner virtue produced by the indwelling Spirit of God in the Christian, is the fulfillment of the law. Paul is *not* saying that we fulfil the law when we *use* love to comply with the commandments *of the law*. Instead, Paul is teaching that, if we simply *have* love, we no longer need be concerned about the moral commandments *of the law*, including the Ten Commandments.

Thus, Paul has again shifted focus, this time from a single *commandment of the law of Moses* pertaining to love, to *love itself*, without the *commandment of the law*. And importantly, Paul invests the word “love” with a technical meaning; it is part of the “fruit of the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:22.)

Paul says at Rom. 13:10 that “love is the *fulfilling* of the law.” What does he mean by “fulfilling?” The “-ing” suffix could suggest continuing activity. This in turn could suggest continuing outward conduct.

⁸¹ The Greek word translated “kill” at Rom. 13:9 is “phoneuo” (Wigram and Winter, p. 789), which can also be translated “murder” and is so translated at Mt. 19:18. (*Ibid.*)

But the Greek word translated “fulfilling” at Rom. 13:10 in the KJV means neither continuing activity nor continuing outward conduct. That Greek word is “pleroma.”⁸² “Pleroma” is a noun, not a verb.⁸³ It is used 13 times by Paul and, each time in the KJV, *except here* at Rom. 13:10, “pleroma” is translated “fulness.”⁸⁴ Although the phrase “love is the *fulfilling* of the law” (italics added) is found at Rom. 13:10 in the KJV, there is no reason that that phrase cannot be rendered, “love is the *fulness* of the law.”

Accordingly, one Greek-English interlinear translates this phrase in Rom. 13:10 as “love [is] *fulness* therefore of [the] law.”⁸⁵ One commentator observes, “Vs. 10, literally translated, reads ‘The *fulness* of the law, therefore, is love.’”⁸⁶

Thus, Paul commands the Roman Christians to “love one another.” (Rom. 13:8.) He does so knowing that love itself is the *fulness* of the law of Moses. Paul does not command that we comply with the law. He does not command that we keep the “moral” commandments *of the law of Moses*. He does not command that we comply with the commandment *of the law* found at Lev. 19:18, i.e., “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” He does not command that we comply with or keep the Ten Commandments.

⁸² Wigram and Winter, pp. 630-631.

⁸³ Vine, <https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/ved/f/fulfill-fulfilling-fulfillment.html?hilite=pleroma>. (Italics added.)

⁸⁴ Wigram and Winter, pp. 630-631. The other 12 times are found at Rom. 11:12, 25; 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:26, 28; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:13; Col. 1:19; 2:9.

⁸⁵ Berry, p. 429; italics added.

⁸⁶ Gerald R. Cragg, “The Epistle to the Romans,” *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), IX, p. 607 (italics added).

Instead, the law of Moses has been fulfilled, and stands fulfilled, by love, produced by the Spirit of God in the Christian.

To say that *we are free from any obligation to comply with the Ten Commandments* is not to say that *we are free to sin*. Christians are still, of course, taught not to sin. (1 Jn. 2:1.) But as Christians, our motivation for not sinning is no longer a fear of condemnation for transgressing a law, but a desire not to grieve and hurt God. (Eph. 4:30) and instead to glorify Him (1 Cor. 6:20). God teaches Christians to love Him (Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9), and to love one another (Rom. 13:8, 1 Thess. 4:9), but not as *commandments of the law of Moses*.⁸⁷

The account of the discreet scribe at Mark 12:28-34 reveals that the scribe knew that “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” were the greatest commandments *of the law of Moses* but, even then, Jesus taught that the scribe had not yet made it into the kingdom of God, though he was “not far” from it. The

⁸⁷ The *Ten Commandments* impose obligations. As discussed, neither these nor the rest of the law of Moses imposes obligations on *Christians*. *Doctrines applicable to the church* (not the law of Moses or the Ten Commandments) impose obligations upon Christians. And some conduct required or prohibited by the Ten Commandments is required or prohibited by church doctrine. (1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Ex. 20:3); “Flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14). 2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image[.]” (Ex. 20:4); “Flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14). 3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain (Ex. 20:7); Paul teaches against blasphemy (1 Tim. 1:20). 4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Ex. 20:8); “For we who have believed enter that [sabbath] rest.” (Heb. 4:3). 5. “Honour thy father and thy mother[.]” (Ex. 20:12); “Honour thy father and mother[.]” (Eph. 6:2). 6. Thou shalt not kill (murder) (Ex. 20:13); Paul lists “murders” as one of the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19, 21). 7. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Ex. 20:14); Paul lists “adultery” as one of the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19). 8. “Thou shalt not steal.” (Ex. 20:15); “Let him that stole steal no more[.]” (Eph. 4:28). 9. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (Ex. 20:16); “Lie not one to another[.]” (Col. 3:9). 10. “Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is your neighbour’s.” (Ex. 20:17); “I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be . . . covetous . . . with such an one no not to eat.” (1 Cor. 5:11).)

scribe had yet to learn that the law would be fulfilled *in us*, not kept, through the love of the One with Whom the scribe was speaking, and from Whom the scribe was “not far” physically or spiritually.

Accordingly, Jesus taught at Mt. 5:17, “. . . *I* [the person of Christ] am . . . come . . . to *fulfil* [the law].” The Greek word translated “fulfil” at Mt. 5:17 is a form of the Greek word translated “hath fulfilled” at Rom. 13:8.⁸⁸

Christ came to fulfill the law. *He did not say at Mt. 5:17 that He wanted Christians or others “to fulfill” it.* At Luke 24:44, Jesus, after His resurrection, told His disciples, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be *fulfilled*, which were written *in the law of Moses*, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning *me*.” (Emphasis added.) And the Greek word translated “fulfilled” at Lk. 24:44 is a form of the Greek word translated “fulfil” at Mt. 5:17 and “hath fulfilled” at Rom. 13:8.⁸⁹

Indeed, Mt. 5:17 teaches that Christ came to *fulfill* the law *and “the prophets.”* Similarly, at Lk. 24:24, Jesus reminded the disciples that He had said that all things “must be *fulfilled*, which were written in the law of Moses, *and in the prophets*, . . . concerning me.” If, based on Mt. 5:17 or Lk. 24:24, *Christians* are to fulfill the law, doesn’t it follow that, based on those verses, Christians are also to fulfill “the prophets”?

⁸⁸ Wigram and Winter, p. 630; both Greek words are forms of “pleroo.”

⁸⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 630; each Greek word is a form of “pleroo.”

Christ came to fulfill the law, *He* in fact fulfilled it, He now dwells in the Christian by faith (Eph. 3:17), and now love, part of the fruit of the Spirit, *has* fulfilled the law. Jewish Christians can voluntarily comply with the law as a matter of lifestyle and culture, but not because they are under the obligation of the law.

What Paul teaches at Rom. 13, he teaches more briefly at Gal. 5:13-14. Those verses read:

(13) For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by *love* serve one another. (14) *For* all the *law is fulfilled* in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

(Italics added.)

The Galatian Christians were being wrongly taught by Judaizers that the Galatian Christians had to comply with the law. Here, at Gal. 5:13, Paul commands the Galatian Christians to do works of service motivated “by love.” Paul begins Gal. 5:14 using the word “For,” again, signaling an explanation to come. Paul’s explanation is that the law is fulfilled by “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” i.e., by Lev. 19:18.

But Paul has not commanded the Galatian Christians to *comply with the commandment of the law*, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” According to Paul, if persons, including Christians, *could* hypothetically comply with that Mosaic commandment, and *all* the other commandments of the law of Moses, *perfectly* throughout their lives, then, and only then, would their compliance with that verse fulfill

the law. For “cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them.” (Gal. 3:10; italics added.)

Paul has not commanded the Galatian Christians to *comply with the commandment of the law*, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”⁹⁰ The commandment which the apostle Paul gives to the Galatian Christians is to serve one another “by love”; he knows that the *love* motivating that service has fulfilled the law. This is Paul’s answer to the Judaizers.

The phrase “is fulfilled” at Gal. 5:14 is a translation of the Greek word “peplerotai,” which is a word in the Greek perfect tense.⁹¹ “Peplerotai” at Gal. 5:14 is also a form of the Greek words translated “fulfil” at Mt. 5:17, “fulfilled” at Lk. 24:44, and “hath fulfilled” at Rom. 13:8.⁹²

Paul is teaching that the law *has been fulfilled* by the commandment of the law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” But this is Paul’s explanation concerning why Paul, in the exercise of his apostolic authority, commands the Galatians to serve by “love.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Contrast Jas. 2:8, “[i]f ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well[.]”

⁹¹ Friberg and Friberg, p. 585.

⁹² Wigram and Winter, p. 630.

⁹³ As an aside, 1 Jn. 3:4-5 (KJV) are sometimes cited to support the claim that Christians are still governed by the law and obligated to comply with it. Those verses read: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” The Greek reads

APPENDIX B: JAMES WROTE HIS EPISTLE TO JEWS

One price of the God-given success of Paul's apostolic ministry is that Christians sometimes erroneously view certain portions of the non-Pauline New Testament through the prism of Paul's writings. For example, it is erroneously assumed that because Paul's letters were addressed exclusively to Christians, James's epistle must have been addressed exclusively to Christians. However, that is not the case.

Although *Paul* wrote his epistles to Christians (Jewish and Gentile Christians), there is ample evidence *James* wrote his letter to the *Jews*, some of whom were Christians, *but some of whom were not*. Some of the Jewish people to whom James was writing were professing to be Christians (but were not Christians) or were associating with Christians (but were not Christians). (See Jas. 1:6-8, 10-11, 21, 26; 2:9, 13-20, 26; 4:4;8, 5:1-6, 19-20.) In this sense, the Epistle of James is like Old Testament writings to the Jewish people, some of whom trusted in God and some of whom did not. We review below the Scriptural evidence.

A. JAS. 1:1

Thus, at Jas. 1:1, James expressly says, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, *to the twelve tribes* which are scattered abroad, greeting." (Italics added.) He does not say, "to the churches" (as Paul does at Gal. 1:1-2) or "to the saints" (as Paul

differently: "Everyone that practises sin, also lawlessness practices, and sin is lawlessness." (Berry, p. 612; see also NASB.)

does at Eph. 1:1 and Col. 1:2). Some members of the “twelve tribes” were Christians; others were not.

Further, as shown below, certain verses in James make sense if James is addressing Jews who are not Christians, but the verses are inconsistent with other Scriptures if the verses are construed as referring to Jewish Christians.

B. JAS. 2:14-20

Accordingly, at Jas. 2:14-20, James implies that some Jews have “faith without works.” This “faith” does not “save,” “is dead,” is akin to the belief of a demon, and is the “faith” of a “foolish” person. This is not the “faith” of a Christian.

C. JAS. 4:4

At Jas. 4:4 (NASB), James says,

“*You adulteresses*, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?”

(Italics added.) But Paul said at 1 Cor. 6:9-10, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, . . . *nor adulterers*, . . . *shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” (Italics added.) This indicates that the “adulteresses” of Jas. 4:4 are not Christians.

Moreover, Jas. 4:4 says,

“*You adulteresses*, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world *makes himself an enemy of God.*”

(Italics added.) However, Paul teaches that *before* people became Christians they *were* enemies of God, but Christians are *now* reconciled to God. (Rom. 5:10 [“For if while we *were* enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, *having been reconciled*, we shall be saved by His life”], italics added; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:21-22.) This again indicates that “you [Jewish] adulteresses” are not Christians.

D. JAS. 4:8

James 4:8 reads:

“*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.* Cleanse your hands, ye *sinner*s; and purify your hearts, ye *double minded.*”

(Italics added.) This verse contains evidence that James is here talking to Jews who are not Christians. First, he says, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” But Christians have not merely drawn *near* to God, and God has not merely drawn *near* to Christians. God is *already inside* Christians. Paul wrote at 1 Cor. 3:16, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” At 1 Jn. 4:13, John declared, “Hereby know we that *we dwell in him, and he in us*, because *he hath*

given us of his Spirit.” (Italics added.) This indicates that James’s instruction, “Draw nigh to God,” is directed at Jewish unbelievers.

Second, James commands at Jas. 4:8, “Cleanse your hands, *ye sinners.*” The word “sinners” is a translation of a form of the Greek word “amartolos.”⁹⁴ It is routinely used to refer to unbelievers, i.e., unsaved persons.⁹⁵

For example, the Pharisees complained at Mt. 9:11 that Jesus ate with publicans and “sinners,” and Jesus replied in part at Mt. 9:13, “I am not come to call the righteous, but *sinners to repentance.*” (Italics added.) Mt. 26:45 records that Jesus told His disciples that He was “betrayed into the hands of *sinners.*” (Italics added.) He taught at Lk. 15:10 that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one *sinner that repenteth.*” (Italics added.) Paul said at Rom. 5:8-9: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while *we were yet sinners,* Christ died for us. Much more then, *being now justified* by his blood, *we shall be saved from wrath* through Him.” (Italics added.)

In each of the above verses, “sinner(s)” is a form of the Greek word “amartolos.”⁹⁶ Moreover, as we discuss in section G. below, James uses the word “sinner” in Jas. 5:20 to

⁹⁴ Wigram and Winter, p. 34.

⁹⁵ Wigram and Winter, p. 34. Wigram and Winter list the 47 times that a form of “amartolos” is used in the New Testament. Review of the list reveals that “amartolos” is routinely used to refer to unbelievers.

⁹⁶ Wigram and Winter, p. 34.

refer to an unbeliever. These facts indicate that when James says “ye sinners” at Jas. 4:8, he is referring to Jewish unbelievers.

Finally, at Jas. 4:8, James refers to “ye double minded.” The only other time he employs the word “double-minded” is at Jas. 1:5-8, where he teaches,

“⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

⁸A *double minded* man is unstable in all his ways.”

(Italics added.) Each word “double-minded” at Jas. 4:8 and 1:8 is a translation of a form of the same Greek word, and it is only found in the New Testament in these two verses.⁹⁷

At Jas. 1:6, James contrasts the man who “ask[s] in faith, nothing wavering” with “he that wavereth.” *And as shown below, “he that wavereth” is not a Christian.* For at Jas. 1:7, James says, concerning the man who wavers, “let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” But *Christians* who ask according to God’s will *have the petitions* that they desire. For at 1 Jn. 5:11-15, the apostle John writes to Christians:

¹¹And this is the record, that God hath given to *us* eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. ¹³These things have I written *unto you that believe on the name of the Son of*

⁹⁷ Wigram and Winter, p. 159. The Greek word is “dipsukos.”

God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: ¹⁵ And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

(Italics added.) Therefore, “he that wavereth” at Jas. 1:6 is not a Christian.

Third, Jas. 1:6-8 teach that “he that wavereth” is a “double minded man.” This focuses not on an individual instance of wavering or doubting but on the man’s double-minded character. And since “he that wavereth” is not a Christian, the “double-minded man” is not a Christian. But if the “double minded man” of Jas. 1:8 is not a Christian, *this is evidence that “ye double minded” of Jas. 4:8 are not Christians.*

E. JAS. 5:1-3

At Jas. 5:1-3 (NASB), James writes,

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

³ Your gold and your silver have rusted; and *their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire.* It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”

(Italics added.)

James says concerning “you rich” that the rust of their gold and silver will be a *witness against them and consume their flesh like fire*. But at Rom. 8:33-34 (NASB), Paul said concerning Christians, “³³ Who will bring a *charge* against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who *condemns*? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.” (Italics added.) Paul told the Corinthian Christians at 1 Cor. 1:8 (NASB) that Christ “will also confirm you to the end, *blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Italics added.) And Paul declared at Rom. 8:1 (NASB), “Therefore there is *now no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Italics added.) This shows that “you rich” are Jews who are not Christians.

F. JAS. 5:6

James proclaims at Jas. 5:6 (NASB), “⁶ *You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.*” (Italics added.) Here, James, writing to Jews and continuing his denunciation of “you rich,” refers to *the killers as “you”*—using the second person—and refers to *the righteous person killed as “he”*—using the third person. *In other words, “you”—the killers, some of the Jews to whom James is writing—are not righteous persons.* That is, they are not Christians.

As we discuss in this essay, even under James’s doctrine of justification by works taught in his epistle (a doctrine he later abandoned at the right hands of fellowship), Christians were righteous. They were righteous because they were “justified by works.”

(Jas. 2:21, 25.) Thus, when James indicates that some of the Jews to whom he is writing are “killers” and not righteous, he is indicating that they are not Christians.

G. JAS. 5:19-20

James writes at Jas. 5:19-20:

“¹⁹ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; ²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

As we will see, James, talking to Jews, some of whom are Christians, and some of whom are not, is teaching about a Jewish Christian who saves an unsaved Jewish sinner.

We start with the word “Brethren” at Jas. 5:19. Sometimes the *apostle Paul*, who wrote his letters to a church(es) or individual Christians, used the word “brethren” or “brother” to refer to Christians. As to “brethren,” for example, at 1 Cor. 15:1, he said, “Moreover, *brethren*, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, *which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand[.]*” (Italics added.) At Philip. 4:1 he wrote, “Therefore, my *brethren dearly beloved* and longed for, *my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*” (Italics added.) Similarly, as to “brother,” at Eph. 6:21, Paul referred to “Tychicus, a *beloved brother* and faithful minister in the Lord.” (Italics added.) At Col. 4:7, Paul alluded to “Onesimus, a *faithful and beloved brother*, who is one of you.” (Italics added.)

But one should not assume that, because Paul sometimes used the word “brethren” or “brother” to refer to Christians, the authors of the non-Pauline letters, such as James, always used the word “brethren” or “brother” to refer to Christians. A good example of this may be found upon careful consideration of 1 John 3:15. There, the apostle John writes: “Whosoever hateth his *brother* is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” (Italics added.) John teaches that the one who hates his brother does not have eternal life.

However, Christians have eternal life. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him shall not perish, *but have eternal life.*” (Italics added.) Similarly, John 6:47 records that Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *he who believes has eternal life.*” (Italics added.) Thus, the one who does not have eternal life is an unbeliever.

The above means that the one who hates his brother does not have eternal life *and is an unbeliever*. But if one hates “*his brother*” (italics added), that means that both *the one who hates* and the one who is hated are brothers. That is, *the one who hates is a “brother” too*. But the one who hates is a “brother” *and is an unbeliever* (not having eternal life). This shows in turn that *when John uses the word “brother” at 1 Jn. 3:15, the word can refer to an unbeliever, i.e., a person who is not a Christian.*

Turning to James, first, again, in his epistle he said he was writing to “the twelve tribes,” i.e., *Jews*. He did not say he was writing to a church(es) or to “saints.” The fact

that James was writing to Jews provides evidence that when he used the word “Brethren” at Jas. 5:19, he was simply referring to his “Brethren”—the Jews, some of whom were Christians, and some of whom were not.

Second, James says at Jas. 5:19, “if any of you do *err* from the truth[.]” (Italics added.) The Greek word translated “err” at Jas. 5:19 is “planethe,”⁹⁸ a form of the Greek word “planao.”⁹⁹ “Planao” means “go astray, be misled, wander about,” “deluded,” “wander away,” “be mistaken,” “deceive oneself,” “be deceived.”¹⁰⁰ BAGD cites Jas. 5:19 as an example of the meaning “wander away.”¹⁰¹

The only other time “planethe” is used in the New Testament is at Matt. 18:12.¹⁰² At Matt. 18:12-14, Jesus said:

¹² How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them *be gone astray* [“planethe”], doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? ¹³ And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went

⁹⁸ Friberg and Friberg, p. 701.

⁹⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 627.

¹⁰⁰ BAGD, p. 665.

¹⁰¹ BAGD, p. 665.

¹⁰² https://biblehub.com/greek/plane_the__4105.htm.

not astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should *perish*.”

(Italics added.) Here Jesus associates the concepts of “gone astray” and “perish[ing].” Generally, to the extent one has “gone astray” *and* “perish[es],” one is an unbeliever.¹⁰³ For John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in Him should not perish*, but have everlasting life.” (Italics added.) This is evidence that the one who “err[s]” at Jas. 5:19 is going astray, wandering away, misled, deceived, *and at risk of perishing*. This in turn is evidence that the Jewish person who so “err[s]” is an unbeliever. i.e., not a Christian.

Third, in the phrases “one *convert* him” at Jas. 5:19 (italics added) and “he which *converteth* the sinner” (italics added) at Jas. 5:20, the words “convert” and “converteth” are translations of a form of the Greek word “epistrepho.”¹⁰⁴ BAGD observes that its meaning here is “turn in a relig[ious]-moral sense.”¹⁰⁵

James uses “epistrepho” here in the context of converting a “sinner.” (Jas. 5:20.) The word “sinner” at Jas. 5:20 is a translation of a form of the Greek word

¹⁰³ The above is not addressing the issue of whether one of the “little ones” can go astray, and Jesus does not say at Mt. 18:14 that one of the “little ones” can or does perish. In fact, He said at Mt. 19:14, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*.” (Italics added.)

¹⁰⁴ Wigram and Winter, p. 287.

¹⁰⁵ BAGD, p. 301.

“amartolos.”¹⁰⁶ As discussed in section D. above, “amartolos” is routinely used to refer to unbelievers, i.e., unsaved persons (and is translated “sinner” at Jas. 5:20, where it refers to an unsaved person). The one doing the converting at Jas. 5:19 is obviously a Jewish Christian.

The above indicates that when James refers to “one convert him,” James is referring to a Jewish Christian converting a Jewish sinner, i.e., *causing the Jewish sinner to turn, in a religious or moral sense, from being an unbeliever or unsaved person to being a Christian.*

Finally, James states at Jas. 5:20 that “he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall *save a soul from death.*” The meaning is clearly salvation in the context of a future saving of a soul from eternal death.¹⁰⁷ The premise is that the one needing salvation is an unbeliever.

In sum, James is teaching at Jas. 5:19-20:

“Brethren [Jews], if any of you [Jews] do err from the truth, and one [a Jewish Christian] convert him [the Jew who errs]; Let him [the Jewish Christian] know, that he [the Jewish Christian] which converts the [Jewish] sinner from the error of his [the Jewish sinner’s] way shall save a soul [the Jewish sinner’s] from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins [of the Jewish sinner].”

¹⁰⁶ Wigram and Winter, p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Barnes observes, “The word death here must refer to eternal death, or to future punishment. There is no other death which the soul is in danger of dying.” *Barnes Notes on the New Testament*; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/james/5.htm>.

In other words, James is referring to a Jewish Christian who saves an unsaved Jewish sinner, i.e., a person who is not a Christian.¹⁰⁸

James is writing to Jews, some of whom are Christians and some of whom are not. To determine to which group he is speaking in a given set of verses in his epistle, one must consider the context of the verses.

¹⁰⁸ See also Jas. 4:8: “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*” *Christians already* have drawn near to God; indeed, they have God’s Spirit *inside* them. (1 Cor. 3:16.) *Christians’ hearts already* have been purified by faith. (Acts 15:9.) Jas.4:8 is a call to Jewish unbelievers.