

## 11 *Was James Writing His Epistle For A Trial of Paul?*

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### *Introduction*

Scholars now recognize the Epistle of James was intended for a specific purpose: a trial. The epistle begins by explaining seating rules for a trial at a “synagogue,” not at a church service.

However, there is more to support this trial theory than what the scholars have acknowledged. When one looks at James’ message, one has the unmistakable sense that James is dismantling the doctrines taught by Paul. This is particularly true in James’ discussion of faith and works. James explains Genesis 15:6 in a diametrically different way than Paul explained the very same verse. James tells the story of Abraham in a manner at total odds with Paul’s account. James leads the reader to a diametrically opposite doctrine of justification by works and “not faith [that is] alone.” There is also no mistaking that James defines salvation as crucially relying on faith and works, *not one without the other*. He, in fact, mocks the idea that salvation depends upon doctrines you *only* mentally agree with. If mental belief *alone* were the true salvation formula, he says demons would be saved. The demons know and believe the truths about God, but they do not act upon them by pursuing God.

Finally, when you look through *all* of James, it is not just chapter two that takes Paul down a notch. It is almost every chapter and verse of James’ Epistle that does so. It is as if James is spreading out Paul’s letters on a table, finding flaws, and then writing messages that address those flaws.

This is precisely the kind of assistance one would expect from a leader in the early church to provide the judges in a pending trial of Paul. James' epistle would become the doctrinal reference guide for the judges.

However, did James have this role within the early church? Why would James, not Peter, provide an epistle for this special purpose if indeed that was its purpose?

It turns out that James (the brother of Jesus) was the bishop of Jerusalem. He was the first original head of Christ's church. This would make his input something to be expected at a heresy trial of Paul.

All the pieces fit that the Epistle of James was intended for a trial of Paul at a Christian-controlled synagogue. It fits the trial at Ephesus spoken about in Revelation 2:2. It fits the story of Luke in Acts chapter 19 of a budding 'synagogue'-church at Ephesus expelling Paul as a heretic.

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*Was It Written for A Trial At A Synagogue?*

In James 2:2-4, James is discussing how a meeting at an assembly should be conducted. He discourages favoritism at this meeting. He gives rules for standing and sitting. The traditional understanding has been this was about a hypothetical gathering for worship. However, that now appears to have been a simplistic view. As Stulac mentions:

A second and more recently advocated position is that the meeting is **a judicial assembly of the church**, and that the rich and poor individuals are both members of the believing community who are involved in a dispute to be adjudicated.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Stulac, *James* (1993), *supra*, at 90.

In 1969, R.B. Ward concluded James is “describing a *judicial assembly* rather than a worship service.” (Stulac: 91.)<sup>2</sup> He notes there is a subsequent reference to *judges* and *courts*. (James 2:4, 2:6.) Second,

it rather neatly resolves the questions some have had about this illustration in a worship setting. Why would Christians coming to worship need to be told where to stand or sit?... Why would some stand and others be seated? In Ward’s *judicial setting*, procedures of standing or sitting might well be unfamiliar to the participants, and clothing might be a factor that would unfairly impress the judges. (Stulac: 91.)

Nor can we overlook that this proceeding was to take place in a *synagogue*. In James 2:2-4, James uses the Greek word *synagoge* for this meeting even though in other places in the same letter (in 5:14) he refers to Christ’s church as an *ecclesia*. The word *ecclesia* was typically used to mean *church*, as distinct from meetings at *synagoge*. Also, incongruously, this word *synagoge* is only used in the New Testament for a church-meeting in James 2:2-4. James intends it to be a particular gathering place for *Christians*. James’ context makes it clear as to this *synagoge*, there is “Christian ownership of and authority over this assembly.” (Stulac: 91.)

Thus, when we put these two facts together, we can deduce James was writing his letter in the context of an upcoming gathering at a Christian-controlled synagogue to conduct a trial. The event would involve a large crowd. Some would stand and some would sit. This is completely consistent with the idea of a *synagogue* at Ephesus at which Paul taught for three months. (Acts 19:8.) It fits the story of the synagogue at Ephesus from which Paul felt compelled to leave as recorded in Acts 19:9. It fits the place where Paul put

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2. Stulac cites R.B. Ward, “Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2-4,” *Harvard Theological Review* 62:87-97 (1969).

on “his first defense” yet “all abandoned” him and “all in Asia abandoned” him. (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:14-17.) Ephesus was the capital city of Asia—Western Turkey. (For more discussion, see page 224 *et seq.*) James’ Epistle appears to have been written for a trial of Paul. It appears it was for the trial at Ephesus which Jesus alludes to in Revelation 2:2.

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*James Is the Head Bishop of the Church*

Why would James be giving an evaluation of Paul’s teachings for purpose of a trial? Because James was the head of the church at that time. Paul indirectly alludes to this in Galatians 2:9:

**James** and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be **pillars**...(ASV).

Cephas was the Aramaic version of Peter’s name. Thus, Paul says the main supports (pillars) in Jerusalem appeared to be **James**, Peter, and John.

Second, we find in Acts that James takes the position of the final decision-maker over and above the apostles on doctrinal issues. In Acts 15:6, the “apostles and elders were gathered together to consider” the issue whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised. After Paul and Peter speak, James gets up in Acts 15:19 and says “I judge” (Young’s Literal). James then spells out exactly what is to be done and all the particulars. A letter is to be written and several specific requirements are to be demanded. Robertson’s *Word Pictures* explains James uses an expression of *krino* (to judge) in the first person form. Robertson further explains that this is exactly the form used by a judicial officer. It means “I give my judgment.” Robertson says the implication on James’ status is clear:

James sums up the case as President of the Conference in a masterly fashion and with that consummate wisdom for which he is noted.

The apostles including Peter were all present. Obviously, they previously had authorized James to exercise such authority on doctrine. In fact, they were evidently waiting for his final ruling.

Lastly, the proof we have that James was the head of the church at the time of his epistle comes from abundant external ancient sources. These sources say James was appointed by the twelve apostles as the head over the Jerusalem church. Because there are some in Christendom who suppose this honor belongs to Peter, we need to review the evidence in depth.

#### Historical Sources For James' Role

First, Eusebius (c. 260-341) in about 325 A.D. wrote the following in *Ecclesiastical History*. Eusebius is regarded as a conservative early Church historian, having at one time himself been bishop of Caesarea in Palestine. Eusebius agrees James was the initial leader of the church after Jesus' resurrection.

James, the brother of the Lord, to whom the episcopal seat at Jerusalem had been **entrusted by the apostles**. (*Ecclesiastical History*, Chapter XXIII.)

What Eusebius says, we see occurring in Acts ch. 15. Hegesippus (c. 120?), who lived immediately after the apostles in Palestine, had written a work divided into five books called *Memoirs*. In Book V, he mentions:

**“[To] James alone, it was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies because he was a Nazirite and connected to the Priesthood [through Mary and to King David through Joseph].”**  
Epiphanius  
*Panarion 30*

James, the brother of the Lord succeeded to the government of the Church **in conjunction with the apostles**. *Memoirs of Hegesippus* Book V (quoted by Eusebius).

Jerome, the famous translator of the entire Bible into the Latin Vulgate (405 A.D.), devotes chapter two of his *On Famous Men* to a biography of James the Just. This is another name for the James who is talking in Acts chapter 15. Incidentally, as you read this quote, you will see Jerome is struggling on how this person can be “the brother of Jesus” and yet Mary was a perpetual virgin. By the 400s, the Roman Catholic church was now claiming Mary remained a perpetual virgin. Jerome gives a very odd explanation of how James could be the “brother of Jesus.” Jerome suggests that James is the son of a sister of Mary. (This entire effort to make Mary a perpetual virgin is unscriptural and *dangerous*.)<sup>3</sup> However, what is important is that Jerome cites Hegesippus for the fact that James was appointed the “bishop<sup>4</sup> of Jerusalem” by the “apostles.” Jerome writes:

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3. Roman Catholicism insists Mary remained a perpetual virgin. Yet, in Matthew 13:55-56 when the people of Nazareth are amazed at Jesus, they ask: “Is not his *brothers James* and Joseph and Simon and Judas [*i.e.*, Jude]?” Catholic authorities claim *brother* here should be understood as *cousin*. However, there is a word in Greek for cousin, *anepsios*. When ancient writers spoke of James, they called him the *brother* of Jesus. In the same context, they identified Jesus’ *cousins*, using the word *anepsios*. (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.4; see 2.23.4 and 3.20.1 (quoting Hegesippus).) Also, Matthew 1:24-25 states Mary and Joseph had sex after Jesus was born. Once he knew of the pregnancy, Joseph “had no marital relations with her **until she had born a son**.” This is the same as saying he had sexual relations with Mary only after she had a son. Furthermore, if Mary never had sexual relations with Joseph, she would have defrauded him. (1 Cor. 7:5.) Marriage in Judaism meant having sex with God’s purposes in mind: to sustain a family line. (Ben Witherington, *Woman in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.) The notion of perpetual virginity is based on the pious but unsupportable idea that Mary has to be purer than pure sexually.

James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book, after our Lord's passion at **once ordained by the apostles bishop of Jerusalem**,... Hegesippus who lived near the apostolic age, in the fifth book of his Commentaries, writing of James. says 'After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made **head of the Church at Jerusalem.**'

Likewise, Epiphanius, a bishop in the late 300s, writes of James in his *Panarion* 29.3.4. He says that "James having been ordained at once the **first** bishop, he who is called the brother of the Lord.... [W]e find as well that he is of David's stock through being Joseph's son...."<sup>5</sup> To the same effect is Clement of Alexandria, who said the apostles did not pick from their own number "because the savior [already] had specifically honored them, but [instead] chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem."<sup>6</sup>

There is thus no question that James is the original head bishop of the church of Christ. He was appointed by the twelve apostles themselves. Acts ch. 15 gives witness to this, as well as *all* ancient histor-

**"The Lord's brother was Holy from his birth. Everyone from the Lord's time till our time has called him the Righteous." Hegesippus (quoted in Eusebius E.H. 2.23)**

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4. The concept of *bishop* in those days was a person whose principal function was to officiate and give a sermon at church gatherings (besides having authority over sibling churches in the *same city*). We learn this by the evidence of the *Canons of Hippolytus* (ed. Paul F. Bradshaw)(Grove Books, 1987) which discusses church offices and functions in an Egyptian church sometime between 311 and 400. Hippolytus does not mention pastors, ministers, or priests. The only other officers were elders and deacons. Deacons gave sermons sometimes.

ical sources. Thus, contrary to a popular misconception, Peter was not the bishop of the Christian church when it first began. Rather, as Acts chapter 15 depicts, in the early period Peter speaks but then everyone waits for James to decide the issue.

This is not to detract from Peter's important role either. Around 42 A.D., ten years into James' service as bishop over Jerusalem, Peter founded a church at Rome.

Peter was, in effect, its first bishop.<sup>7</sup> (Every city in Christendom had its own bishop. Thus, Peter was *de facto* bishop at Rome even if some bishop lists omit his name.) By the same token, Peter's position at Rome ten years into James' primary position at Jerusalem does not detract from James' role.

While scholars did not initially appreciate Professor Eisenman's resurrecting these historical references about James outlined above, renown Christian scholars have now come to Eisenman's defense. They acknowledge it was James, not Peter, who *actually* first led the church from Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Joseph was in the Davidic line, not Mary. Thus, James was born through the seed of Joseph. Epiphanius says James was picked as bishop because he shared the Davidic blood-line. Consequently ***Joseph must be the father of James***. Could Mary *not* be his physical birth-mother? It is possible but not plausible. Either Joseph must have been previously married or Mary predeceases him. The latter alternative makes no sense. When Mary is still very much alive, the townspeople ask about Jesus and his brother James. In Matthew 13:55-56, the townspeople of Nazareth ask: "Is not his brothers ***James*** and Joseph and Simon and Judas [*i.e.*, Jude]?" Thus, the only other possibility where Mary was not James' mother is if Joseph had children prior to marrying Mary. Yet, the picture of the flight to Egypt mentions only Jesus as their son at that time. Consequently, James was born of Joseph and Mary. There is no sin in Mary having sex with her husband. (See Song of Solomon.) In Jewish custom, it was virtuous and appropriate to have children. It is wrong to imply married sex is sin.

6. Clement of Alexandria, *Hypostases*, Bk. 6, cited by Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (trans. ed. G.A. Williamson) (Penguin: 1965) at 72.



The importance of this history is it proves why James was the *right person* to write a letter to Christians at Ephesus for a trial. As head bishop, he was the one to guide them on how to evaluate Paul's doctrines. James was the voice of what was *orthodox* in the church at that time.

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*Luther's Admission of James' Direct Conflict with Paul*

The primary proof that the Epistle of James is directed at Paul is the clarity of the contradiction over faith and works. On this point, the contradiction by James of Paul is pervasive, thorough, and unmistakable. James certainly claims salvation is not by faith alone. James says that one is justified by works. He gives several examples. He uses Paul's favorite example of Abraham. James quotes and re-analyzes Genesis 15:6 to reach a contrary conclusion to that of Paul. No gloss can legitimately efface James' point. Paul clearly says the opposite. (Rom. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:6 *et seq.*)

James begins his message on faith and works at James 2:14-25. James 2:17 reads: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James asks rhetorically "can

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7. Peter was crucified in Rome in 67 A.D. during the reign of Nero. Eusebius says that this was after coming to Rome twenty-five years earlier. (Eusebius, *The Chronicle*.) Peter thus arrived at Rome about 42 A.D. Several sources claim Peter was the first bishop of Rome prior to Paul's arrival. However, two more ancient Christian sources—the *Constitution of the Apostles* (ca. 200 A.D.) 7:46 and Origen (*Haer.*3.3.3)—in their lists of the bishops of Rome begin with Linus. *Constitution* says he was appointed by Paul. However, Paul did not arrive in Rome, according to Jerome, until 25 years after Jesus' resurrection. This means Paul arrived sometime after around 57 A.D. (Jerome, *Lives of Famous Men*, ch. V.) Peter apparently was acting bishop *without ordination* of the church he founded at Rome until Paul in 57 A.D. arrives. Then in Peter's absence, Paul appoints a bishop—Linus. The *Constitution* then recordJ/T

such faith save?” which calls for a negative answer. Thus, faith without works (in context, *works of charity*), James says, cannot save.

What few commentators like to note is James’ words on *faith and works* are directly based on Matthew 25:30-46. In this Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, the dividing line between the saved and lost, as Jesus tells it, is whether one did works of charity to his brethren. Jesus requires the very same acts of crucial charity that James cites—provision of food, water, and clothes. (For further discussion, see page 201 *et seq.*) James then cites example after example to prove that works justify. He concludes “man is justified by works and not by faith alone” [*i.e.*, a faith that is alone]. (James 2:24.) This is discussed in more depth later on in this chapter in the topic “James on Faith and Works” on page 249.

The stark contrast between James and Paul was evident to a luminary as great as Luther. He writes of James’ epistle:

In a word, he [James] wanted to guard against those who relied *on faith without works*, but was unequal to the task in spirit, thought, and words. He mangles the Scriptures and thereby *opposes Paul* and all Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

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8. When Professor Eisenman first reminded people about James’ role, the response was very hostile. Eisenman was accused of “contradicting the New Testament” which supposedly “depicts Jesus’ successor as Peter.” (See “Book About Brother of Jesus Stirs Up Furor,” *L.A. Times* (June 14, 1997) Metro, at 4.) Other professors claimed Eisenman’s views on James were “marginal.” He is not even coming from “left field,” but “from over the fence.” *Id.* Yet, Eisenman’s view is the only conclusion supported in history. Professor Eisenman now has allies willing to defend him, including the renown Christian scholar Ben Witherington III, in *The Brother of Jesus* (N.Y.: Harper Collins, 2003) at 89-211.
  9. “Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude (1522),” from the *American Edition of Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963) Vol. 35 at 395-399.

Another time, Luther was even more blunt and somewhat humorous when he said:

Many sweat hard at reconciling James with Paul... but unsuccessfully. 'Faith justifies' [Paul] stands in flat contradiction to 'Faith does not justify' [James 2:24]. If anyone can harmonize these sayings, I'll put my doctor's cap on him and let him call me a fool.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, indeed James is going directly after Paul's teachings on salvation. He is proving them, in his mind, to be false. The contrast is stark and blunt. There is no rational basis to imagine James intends to do something other than correct a perceived false teaching by *none other* than Paul.

What aids this conclusion is that this correction process continues throughout James' Epistle. The fact the entire epistle continues in anti-Paul directions therefore heightens the probability that James' Epistle was aimed at Paul. Before reviewing each of those smaller corrections by James of Paul, let's explore the larger conflict whether salvation can be by a *faith that lacks works*. James' points are so obviously aimed at Paul that it bespeaks this Epistle served as a road map in a trial against Paul.

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### *James on Faith and Works*

Paul teaches that one can be justified by faith without works. (Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16.)<sup>11</sup> James taught the exact opposite in James chapter two. Faith without works cannot justify and cannot save.

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10.W. G. Kummel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1972) at 26.

James is relying upon Jesus for his position. For Jesus taught the very same thing as James, using the same charitable works test. Jesus says such works were necessary to save you in Matt. 25:30-46. James says you need these identical works to add to faith to be justified. (James 2:14 *et seq.*) The works-of-charity-as-necessary-for-salvation formula is merely a repeat of Isaiah 58:5-8.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Jesus and James are saying nothing novel. Paul is the one staking out a novel claim that runs against the revealed word of God. Paul is claiming salvation must never turn on adding works to faith. Paul claims if you do so, you commit a heresy. You are making salvation depend on putting God in your debt—God owes you salvation. (Rom. 4:4.)

**“The greatest danger zone in evangelical thinking is that most believe that because no works are required to reconcile us to God, no works are necessary to get us to heaven!”**  
Pastor Reimar Schultze (citing the three judgment parables of Matt. 25)

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11. Romans 4:5 states: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (KJV). This clearly says you are justified by faith even if you have no works. Paul says the same thing in Galatians 2:16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law... [E]ven 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.”
12. The same message is in Isaiah 58:5-8 (NLT). God tells the people that “you humble yourselves *by going through the motions*” (v. 5) but what God wants is for “you to share your food with the hungry and welcome the poor wanderer into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them.” (v. 6-7). Then quite clearly, God says: “If you do these things, ***your salvation will come like the dawn.***” (v. 8.) Isaiah means mere verbal expression of faith or even humility is not enough. *Action* must follow. It is not optional or merely forensic proof of an already completed salvation. Paul’s view is at odds with Isaiah whom we know was inspired.

Paul justified his conclusion based on Genesis 15:6 where God's promise in Genesis 15:5 was reckoned by Abraham as righteousness. In the Hebrew, Abraham, not God, is clearly the actor *reckoning* something as righteousness. However, Paul interpreted the verse to mean God imputed righteousness to Abraham based on faith. From this Paul deduced salvation based on Abraham's faith alone. (Gal. 3:6-9; Romans 4:3.)

Paul is thus claiming Genesis 15:6 is about Justification by Faith. As we will discuss below, however, this verse lends no support at all, just as James is asserting, to the concept of justification by faith alone. Paul was misled by an erroneous translation in the Septuagint (247 B.C.) of the Hebrew of Genesis 15:6.

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*Justification in Abraham's Life: James and Paul at Odds*

In Young's, Genesis 15:6 reads: "And he believed [*emn*] in the Lord; and **He** counted it to **him** for righteousness." In the original Hebrew, however, this more correctly says "And he [Abram] believed the Lord, and [**he**, *i.e.*, **Abram**] reckoned it [*i.e.*, the promise of blessing in Gen. 15:5] to Him as justice." It had nothing to do with God reckoning anything to Abraham based on faith. It was always about how Abraham viewed God's blessing in Genesis 15:5.

As the evangelical scholar Victor Hamilton points out, the Young's capitalization effort misleads you if you followed normal Hebrew syntax and ignored Paul's spin of the passage. This is because the *He* with a capital *h* is an interpolation of what is *assumed* to be present. *He* is actually missing. When the *he* is missing, under normal rules of Hebrew, the *he* that must be interpolated is borrowed from the subject of the preceding clause, namely *Abram*. Because this starts as "he [*i.e.*, Abram] believed the Lord," it must finish "he [Abram] counted it as righteousness to Him." It was wrong for the YLT to capitalize the *he* in the second part so it read "**He**

[God] counted it to *him* as righteousness.” Rather, it should have been “*he* [Abram] counted it to *Him* as righteousness/justice.”

In Professor Victor P Hamilton’s *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans 1990), we read in Vol. I at 425:

The second part of this verse records Yahweh’s response to Abram’s exercise of faith: ‘he credited it to him as righteousness.’ But even here there is a degree of ambiguity. Who credited whom? Of course, one may say that the NT settles the issue, for Paul expressly identifies the subject as God and the indirect object as Abram (Rom. 4:3).<sup>13</sup> ***If we follow normal Hebrew syntax, in which the subject of the first clause is presumed to continue into the next clause if the subject is unexpressed, then the verse’s meaning is changed...*** Does *he*, therefore, continue as the logical subject of the second clause? ***The Hebrew of the verse certainly permits this interpretation***, especially when one recalls that *sedāqa* means both ‘righteousness’ (a theological meaning) and ‘justice’ (a juridical meaning). The whole verse could then be translated: “Abram put his faith in Yahweh, and *he* [Abram] considered it [the promise of seed(s)] justice.”

Thus, in the Hebrew original version of this verse, it had nothing to do with justification of Abraham *by God* based on faith. It was Abraham counting the promise of God in

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13. This is implied by Paul from the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures circa 250 B.C. Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6 both have “*it* was counted unto him for righteousness.” This is the Septuagint translation. Thus, Paul is reading into the ambiguity spawned by the Septuagint translation which has *it* as the subject of *counted*.

Genesis 15:5 as justice by God. Professor Hamilton was being honest despite how a true translation would upset Hamilton's own Protestant theology.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, even if *He* was the subject of *counted*, as the YLT renders it, then the *it* which is the object of *counted* would likely mean *faith*. The *faith* would be what is deemed *righteousness*, not Abraham. Abraham's faith would be deemed a righteous deed. This matches the Jewish view that faith can be described as a work.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is plausible to consider that every time you trust or believe in God despite reason to doubt Him, you perform a work that pleases God.

The fact that faith (not Abraham) would be the best alternative of what is imputed to be righteousness is clearly seen by comparing Genesis 15:6 with Psalm 106:30-31. Phinehas' action of killing the wicked was "counted to him as righteousness." In Hebrew, those words in Psalm 106:30-31 are identical to Genesis 15:6. In context, Psalm 106 means the act of killing wicked people was reckoned an act of righteousness. It did not imply any kind of salvific justification of Phinehas. Thus, one should not read any salvific justification of Abraham into the identical expression in Genesis 15:6. At best, it could be Abraham's faith was a righteous deed. It would be reckoned as righteousness. Therefore, even if we viewed the *he* who is reckoning to be God, the better view would be that *faith*, not Abraham, was deemed righteous.

#### **The Misleading Septuagint Greek Translation of 247 B.C.**

In 247 B.C., the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, and is known as the Septuagint. Jewish scholars acknowledge "the Septuagint was translated by *very bad*

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14. Victor P. Hamilton's background is formidable. He is Professor of Bible and Theology at Asbury College. He has a B.A. from Houghton College 1963, a B.D. from Asbury Theological Seminary 1966; a Th.M. Asbury Theological Seminary 1967, an M.A., Brandeis University 1969; and a Ph.D. Brandeis University 1971. Hamilton's commentary is based on his complete translation of Genesis itself.

*translators*” and “very often the [Septuagint] translators *did not even know what they were reading* and created nonsensical sentences by translating word for word.” (Nehemiah Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua vs. Greek Jesus* (Jerusalem: 2006) at 33-34.)

Paul swallowed these errors in the Septuagint time and time again. Most important, Paul was misled by the highly ambiguous translation of Genesis 15:6 in the Septuagint Greek translation of 247 B.C. Paul quotes it twice. (Romans 4:3; Gal.3:6.)

First, the Septuagint was missing *it* altogether as the direct object of *counted* in the verse. The Septuagint error made the verse now ambiguous. What was being *counted* as righteousness? Abraham, the faith or the promise of Genesis 15:5? The Septuagint aggravates the error by a second major mistake in translation of the verse.

The Septuagint next erred by revising the verb involved. The Septuagint tense in Greek for *counted* (elōgisthê) is in the third person singular aorist passive indicative. This means *was counted*. While the third person means the

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15. To Jews, Abraham’s faith was just another work. (C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburg, T. & T. Clark LTD, 1975) Vol. 1 at 229.) However, one cannot be sure this is true Biblically from the single ambiguity in Genesis 15:6. Some try to prove faith can be a work from what Jesus says in John 6:29: “This is the **work** of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (KJV) The translation, however, is misleading by addition of punctuation and the wrong verb tense. *Robertson’s Word Pictures* points out, citing Westcott, the verse uses a present active subjunctive for *pisteuo*, meaning “that you may keep on believing” (trusting). Thus, literally Jesus says “This is the work of God that you may keep on believing on Him whom He sent.” In this usage, Jesus means by *this* Himself (including His ministry) is the work of God presented so that you *may* believe. The Greek is *ho theos*, “work of God,” not “work required by God.” When the subjunctive tense *may believe* is properly revealed, it rules out the typical interpretation. For the subjunctive makes it impossible to believe God’s work is that you merely only *may believe*. Rather, in context, it means Jesus is inviting them to accept Himself as “this is the work of God” which God presents so “they **may** keep on believing/trusting.” Thus, we cannot rely upon John 6:29 to prove faith can be a work.



subject could be *he*, *she* or *it*, in context, the most likely subject is *it*. This is because the *passive* form of the verb *count*—*was counted*—reads awkwardly if any subject other than *it* is used. Thus, it makes little sense to say *he was counted to himself*. Thus, the KJV correctly reflects the Greek Septuagint, which Paul relied upon. However, if the KJV is correct, the translation flaw by the Septuagint is self-evident. **The *he* as the subject of *counted* in the original Hebrew has been erased, and now *it* is the subject.** This leaves who is doing the *counting* as ambiguous in the Septuagint. “It was counted to him...” Perhaps it is God or Abraham doing the counting. However, in the original Hebrew, as Hamilton notes, normal Hebrew syntax says it was Abraham doing the reckoning, not God.

Thus, in 247 B.C., the Septuagint launched a highly ambiguous version of Genesis 15:6, omitting the *it* as the object of *counted*, and changing the subject of *counted* from *he* to *it*. Paul got sucked into these ambiguities, like a vortex.

### Post-Septuagint Commentaries within Judaism

Because of the Septuagint flaws, commentators within Judaism post-dating the Septuagint understood God was imputing a righteousness to Abraham. However, these same commentators believed it was based on Abraham's *faithful obedience*, not merely faith. This faithfulness preceded Genesis 15:6. Abraham did not suddenly *believe* in Genesis 15:6 and become *justified* for the first time.

Paul, by contrast, in Romans chapters 3-4 regarded Abraham as still a sinner who experienced his first justification by the mere *believing* recorded in Genesis 15:6.

The contrary Jewish understanding of Genesis 15:6 predating Paul is best exemplified by 1 Maccabees 2:52 (135 B.C.). This was written in Greek.<sup>16</sup> The following allusion to Genesis 15:6 obviously derives from the Septuagint Greek translation. Maccabees 2:52 says “Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed to him for righ-

teousness?” This has *it* as the subject of *counted*, and thus tracks the Septuagint version, not the original Hebrew. More to the point, this reading viewed the Septuagint Genesis 15:6 as teaching it was *faithful obedience* that led to an imputed righteousness. As Gathercole comments, “Here it is faithfulness under temptation that leads to his being granted a state of righteousness.”<sup>17</sup> It was not faith that originally caused the imputation of righteousness, as Paul claimed. This must be true from a Biblical perspective as well. Otherwise, one has no explanation for all God’s earlier promises and blessings on Abraham, including the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 *et seq.*

Or must we succumb to a Pauline view that God did all this prior to Genesis 15:6 because Abraham was an unjustified sinner whom God wanted to impress to the point of *faith*? I think not. And I am in good company. The Christian scholars who address this hard question agree that Abraham had to be justified prior to Genesis 15:6.

#### **What the Bible Teaches About Abraham’s Status At This Point**

The Hebrew Bible does not depict Abraham as an unjustified sinner until the believing on the Lord mentioned in Genesis 15:6. This fact has not escaped thoughtful Christian scholars. In fact, such a notion that Abraham was a lost soul until Genesis 15:6 (implied by Paul in Romans chs.3-4) is ludicrous. James B. Coffman, a conservative scholar in the Church of Christ tradition, pointed this out about Genesis 15:6 in his famous commentary on the ‘Old Testament.’ First, Coffman derides the view of this verse which Paul is under-

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16.1 Maccabees was written in Greek, although it shows traces of use of Semitic (Hebrew or Aramaic) idiom. (“Books of Maccabees,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=18&letter=M> (last accessed 5-30-06).)

17. Simon J. Gathercole. *Where Is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) at 51.

stood in Romans chapters 3-4 to assert. "One may only be astounded at the amount of nonsense written about this verse, which is hailed as the plan of salvation for the sinners of all ages, some even claiming that Abram was 'saved by faith only' ...." Finally, Coffman concludes:

It is absolutely impossible properly to observe this place [*i.e.*, Gen. 15:6] as the record of a new covenant. Gen. 12:1f contains the embryo of all that is given here. Therefore, this chapter has a recapitulation and further explanation of the... [promises] he received in good faith, and... ***had already demonstrated his faith by OBEDIENCE....***

As Whiteside, a scholar of great discernment, exclaimed:

'One of the strangest things in all the field of Bible exegesis is the contention so generally made that this language refers to the justification of Abraham ***as an alien sinner***. It seems to be taken for granted that up to the time spoken of in this verse, Abraham was an unforgiven, condemned sinner....The facts [from Scripture] are all against such a supposition.'<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Paul's contrary thesis in chapters three and four of Romans that Abraham was justified by his faith alone (first experienced in Genesis 15:6) is pure nonsense. Paul wants us to see Abraham became the father of all who believe by implying he was transformed from sinner to a justified saint *only* by the step of believing. (See Rom. 3:9-10, all have sinned; Romans 4:1-5, 10-18, Abraham first justified by faith, and thus becomes father of all who believe.) However, Paul's

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18.Coffman cites R. L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Saints at Rome* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Manney Company, 1945) at 89-90.

notion totally contradicts what is clearly implied from Scripture, namely how Abraham must have been justified prior to Genesis 15:6.

Paul also turns a mere promise to Abram in Genesis 12:2 and 15:5 and the faith it spawned in 15:6 into a covenant that we inherit. However, this overlooks entirely the covenant God actually made with Abram was in Genesis 17:1-7, which transformed him into Abraham. The covenant was squarely conditioned on obedience.<sup>19</sup> Only after Abraham died did God declare Abraham had kept the covenant faithfully and then God declared He would keep His side of the covenant.<sup>20</sup>

Why did Paul lend support to such nonsense that Abraham was justified by faith and that Genesis 15:6 was the Abrahamic covenant we inherit? As mentioned before, the ambiguities in the Septuagint Genesis 15:6 sucked Paul in, and led him to err.

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*James Likewise Sees Paul's Error on Abraham's Justification*

James, in his exposition of the very same verse, Genesis 15:6, still has the traditional interpretation of the Greek Septuagint in mind. God had made a new hard-to-believe promise to Abraham about offspring in his old age. (Gen. 15:5.) Yet Abraham trusted God's promise. *At that point*, this trust was simply just another good characteristic of Abraham. It merely added to the status of justification that Abraham *already* enjoyed. Because James assumed justification can be lost, to know how Abraham was justified in the sense of final

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19. God said Abraham's Covenant is an "eternal covenant" for all generations (Gen. 17:7). God said He "will" create such a covenant only if Abraham would first "walk before me blamelessly." (Gen. 17:1)

20. After Abraham was dead, God declared Abraham had been obedient to all His "law, commandments and statutes," and then affirmed He was about to institute His end of the covenant with Isaac. (Gen 26:4-5.)

salvation, James must look ahead. That issue depends crucially on the final test where Abraham offered up Isaac in Genesis 22. Thus, James understood the faith of Genesis 15:6 as part of the justification process. However, if you want to know how God measured Abraham's final justification, then James implies that you look at how he did on the last test, not at the test of his *faith alone*. (James 2:21, 23.)

James starts by quoting Genesis 15:6 from the Septuagint.<sup>21</sup> Then James explains Genesis 15:6 opposite of what Paul sees there. James says "see that by works a man is justified and not faith alone." (James 2:23-24.) Those commentators influenced by Paul, and those who attempt to translate Genesis 15:6 to match Paul's thoughts, are left mystified. They gasp: 'How can James say this in light of what is contained in Genesis 15:6?'

However, James' understanding lines up precisely with the pre-Christian interpretation of Genesis 15:6, in particular the quote from Maccabees referenced above. To repeat, the non-canonical book of 1 Maccabees written in 135 B.C. says at 2:52: "Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed to him for righteousness?"<sup>22</sup> This verse is precisely what James alludes to in James 2:21. James even phrased it almost identically: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?"

Now combine the parallel between Maccabees and James to see what you find: 'was not Abraham found *faithful in temptation*, *i.e.*, justified by works, and that faithfulness, *i.e.*, offering up Isaac on the altar, was imputed to Abraham as righteousness?' Maccabees and James thus both say Genesis 15:6 is not the final verdict. It was an earlier step. If Abraham

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21. James' epistle reads similar to the Septuagint. This Septuagint translation became the accepted version by most, and James apparently elects not to debate the translation.

22. J. W. Roberts, *The Letter of James* (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1977) at 92.

had failed the test of Genesis 22, and not offered up Isaac, James is saying that then Abraham would be lost. But Abraham passed the test, and it is this later obedience which *justifies* Abraham. The earlier faith, taken *alone*, could not have saved Abraham. If he had failed in Genesis 22, then faith *alone* would have failed him as a means of final justification. Cf. Ezek. 33:12 *et seq.*

How could James reach this conclusion based on Genesis 15:6? He saw, like 1 Maccabees saw, that Genesis 15:6 is not actually about faith, but about faithfulness. It is not about *believing*, but justification by *faithful* obedience. This is because James was using the Hebrew concept of *faith* to construe the Greek word for *faith*. In Hebrew, *faithfulness* cannot ever be separated from *faith*, contrary to what *faith* could mean in Greek.<sup>23</sup> Thus, James knew the underlying Hebrew had to mean no less than that Abraham was faithful to God, and it was reckoned as righteousness.

Therefore, because Moses in writing Genesis 15:6 could not separate *faith* and *faithfulness*, a Jewish mind would understand it from a Hebrew perspective. Justification for Abraham would crucially depend on how Abraham's life finished, not how it started.

Thus, James saw the faith in Genesis 15:6 as a small step on a long road. He thus was exposing the error of how Paul was reading Genesis 15:6. James in James 2:21-24 saw *faith* as *faithfulness* in Genesis 15:6. James, like the Maccabees' interpretation, saw that the act of faith in Genesis 15:6 was good, but more important was Abraham's later faithful action of offering up Isaac in Genesis chapter 22.

Some Paulinists try to claim James is not talking about the topic of *salvific* justification, in order to avoid James' criticism of Paul's ideas. However, James is using *justified* in the way Paul was trying to spin Genesis 15:6. James uses the identical Greek word for "justified" that Paul used.

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23. Later, at page 270, we discuss that in Hebrew, unlike Greek, *faith* could not be distinct from *faithfulness*.

He is thereby responding to Paul's interpretation of Genesis 15:6. James is saying that if you address the issue of justification that counts eternally, then Genesis 15:6 is not sufficient. Faith alone will not suffice. Nor was Abraham justified for the first time *as a person* in Genesis 15:6 by adopting a mental belief (which James derides). Abraham already had a long period of faithful obedience to God up to that point. The faith of Genesis 15:6 was just another step in what justified Abraham. However, if you want to find the moment of final justification that counts, it must come *after* faith. For Abraham, his continuing faithful obedience culminates in Genesis 22. Such faithful obedience—both before and at the moment of the offering of Isaac—is what keeps on justifying the man, not faith alone. Accordingly, James concludes that “man is justified by works and not by faith alone” [*i.e.*, a faith that is alone]. (James 2:24.)<sup>24</sup>

#### James on Paul's Idea of Faith Alone

Just as Paul's misreading of Genesis 15:6 led to a faith alone salvation (Romans 4:4-6), James' correction of how to read Genesis 15:6 led to a correction of Paul's faith alone doctrine. James says in the same context that a faith without deeds does not justify and cannot save. James says this precisely in James 2:14, at direct odds with Paul's teachings.

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24. James links the lack of justification with the concept of incomplete works. (Jesus did likewise in the Parable of the Sower & his letter to the church of Sardis in Revelation chapter 2.) James does so by saying in James 2:20-24 first that Abraham's “faith was working with his works” (*synergei tois ergois*). Then James says Abraham's faith was *made complete by works*. “The verb *eteletiothe* means ‘perfected’ (or ‘brought to maturity’).” (Stulac, *James, supra*, at 115.) Stulac confesses that the Scriptural promise of justification that Paul ascribes to faith, James says is “to be fulfilled by works.” *Id.* Thus, James says, like Jesus says, that there is no justification without faith completed by works.

Stulac explains this verse in his commentary entitled *James* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993). James makes his point plain in James 2:14 by means of the rhetorical question “can such faith [without works] save?” The question calls for a negative answer. Stulac says James means that faith without works is useless for “salvation itself.” (*Id.*, at 108.) Peter Davids, another specialist on *James*, agrees. He says James means the “use [-lessness of faith without works] takes on serious consequences, for it is salvation which is at stake.”<sup>25</sup>

Stulac explains that while James is not saying works alone without faith saves, James rejects the idea that “faith *by itself*, without the accompanying actions” can save. (*Id.* at 109.) Stulac (like others who admire James) tries to find ways to make Paul consistent with James. However, mincing words cannot work. Stulac concedes James “uses the same terms for deeds (*erga*) as Paul.” (*Id.*, at 111.) The words are identical between Paul and James. However, the thoughts are at odds. There is no question that James means faith plus works justifies; faith alone does not.<sup>26</sup>

Luther was blunt about there being a conflict between James and Paul. He said James contradicts Paul. Luther was right. This is what further proves the Epistle of James was likely a document used to try Paul. As a matter of Biblical interpretation, the erroneous Septuagint misled Paul. As Hamilton’s expert knowledge of Hebrew tells us, it was Abraham who was reckoning to God the promise of Genesis 15:5 as an act of righteousness. However, even if the Septuagint were correct, Psalm 106:30-31 likewise shows James (not

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25. Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: New International Greek Commentary* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982) at 120.

26. Paulinists try to spin James as saying works *prove* justification rather than works *justify*. This is a distortion of James. He explicitly says *works justify*. For discussion, see Richard Lusk in his *Future Justification for Doers of the Law* (2003).



Paul) was correct about Genesis 15:6.<sup>27</sup> The Bible never taught justification by faith alone without deeds. Paul's misinterpretation of Genesis 15:6 is a serious mistake.

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*What About Justification By Works in the Hebrew Scriptures?*

How far off is James from the Bible itself? The Bible taught long before James that obedience to the Law (not faith alone) brings justification. Deuteronomy 6:25 clearly states:

***And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us. (ASV).***

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27. Of course, if you believe both James and Paul are inspired, you will hear attempts to reconcile the two. Stulac is an example. He contends "James is not attempting to refute Paul." (*Id.* at 114.) How so? Stulac concedes James viewed salvation apart from works as impossible. Faith and works are an integral unity in the salvation formula. (*Id.* at 110.) While most view Paul as teaching salvation by faith alone apart from any works, Stulac disagrees. He claims Paul teaches salvation cannot be by "rituals" or "acts of obedience" alone. (*Id.* at 111.) In other words, Stulac claims Paul teaches salvation is *not by works alone*. If true, then Paul and James are saying the same thing, and Stulac would be correct. However, Paul and James are diametrically apart. Stulac has ignored Paul's *actual* teachings. Paul makes it clear that if you are saved "by grace *it is no more by works.*" (Romans 11:6.) This is even clearer in Rom 4:4-5: "(4) Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. (5) But ***to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.***" This verse 5 clearly says that if you believe, and have no works, your faith alone justifies you. Hence Paul excludes the very possibility that Stulac's solution proposes to make Paul fit James. Paul teaches faith alone saves. James teaches to the contrary that faith alone without works does not save. ***If you believe Paul is an apostle, and inspired, you can see he would make a heretic out of James.*** That means the twelve apostles appointed as their leader (James) a *lost* man. This is an implausible solution.

Here *righteousness* is imputed to the person if we observe all God's commands. The Protestants Keil & Delitzsch in their *Commentary on the Old Testament* agree that this verse means precisely this:

[O]ur righteousness will consist in the observance of the law; we shall be **regarded** and treated **by God as righteous**, if we are diligent in the observance of the law.

Is this obedience of which Deuteronomy speaks impossible? No. God in Deuteronomy 30:11 then assures us obedience "is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off." (ASV.) Apostle John likewise says: "And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:2-3.) As Jesus too says, "my burden is light." (Matt. 11:29-30.) It is a Pauline misconception that obedience is a task beyond our ability. (Romans 7:24.) God assures us we can do this.

Paul directly contradicts Deuteronomy 6:25 by Paul's claim that righteousness (justification) is *not* imputed from obedience. In fact, Paul tries to prove the futility of maintaining a righteousness before God by obeying the Law. Paul writes:

[Y]et knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law.... (Gal. 2:16) Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident. (Gal. 3:11).

Prior to Paul's confused analysis, the Bible gave us clear teachings on how to understand the interplay of obedience, sin, repentance, good works, and grace. The Bible teaches that once you sin, all your good works are forgotten and become as "filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6.) This is clearly articulated in Ezekiel 33:12. This is a passage every Christian should memorize. It explains that when the righteous transgress even one command of the Law, then all their righteousness is forgotten. However, when the sinner repents from sin,

and turns to God, then all his sin is forgiven. Grace is thereby given. To him, complete righteousness is now imputed. Ezekiel 33:12 reads:

The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sinneth. (ASV).

Imputed righteousness is caused by what? Turning from sin and going on the path of righteousness. Thus, staying on that path of righteousness, Deuteronomy 6:25 promises, will maintain an imputed righteousness before God: it “shall be righteousness unto us....”

Imputed righteousness was not by atonement. Atonement was the *payment* for sin. It did not make you righteous, *i.e.*, justify you. Rather, it made *justification* possible in God’s eyes as long as His other standards are satisfied: repentance from sin and turning from sin. Jesus taught this in Matthew 5:23-24, although some translations make it more difficult to see His meaning. Jesus says that before you bring the “sacrifice”<sup>28</sup> (often mistranslated as ‘gift’) to the “sacrifice place”<sup>29</sup> (poorly translated as ‘altar’) make sure you are “reconciled to your brother” who has something against you.

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28. The Greek word is *doron*. It can mean “gift,” but its primary meaning in context is “oblation” (sacrifice) (*Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*.) To assess this word’s meaning, we first look at the Hebrew equivalent. The Hebrew word for *sacrifice* is *minchah* (Hebrew Stg 4503). It came from an unused root meaning to apportion, *i.e.*, bestow; a donation; euphemism tribute; specifically a sacrificial offering (usually bloodless and voluntary). As a noun, this Hebrew word meant “gift, oblation, (meat) offering, present, sacrifice.” The Greek equivalent word is *doron* (Greek Stg 1435): “a present; specially a sacrifice: gift, offering.”

29. The Greek word is *thusiasterion*. It literally means “sacrifice place.” (*Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*.)

Thus, Jesus said receipt of atonement had to be post-poned when there was still an unresolved sin problem between you and someone else. The rabbis always taught repentance from sin must precede your receipt of atonement.

In the Judaism of Jesus' day, there was a ten day period between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement. This ten day period "was designated for seeking forgiveness between individuals."<sup>30</sup> The Mishnah (the Rabbinic commentary) on the Days of Ten stated that for "transgressions that are between a person and his or her neighbor, the Day of Atonement effects atonement *only if one has first appeased his neighbor.*"<sup>31</sup> Jesus simply made this principle a daily one. Atonement could not be pled by one who had not first appeased their neighbor to forgive them of some wrong.

Psalm 32:1, 5 repeats this principle of repentance from sin for forgiveness as the first step.

(1) Blessed is he whose transgression is **for-given**, Whose sin is covered....(5) I acknowledged my sin unto thee, And mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; And thou **forgavest the iniquity of my sin**. Selah

Paulinists decry the promise in Deuteronomy 6:25 and 30:11. In those two verses, God promises justification based on obedience to the Law. God assures us it is not too difficult to do. Paulinism has become so entrenched that if one cites these Hebrew Scriptures as if they were valid, one supposedly not only has a wrong salvation doctrine, but also one misunderstands God. Yet the Paulinist admits this is how God taught salvation in the Law God gave Moses. If we cite this admittedly *inspired* teaching on salvation as possibly still

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30. Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2000) at 123.

31. Quoted in *id.*, at 124.

valid, we have supposedly made God finite. We are accused of blaspheming God even though no one disagrees this was at one time God's plan of salvation.<sup>32</sup>

These same exponents of Paul never take this Pauline attack on Jamesian doctrine to its logical conclusion. If the Paulinists are correct, then the God of Moses was finite and Moses blasphemed God by attributing these words to God that obedience justifies.

What really is afoot is that some have made Paul's words and arguments more important than the words of God *Himself*. The danger of adding to Scripture in violation of the duty in Deuteronomy 4:2 is that God's very promises of justification by repentance and obedience are nullified. Thereby, a new conception of God takes *His* rightful place.

I concur with the Paulinist that a *new God* appears depending on which side of this issue you end up teaching. If you are on James' side, you are looking at God Almighty Yahweh. You have Deuteronomy 6:25 firmly fixed in your mind. However, if you look at it from Paul's side, you have a god who barely resembles the God of Hebrew Scripture. Paul's god teaches it is far too hard to keep the Law. Paul's god says it is fruitless to try to obey the Law as a means of remaining just. Instead, as

**“How do you stay saved? What do you do to stay saved? Nothing! Absolutely nothing.”**

**Charles Stanley  
Saved and Sure  
(Audiocassette  
AW114.)**

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32. The following is a common teaching among Paulinists: “**Blasphemy.** The idea of earning anything from God by one's meritorious works is, strictly speaking, not simply a problem in *soteriology* but in *theology proper*. You are not just saying something about your works, or about sin, if the object of acquisition is salvation from the wrath to come, but you are saying something about God—or rather, about **god**, for **you have made him finite**. Thus, the best corrective to merit legalism is found in Paul's preaching to the pagans, not so much to the circumcision party in the Church.” See, [http://www.hornes.org/justmark/archives/2003\\_09.htm](http://www.hornes.org/justmark/archives/2003_09.htm) (accessed 2005).

Paulinist J. Vernon McGee was fond to say: “He [God] never lets go. Now sit back, relax, and enjoy your salvation.”<sup>33</sup> Paul is the effortless way. James and Jesus provide a way that requires *agonizing effort* to enter. (Luke 13:24, Greek *agonozai*.)

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*What About Justification By Faith in the Hebrew Scriptures?*

Paul quotes the same Psalm 32 which I quote above. (See page 266.) Paul does so to prove justification by faith without repentance. However, when Paul quotes Psalm 32:1 in Romans 4:6, Paul *omits* verse 5 of Psalm 32. That verse makes forgiveness contingent upon repentance from sin. Paul instead quotes Psalm 32:1-2 alone. He uses that passage to prove justification is without obedience to the Law or any action of turning in repentance. For Paul, it is solely by faith, because if anything else is required, then it makes salvation depend on a debt owed by God. (Rom. 4:4.) To prove this, Paul relies on *blatantly out-of-context quotes of Scripture!*<sup>34</sup>

However, Paul forgets that God made a *promise, i.e.,* a debt, that justification would result from obedience to the Law! (Deut. 6:25.) God promised it was not too difficult on our side to do! (Deut. 30:11.) Apostle John reaffirms that truth! (1 John 5:2-3.) So there is nothing contrary to God’s principles of mercy (grace) if I insist justification *thereafter* is owed by God *as a debt*. God says it is a debt. He will pay the debt for that justification, *i.e.,* ultimately He will apply atonement for you. This is why it is called a Covenant!

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33. McGee, *How You Can Have the Assurance of Salvation* (Pasadena: 1976) at 12.

34. Paul does the same in his quotes from Psalm 36 in Romans 3. This out-of-context proclivity of Paul is discussed in S.L. Edgar, “Respect for Context in Quotations from the O.T.,” *New Testament Studies* 9 (1962-63) at 56.

Paul suffers from fallacious reasoning in this regard. He argues a false dichotomy. He says if it is a debt, it is no more of grace. (Rom. 4:4.) Those are not the only two choices. Mercy (grace) only comes into play when you sin. Then forgiveness is given by unmerited favor (grace) to one who is repenting from sin. That is the doctrine of grace in Ezekiel 33:12.

Then is justification distinct and at a different point? Yes, justification is at a different point in Ezekiel 33:12. Justification *follows* repentance (and the receipt of grace). Remaining justified is by staying on the “narrow” path of obedience. God makes a promise, *i.e.*, a debt, to justify you whenever you are staying on the narrow path of obeying Him. (Deut. 6:25.) This is the Covenant promise of God!

Thus, Paul gave us a false set of choices: Paul claimed it either is debt or grace. Rather, it is ***both debt and grace***. They are not mutually exclusive. The Bible says it is debt that God owes you justification when you obey, for He honors His word in Deuteronomy 6:25. God keeps His word (*i.e.*, His covenant). However, it is grace when you disobey, and He will give you unmerited favor for true repentance in Ezekiel 33:12. Both principles of *debt* and *grace* are simultaneously true, but operative at different points.

To arrive at Paul’s different conclusion, Paul quotes passages out of context. As already mentioned, in Romans 4:6, Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 to prove one is justified solely by faith without works of the Law (*i.e.*, obedience to the Law). Yet, Paul omits verse 5. Paul only quotes Psalm 32:1-2 which provides:

(1) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile. (ASV).

Paul then spins this to mean faith alone, without any obedience to the Law, brings salvation. (See Romans 4:6 *et seq.*)

However, as noted above, Paul is quoting out of context. Psalm 32 is not how faith alone leads to imputed righteousness. Such an application is frankly impossible. Rather, in Psalm 32, David has the Ezekiel 33:12 formula in mind. The verses that follow clearly prove it is repentance from sin which leads to initial forgiveness and grace. Psalm 32:3-5, which Paul omits, reads:

(3)...my bones wasted away Through my groaning all the day long. (4)...thy hand was heavy upon me. (5) I **acknowledged my sin unto thee**, And mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, **I will confess my transgressions** unto Jehovah; And **thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin**. Selah

Paul was wrong. James was right.

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### *James Used 'Faith' in the Sense Genesis Used the Word*

In fact, in the Hebrew Scriptures that describe Abraham's alleged justification by faith, Paul misunderstood even there the nature of *faith*. James understood it correctly.

In the Hebrew Scripture, *faith* and *obedience* were inextricably tied to one another. Abraham was not justified by faith without action. Paul was taking *believed* in Genesis 15:6 out-of-context of the entire Hebrew Scripture. In Deuteronomy 9:23, we can see clearly that obedience and faith are inextricably intertwined.

When Yahweh sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then **you rebelled against the**



***commandment*** of Yahweh your God, and ***you didn't believe him, nor listen to his voice.***

Hebrew Scripture thus was teaching that when you disobey God, it means you do not *believe* Him. You do not *hear* Him. Thus, by a corollary, when you obey God, it means you *believe* Him and you *hear* Him. They are inextricably intertwined.

As the *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* explains, *faith* in the Hebrew Scriptures—what it calls the 'Old Testament'—had this dual nature:

[T]he faith of the O[ld] T[estament]...is both trust and surrender to God... it is obedience that assimilates the person....<sup>35</sup>

Abraham did not have faith in God that can exist apart from obeying God's voice. Mental belief apart from obedience is different from the Biblical-meaning of *faith* in the Hebrew Scripture. Works of obedience are never apart from faith, as if they are mere fruit of a tree. Rather, obedience has a synergy with mental belief. Together they form the core meaning of *believing* in Hebrew Scriptures. *Abraham's believing was inextricably intertwined with works of obedience.* See Gen. 26:4-5 ("In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.")

Paul, however, wanted to read Abraham's story in a new way. Paul wanted to draw a line that you could be in disobedience to God's law (in fact abandon it) but still be able to be seen as just due to *belief* mentally in two statements. These two statements were: (1) Jesus is Lord and (2) Jesus was resurrected. See Romans 10:9.

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35. Langevin, Gilles. "Faith," *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*. Ed. (Latourelle, Rene. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994) at 309.

To arrive at this, however, Paul was taking Genesis out-of-context. He was applying the Greek meaning of *pistis* to understand the Hebrew word for *believe* in Genesis 15:6. The Greek word *pistis* can mean a mental assent *apart* from obedience. However, in Genesis 15:6, the opposite meaning for *faith* was conveyed in the original Hebrew. The Hebrew concept of faith did not allow it to *exist* in the absence of obedience. There was no conceptual possibility that *faith* can be separated from *obedience*, as Paul saw it. Instead, *faith* in the sense of mental assent was inextricably *dependent* in Hebrew upon the necessity of a simultaneous turn toward *obedience*. (Deut. 9:23.) This is precisely what James is explaining in James chapter two.

Thus, James' statement that "faith [*i.e.*, *pistis* in Greek] without works" does not save merely was explaining the original Hebrew. James was putting back what was missing in the Greek Septuagint translation. It lacked the nuance which Hebrew implied about *faith* in the life of Abraham. Paul by contrast was explaining a Hebrew word for *believe* by a misleadingly deficient word in Greek—*pistis*. This Greek word sometimes can mean merely *mental assent*. Paul is interpreting Hebrew by a deficient and different Greek word used to translate *faith* in the Septuagint. By contrast, James is putting Gen. 15:6 back in context of the *original* Hebrew.

Accordingly, James teaches the Bible's doctrine on salvation which was at total odds with Paul. James was bringing the discussion back to the lessons of the Hebrew Scriptures. James was aware of the Septuagint translation, but urged us to use the original Hebrew meanings. Paul had relied upon an erroneous translation in the Septuagint of Genesis 15:6. James simply used the Hebrew meaning in the original passages to undermine Paul's doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

*James' Reproof that Faith Without  
Endurance Saves (James 1:12)*

Paul is read by almost everyone today as saying that one is saved even if they do not endure in faith. Paul in Romans 10:11 says that anyone who “trusts in Him will never be put to shame.” Charles Stanley says this *trust* is a singular moment in time. Paul’s doctrine implies we do not have to have an enduring faith to be saved. Rather, we need only believe in a “singular moment in time” in our enduring Lord. (Stanley, *Eternal Security, supra*, at 80-81.)

James 1:12 reproofs this teaching. He says to the contrary:

Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation**;  
for when he hath been approved, he shall  
receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord  
promised to them that love him.

James was merely repeating Jesus’ words. “He who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matt. 10:22.) Jesus explained the lost (“withered away”/dead) includes those who “**believe** for a while” but “in time of temptation fall away.” (Luke 8:13.) Elsewhere, breaking faith by disobedience means one is unsaved. John 3:36 (“He who keeps on believing has eternal life, but he who keeps on *disobeying* the son, the wrath of God continues to remain on him.”)

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36. It is ironic but Paulinist historians recognize this contradiction, and use it to argue the Epistle of James was not written by James. “The far-reaching differences in soteriology indicate that the author of the Letter of James cannot be identical with James the Lord’s brother, who according to Galatians 2:9 gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and explicitly acknowledged his proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles.” (Udo Schnelle *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) at 385-86.) However, this ignores Acts chapter 21 is *after the events* Paul mentions in Galatians 2:9. In Acts chapter 21, James still does not know Paul’s doctrine on the Law. James asks and receives Paul’s implicit reassurances that Paul is not teaching the Law’s abrogation.

### Habakkuk 2:4: What Does It Really Say?

How did Paul establish the contrary view to James? Besides his out-of-context quote of Psalm 32:1-2 and his mistaken view of Genesis 15:6, Paul's faith alone doctrine had one other proof text. This came from Habakkuk. Paul claimed this passage establishes a one-time faith saves, without any endurance in faithful living to the Law. Paul was quoting Habakkuk 2:4. Paul, however, quotes from the erroneous Septuagint translation. This led Paul to a completely erroneous interpretation. Paul in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 states:

For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written [in Habakkuk 2:4], But the righteous shall live by faith. (Romans 1:17) But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. (Gal.3:11 KJV)

Paul was apparently unaware that the Septuagint erred in its Greek translation of the Hebrew original. The key word in Habakkuk is not *faith* (*i.e.*, *pistis* in Greek), but *faithfulness* (*i.e.*, *emunah* in Hebrew). Also, Paul omits a crucial word that appears both in the Septuagint and Hebrew: it is the word *his* before *faithfulness*. Both corrections overturn Paul's intended interpretation. The restoration of these missing pieces establish the *opposite* of what Paul was trying to prove.

H. Ray Dunning, Professor of Theology at Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, Tennessee, did a thorough study on *emunah* and *pistis* in Habakkuk 2:4. Professor Dunning gently shows you they are diametrically different. The professor is certainly normative in his views. He does not show any sign of sympathy with my conclusions about Paul. Yet Professor Dunning is clearly showing that Paul erred in his understanding of Habakkuk 2:4. Here is the fruit of Professor Dunning's study:

*The just shall live by his faith.* The word rendered *faith* is the Hebrew *emunah*, from a verb meaning originally “to be firm,” and is used in the Old Testament in the physical sense of steadfastness (Smith, op. cit., p. 140). Thus the better rendering is “faithfulness.” *Faith* is a word for which, in the New Testament active sense, **the Hebrew has no equivalent**—though the term “believe” is derived from the same root as *emunah*.(IB, VI, 989).<sup>37</sup>

Professor Dunning is explaining that there is a gap in translating *faithfulness* in Hebrew into Greek. The simple concept *faith* in Greek does not work. Thus, the noun *emunah* in Hebrew does not correspond properly to the word *pistis* in Greek, despite the Septuagint making this choice. The Hebrew text therefore means the just shall live by *his faithfulness*. What does *faithfulness* mean?

Professor Dunning gives many Biblical examples of *emunah*'s meaning. He also does not shrink back from pointing out a meaning that disaffirms Paul's interpretation:

*Emunah* is the word used to describe the uplifted hands of Moses, which were *steady* (Exod. 17:12). It is also used of men in charge of money who “dealt faithfully” (II Kings 12:15). It is closely akin, if not identical, to the English idiomatic statement “*Hold steady,*” implying that if one does not “bolt,” the circumstances that surround him will alter. Lehman's suggested meaning of the intention of this exhortation is good: “The righteous Israelite, who remains **unswervingly loyal to the moral precepts, will endure**, although he has to suffer for his principles; whereas the wicked,

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37.H. Ray Dunning, “The Divine Response, Habakkuk 2:4,” *Beacon Hill Commentary* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1966) Vol. 5 at 277-78.

who enjoy a temporary ascendancy through their violation of right, are in the end overthrown and humbled.” (Op. cit., p. 219). (Emphasis added.)

*Emunah* thus means *faithfulness* with its core meaning ‘holding steady, holding firm, holding true to moral precepts.’ This is why for James separating faith and faithfulness made no sense.

Professor Dunning goes on to explain that Paul was led into his erroneous interpretation by relying upon the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew into Greek. The Septuagint renders *emunah* with *pistis*. The professor is thereby making an excuse for Paul’s misapplication. Professor Dunning states:

The Septuagint translated *emunah* by *pistis* (faith). It was this translation which the New Testament writers made use of and thus incorporated the vision of Habakkuk into the very heart of the Christian preaching (kerygma). Paul quotes this clause twice (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) in support of his doctrine of justification by faith. By it he “intends that **single act** of faith by...the sinner secures forgiveness and justification.”

Hence, Professor Dunning is saying Paul has a one-time faith in mind. This fits the Septuagint’s choice of *pistis*. Yet, as the professor already explained, the meaning in Hebrew requires *faithfulness*, which means in context an “unswerving loyalty...to **endure**....”

Paul simply erred.

Thus, once more we see James 1:12, 17 is reproving Paul’s entire notion that a one-time faith saves. Rather, it is the faith that endures times of temptation that will receive the “crown of life.” James brushes aside Paul’s contrary view with one quick jab.

*James Ridicules A Faith Based on Mere  
Mental Assent*

Paul in Romans 10:9 says that part of saving faith is “believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead....” The focus in Paul’s salvation formula is on acknowledgment of two facts: Jesus is Lord and Jesus resurrected from the dead. However, demons surely know and believe both facts. It thus makes no sense that believing just these facts gives you a guarantee that “you shall be saved” without any repentance and obedience to follow. In modern evangelism, Paul’s actual words in his sterile salvation formula in Romans 10:9 are generally ignored. Paul said you were saved if you believed Jesus is Lord and you believed in the fact of the *resurrection of Jesus*. Modern evangelists such as Stanley and Spurgeon must realize how sterile this salvation formula appears upon reflection. Thus, they change the formula to mean one has saving faith if one is “acknowledging the fact you are a *sinner* and Jesus *paid* for your *sins*.” If you accept these facts as true, you are assured that you are “saved.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, that is not Paul’s *true* formula in Romans 10:9.

Whether Paul’s formula or the Stanley-Spurgeon formula, modern evangelism presents this as a decision that you can do in the privacy of your own heart. You do not have to confess it out loud. Otherwise that would be a works-salvation, modern Paulinists teach. Whether we keep to Paul’s for-

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38. Stanley, *Eternal Security, supra*, at 33-35 (trust in Jesus’ payment for sin saves you). Spurgeon’s *The Warrant of Faith* (1863) typifies the modern evangelical sermon. He adds an interesting twist that tries to explain away James’ point in James 2:19. Spurgeon does this by making *faith in faith* alone the *act* that James seeks beyond mere acknowledgment of facts. At first, Spurgeon appears to agree with James. After giving the Pauline gospel, he says: “The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us....” What then must we *do*? Spurgeon then says we must trust in Jesus so we always accept these facts and assure ourselves of salvation by faith alone. Spurgeon required the work of *enduring in a faith in faith alone without works*. This is an obvious self-contradiction.

mula for salvation (*i.e.*, belief in the Lordship and resurrection of Jesus) or the modern formula (*i.e.*, belief in your need for Jesus and the atonement), James ridicules that salvation could be acquired by mere mental assent to facts.

James says that the “demons believe” in God, but they are not thereby saved. James says in 2:19: “Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder.” James then goes on to state works are necessary to add to mental assent to make faith *complete*, as mentioned above. Faith without such works, James relates, is therefore akin to the faith which demons have. It lacks something *essential*.

James is, in fact, recalling events in the gospels themselves. These events prove mere intellectual acceptance that Jesus is divine or Messiah means nothing if they end up being alone. As Pastor Stedman, an evangelical scholar and Pauline thinker, unwittingly states:

Remember that back in the Gospel accounts there were demons that ***acknowledged the deity of the Lord Jesus?*** When he appeared before them they said, ‘We know who you are, the Holy One of God.’ (cf, Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34.) They ***acknowledged*** what the Jews were too blind to see, the full deity of Jesus Christ, as well as his humanity. But, though demons ***acknowledged this, they never confessed it.*** They ***never trusted*** him. They did ***not commit themselves*** to him, they did not *live* by this truth.<sup>39</sup>

Pastor Stedman does not realize how this demonstrates Paul’s invalidity. Paul said we are saved if we believe in Jesus’ resurrection and that Jesus is Lord. (Romans 10:9.) The demons not only believe both facts but are personally

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39.Ray C. Stedman, *When Unbelief is Right* (1967), reprinted at <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/1john/0161.html> (last visited 2005).



knowledgeable about them. The demons pass Paul's test for salvation. Stanley and Spurgeon also say that to be saved you must believe in the atonement and that you sin. Demons likewise know Jesus died to atone for sin. *Demons would admit they sin against God and they are proud of it!* Thus, demons could be saved under either Paul's criteria (Romans 10:9) or even Stanley's or Spurgeon's criteria for salvation.

Now you can see that James 2:19 is a perfect response to Paul's teaching in Romans 10:9. James ridicules that formula by saying mere mental assent by demons to truths about God would not save them any more than it *alone* would save you. James' response in 2:19 is perfectly adapted to respond to Paul's salvation formulas. Paul emphasized *mental assent* as what saves you. James says this notion is *wrong*.

Again, the Epistle of James appears perfectly adapted to be used at a trial of Paul.

#### Jesus' View on Works: Forensic Test or Intrinsic Requirement?<sup>40</sup>

TABLE 7.

Servant, Branch, Tree	Works Intrinsically Necessary
"branch in me" (John 15:2)	"bear much fruit if remain in me...If not remain in me, it is a branch that is withered, thrown outside and is burned." (John 15:5-6.)
"his Lord" (Matt. 25:26)	"Evil and lazy slave!...It was necessary you give my money to bankers, and having come I would receive mine with interest...Throw the worthless servant into outer darkness...[where there is] weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 25:26-30.)
"Every tree" (Matt. 7:19)	"that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and thrown in the fire." (Matt. 7:19.)

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**Was James Writing His Epistle For A Trial of Paul?**

**deceived me**, and by it slew me. (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

(13) Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (ASV)

What is Paul saying? First, Paul very clearly says that he would not have known to lust after women had he not been commanded against doing so. Prior to that time, “without the law, sin was dead.” (v. 8).

Paul then comes about this from the other side, making his point more shocking. Prior to the law, Paul says “I was alive without the law” (*i.e.*, spiritually alive), but then the law came, and “sin revived and I died.” (v. 9) Paul is clearly saying the law brought sin to life in him. Without the law, he was living sinless and spiritually, without any temptation to sin. However, when the law came and he read its prohibition, sin, by virtue of the law’s commands inciting in him to lust, occurred. Paul sinned and spiritually died.

James must have scratched his head reading this. How can anyone attribute to God and His law the temptation to sin? Yet, Paulinists defend and explain that is precisely what Paul means.<sup>41</sup>

Psalm 19:8-9  
“The commandment of Yahweh is pure, **enlightening the heart.**”

However, Paul knows what he is saying, and knows we will object. So Paul twice does a “God forbid hand-waive.” (Rom. 7:7, 13.) Paul takes what he has just said and claims “God forbid” you should think he is saying what he has otherwise clearly said. Yet, despite the *God forbid* message, Paul leaves you, the reader, with only words to support the view that the law tempted him to sin. Listen to the hand-waive in Romans 7:13:

Was then that which is good made death unto me? **God forbid.** But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin **by the commandment** might become exceeding sinful. (ASV).

This quote reveals Paul senses the blasphemy of saying the law “which is good” was “made death to me.” So he says, if you think that were true, *God forbid.* Yet, that is *precisely what Paul has just said*, and then *immediately repeats.* He goes back to what he was saying before, adding the post-script, “by the commandment [*i.e.*, the Law] sin became exceeding sinful.” Paul was not being equivocal on that point. That is what Paul said backwards and now forwards. Paul gives himself an out from making a blasphemous statement by saying that if you think he is saying the law, which is good, “made death to me,” *God forbid.* However, Paul then does **not** explain how



Paul Borden explains Paul “eloquently explains how the law causes us to do the very things we don’t want to do....” (2005) (online sermon).

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41. Paulinists admit Paul claims that reading the Law arouses sin. Paul Borden’s audio online sermon *The Frustration of Doing Good* is an exposition on Romans 7. Borden, an American Baptist, introduces his sermon by saying “the apostle Paul eloquently explains how the law **causes us** to do the very things we don’t want to do—clearly accentuating our need for grace.” Borden is blunt: “Paul says the law **caused his sin** to ‘spring to life’—**makes him want to sin.**” See *Christianity Today* which hosted this sermon in 2005 at <http://resources.christianity.com/ministries/christianitytoday/main/talkInfo.jhtml?id=26945> (last visited 6/2005). Incidentally, Borden’s explanations later contradict Paul, claiming Paul means the Law merely incites rebellion when we are told to **stop the sin we love.** Borden explains we like our ways prior to hearing the Law. When the Law tells us that we are sinning, we continue in our ways rebelliously. In Borden’s spin, the Law did not cause the sin to start. In this manner, Borden’s spin contradicts Paul. For Paul says he did not know to lust for women *until* he read the Law’s command against doing so. Paul says he was previously living spiritually alive. Paulinists spin Paul to prevent exposing his blasphemy.

we are supposed to square what he previously said with his *God forbid* statement. He uses mumbo-jumbo of impenetrable words that you are somehow to think answers your concern:

But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that *sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*.  
(Rom. 7:13.)

Those are Paul's only words to take the sting out of saying the Law tempted him to sin. Rather, it appears to be reinforcing his prior blaming his sin on the Law. He says by means of the "good" (the law) and "by the commandment" sin became exceedingly sinful. What does that mean? It appears to be repeating what Paul just said "God-forbid" you should think is what he means. Paul reduces his words into pure mumbo-jumbo. He seeks to dumbfound the reader into thinking your natural concern that Paul is uttering blasphemy has somehow been addressed. Yet, it never happens!

In response, James simply trashes the entire discussion in James 1:13-14. One quick jab, and Paul's ideas are again refuted.

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*James 3:17: Is It a Response to Being the Victim of Paul's Hypocrisy?*

The word *hypocrite* in Greek means an actor. It is someone who pretends to be something he is not. Jesus' harshest words were reserved for *hypocrites*. (Matt. 23:13, 14, 23-28.) The Pharisees wore an actor's mask. They appeared righteous when inwardly they were full of dead men's bones. (Matt. 23:38.) Jesus used the term *hypocrite* just as we would. A hypocrite pretends to be something he is not.

James writes about hypocrisy in James 3:17:

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, *without variance, without hypocrisy.*

What was this supposed to address about Paul? By the time James wrote his epistle, he must have been fully aware that Paul did teach the Law was abrogated as to Jews. Paul says this clearly in Romans chapter 7 which James is apparently still reading. All James can see is the blatant hypocrisy that Paul previously committed against James in Acts 21:21 *et seq.* (For more on Paul's position on the Law, see the chapter entitled, "Did Paul Negate the Law's Further Applicability?" on page 73.)

Most of us are unaware but in Acts 21:21 Paul misleads James that he, Paul, was teaching the Law still applied to Jews who found Christ. That is why the attack on *hypocrisy* in James 3:17 is a response to Paul.

What led to this attack on hypocrisy is that James in Acts 21:21 tells Paul the following about Jews coming to Christ:

[T]hey have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk after the customs (*ethos*). (ASV)

James tells Paul that Paul can prove he is not teaching such Jews coming to Christ to forsake Moses by Paul submitting to the Nazirite vow from Numbers 6. Paul does so. Paul is thus leading James to believe that James is indeed misinformed. Paul is letting James think Paul does not advocate the Law given Moses has been abrogated even as to Jews who would accept Christ. James clearly was seeking assurance from Paul to this effect in Acts 21:21.

Yet, Paul in Romans 7:2 proudly says that by virtue of Jesus' death, under the Laws of remarriage, Jews are "loosed from the Law" (KJV) "released from the Law" (ALT) "dis-

charged from the Law” (ASV) and “set free from the Law” (YLT). They are now free to re-marry another—a God who has no Law of Moses any longer for them. The key Greek word is *katarge*. Robertson’s *Word Pictures* explains this means “to make void.” Literally, Paul says the Law *becomes of none effect* for Jews any longer when Christ died. Paul uses the same expression in Ephesians 2:15 when he says the Law was “abolished.” The word there is again *katargas*—the aorist active participle in Greek of the same word in Romans 7:2. Paul’s point is this principle of abolition applies to the Jews. This is why, based on Romans 7:2, some Paulinists teach Jews and Christians who follow the true Sabbath (*i.e.*, sunset-to-sunset Friday to Saturday) are “guilty of spiritual adultery.”<sup>42</sup> The Law is so totally abolished as to Jews that a Jew (and a Christian) actually shows unfaithfulness to God by following the original command from God Himself! *Oh my!* What man cannot believe when he is at first *deceived!*

But what explains Paul letting James in Acts 21:23-26 believe erroneously that Paul taught the Law of Moses was still valid for Jewish Christians? Clearly James asks Paul to submit to the Nazirite vow to prove Paul does not in fact teach otherwise. Paul does submit to the vow. This action and Paul’s silence thereby misleads James that Paul was living like a Jew not out of pretence but from a sincere belief that the Law had to be followed.

How could Paul justify such behavior? Paul gives us the answer: *he consciously practiced to make observers think he was observant of the Law* when he did not believe it was any longer valid. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 Paul says he is “not under the Law” and in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 Paul repeats this. Paul then adds that when around Jews he acts

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42. “All Sabbatarians are guilty of adultery:...Paul said that [obeying the Ten Commandments] is equal to spiritual adultery, because in order to be joined to Christ, all the old Law must be abolished.” <http://www.bible.ca/7-10-commandments-abolished-Romans-7-1-7.htm> (last accessed 2005).

like he is under the Law (Torah). When around Gentiles who are not under the Law (Torah), he acts like one who is under no law even though he is under the Law of Christ [*i.e.*, back to Paul's "expedient" and "not be dominated" test of right and wrong in one's conscience]. Listen to Paul's open admission of such blatantly hypocritical tactics in 1 Corinthians 9:20-21:

(20) And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, ***not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law***; (21) to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. (ASV)

One Pauline pastor himself defines "without hypocrisy" in James 3:17. He unwittingly gives us a clear understanding of the problem that James saw in Paul. This pastor says James means true wisdom, if from God, involves "no attempt to play a role or pretend to be what we are not."<sup>43</sup> Paul blatantly admits he does this. Paul did this with James clearly in Acts 21:21 *et seq.* Therefore, James 3:17 was saying Paul cannot be a prophet from God. Paul plays the hypocrite, and teaches others to do the same. *The end justifies the means.* James says such a person does not have *true wisdom from God.*

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### *James 3:17 on Variances (Inconsistencies)*

In the balance of James chapter 3, you can sense James is still reading Paul. He finds other character flaws than merely hypocrisy which mark the fruit of a false prophet.

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43. Pastor Gil Rugh (Indian Hills Community Church, New Jersey), *Wisdom From Above James 3:17,18* (1978), reprinted at <http://www.biblebb.com/files/GR772.HTM> (last visited 2005).



James in 3:17 says the wisdom from above is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated [*i.e.*, asked a question], full of mercy and good fruits, without *variance*....”

The Greek word for *variance* is *adiakritos*. To be *adiakritos* means to be “unintelligible” or “undecided.” (Liddell Scott Lexicon.) Thus, if you suffer from *adiakritos*, you engage in *ambiguity*. James says God’s true wisdom lacks ambiguous double-speak. By contrast, muddled self-contradictory thoughts make one’s teaching *ambiguous*, *hard to discern*, or *unintelligible*. James says God’s wisdom is, instead, pure, single, and *unambiguous*. When two thoughts are at odds with one another, they reveal the speaker is somewhat *undecided* which direction to take. The speaker wants to please both sides of an argument. He is saying things each side wants to hear. By contrast, God’s wisdom is *unwavering*, *direct* and not *waffling*.

How can this test apply to Paul?

James obviously saw the numerous “variances” (self-contradictions) in Paul’s writings and deeds. We also saw earlier Paul’s oft-repeated technique of throwing a *God-forbid hand waive* into daringly blasphemous discussions. It throws a bone to one side of an argument. Paul then goes on to emphasize a message contrary to the implication that one would assume from the *God-forbid* statement. (See page 281 *et seq.*) This methodology bespeaks intentional effort to befuddle the reader/listener with ambiguous double-speak.

Another example of Paul’s self-contradiction is that Paul taught the Galatians that if they became circumcised they would be “severed from Christ.” (Gal. 5:4.) Yet, in Acts 16:1-3, Paul has Timothy circumcised. Either Paul is contradicting himself or he is encouraging hypocrisy, *i.e.*, Timothy pretending to be submissive to the Law. Either way, Paul comes out as not a godly teacher, *i.e.*, either he is self-contradictory or he plays the hypocrite to deceive people.

Another example of Paul's "variances" is Paul writes: "A man is not justified by the works of the Law" (Gal. 2:16). However, to the Romans Paul wrote: "For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified" (Rom 2:13). Which way is it?

Another time Paul says salvation is by works plus faith. In Romans 2:6-7, Paul says God "will render to every man according to his works: *to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life.*" The Greek words translated as 'patience in well-doing' more correctly says *endurance in good works*. Paul thus says 'to those who endure patiently in doing good works, God will render eternal life.' Paul thus contradicts his own claim that eternal life is a free gift, without works. (Eph. 2:8-9; Romans 4:4.) Which way is it?

Likewise, in Philippians 2:12-13, Paul makes a statement that is self-contradictory. First, in Philippians 2:12, Paul says "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Yet, in Philippians 2:13, Paul appears to negate your responsibility by saying "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do [His] good pleasure." The commentators have engaged in an endless struggle to match verse 12 against verse 13. Verse 12 emphasizes human responsibility while verse 13 emphasizes the 100% agency of God in your human will. Which way is it Paul? Were you unable to decide? Or did you have another purpose in speaking out of both sides of your mouth at once? James senses this problem, and says God's true wisdom lacks *variances*.

Further, Paul traps himself in a self-contradiction when he says the following:

One of themselves, a prophet of their own said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' ***This testimony is true*** (Titus 1:12).

Paul thereby made a self-contradictory statement. For Paul says "one of themselves" (a Cretan) made a statement that "Cretans are *always* liars," and Paul says this "is true."

However, it cannot possibly be simultaneously true that a Cretan made a true statement and Cretans are “always liars.” Many scholars have poured over this to find an escape, and salvage Paul’s inspiration. Christian academics have struggled to solve this logical impossibility. However, no amount of multi-dimensional analysis (which is the only solution so far that conceivably works) is a serious answer. Paul is trapped in a logical dilemma because Paul says a Cretan was telling the truth when he said “Cretans are always liars.....” Paul’s slur on all Cretans is a self-contradiction in terms.

James, of course, can see all these self-contradictions, just as we can easily see them. He says the true wisdom from God is **not** unintelligible, ambiguous, difficult to discern, or self-contradictory. Paul’s writings cross all those boundaries.

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*James Faults Overbearing Rebukes*

Again, James in James 3:17 notes other problems with Paul which are evident in Paul’s writings.

For example, it is hard to ignore Paul’s overbearing non-gentle style. Paul is not gentle with the Galatians who want to keep the Sabbath and festivals and circumcision. Paul responds to the issue by calling the Galatians “foolish” (*i.e.*, stupid) (Gal. 3:1.) To intimidate opponents further, Paul calls down curses (*anathema*, “cursed”) on those who contradict him among the Galatians. (Gal. 1:8.)

How does James respond? He says one having the wisdom of God would be writing “full of mercy,” not “cursing.” (James 3:10.)

*Are James's Remarks on Boasting Aimed for Paul?*

The Epistle of James shows another earmark that it was used as Exhibit A in a trial of Paul. James writes:

[T]he tongue is a small member, yet it **boasts** of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!....Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a **good conversation his works**, with the **meekness** of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and contentiousness in your heart, **do not boast and lie** against the Truth. (James 2:26-3:14).<sup>44</sup>

James is extolling meekness in contrast to boasting. Jesus likewise promised salvation to the meek: “the meek...shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:3,5.) This was the quality that endeared Moses to God: “Now the man Moses was **very meek**, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.” (Numbers 12:3.) By contrast, God does not “respect the proud.” (Ps. 40:4.) Proverbs 16:5 says: “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Jehovah.” James makes both points simultaneously in his famous line: “God resists the **proud**, but gives *grace* to the meek.” (James 4:6.)

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44. Paulinists try to save Paul from what James condemns by lifting out-of-context James 3:16. There James continues and says, “But now you are boasting in connection with your arrogance. ALL boasting of *this kind* is evil.” Thus, they read James to only condemn *boasting in arrogance*. They insist Paul does not do this. However, *boasting* of your own exploits and background rather than God’s accomplishments is likely James’ meaning. The latter is appropriate “boasting in the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24.) Thus, you can boast of God’s accomplishments, not your own.

Paul in numerous places boasts, but the most blatant is in Second Corinthians. The KJV translation makes it difficult for you to recognize this. It changes Paul's admission that he is *boasting* into an admission he is *glorying*. Yet, Paul's Greek word is *boast* or *boasting*. Paul's admission of this behavior uses the **same Greek word** as used by James when he condemns such behavior in James 4:6. What the KJV incorrectly translates as *glorying* when Paul speaks, the KJV then correctly translates as *boasting* when James condemns the behavior. Oh the mysteries of Bible translation!

Regardless, Paul in Second Corinthians has a passage that is nothing but boasting. Paul admits this *boasting* behavior repeatedly in the very same context:

Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that ***I may boast myself a little***. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in ***this confidence of boasting***. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also...Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) ***I am more***; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft...In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen... in perils among false brethren;.... ***in nothing am I behind the very chiefest of the apostles, though I be nothing***.... (2 Corinthians 11:16-12:19 (ASV).)

Throughout this litany of boasts, Paul confesses he is boasting. Paul appears to be admitting it is foolish to do this ("I speak as a fool"), but he does it anyway. James calls such behavior and lack of self-control a serious error:

But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. (James 4:16.)

If any man among you seems to be religious, and **does not bridle his tongue**, but deceives his own heart, **this man's religion is vain**. (James 1:26).

James tells you point blank, by inference, Paul's religion is "empty" and his boasts are "evil." Such a person "lies" against the truth. (James 1:26; 3:14.) If Paul knows this is foolish but cannot 'bridle his tongue,' then "this man's religion is vain." (James 1:26.) This is just the kind of information the Ephesians needed to have to try the one who "says [he is] an apostle and is not but [is a] *liar*." (Rev. 2:2.)

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### *Conclusion*

James is the head of the church in Paul's day. His epistle is intended to set up rules for attendance at a judicial assembly in a Christian-controlled synagogue. The assembly at Ephesus that pressured Paul to leave in Acts chapter 19 was in fact a *synagogue*.

Then the theological issues addressed in James' epistle all skewer Paul. It would perfectly serve as a trial brief to examine Paul's teachings for heresy if the synagogue at Ephesus requested it.

This is self-evident because James' Epistle uses all Paul's terminology, in particular the Biblical example of Abraham. James reinterprets Genesis 15:6 as having a diametrically opposite meaning from Paul's interpretation. On this and many other points, James' views are at direct odds with Paul's doctrines. It thus appears likely that James' epistle was intended for the confrontation between Paul and his detractors at the Ephesus synagogue where he had led many to Christ previously, as reflected in Acts chapter 19. With the help of James' letter, this Christian synagogue apparently found Paul not to be a true apostle of Jesus Christ. They received the highest commendation possible for doing so. A commendation from the glorious One Himself in Revelation 2:2.