

DOES JAMES DISAGREE WITH PAUL ON JUSTIFICATION?
AN EXEGETICAL COMPARISON OF ROMANS 3:27–4:3 AND JAMES 2:14-26

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Abstract

Does James disagree with Paul on justification? This question has plagued Christians for centuries as they have tried to make sense of the words, "You see that a man is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24), for these words seem the exact antithesis to Paul's "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Ro 3:28). Over the years many scholars have addressed this question, but few have reached a consensus on what James means by justification in his book. However, with the importance of justification in the life of a Christian, the answer to this question could not be more important. In an attempt to answer this question, this thesis will compare James 2:14-26 and Romans 3:27-4:3 exegetically and give careful treatment to the different contexts in which these two authors wrote. In conclusion, this thesis will find that Paul and James are likeminded writers who use the word "justification" in different ways, with a different meaning, to defend the same faith that alone saves.

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Part 1—Introduction

Martin Luther famously remarked, "It is really an epistle of straw . . . for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it."¹ At another time he said that it was a "really dangerous and bad book," and he threatened to tear it out of his Bible and use it to heat his stove.² What was the antecedent of those damning statements? An apocryphal book that the Roman Catholic Church employed to undermine Christ's redemptive work? Some sort of work that one of his opponents wrote to cloud the message of the gospel? Surprisingly, one need not look any further than the New Testament to find Luther's real culprit: the epistle of James. Since many of Luther's opponents were using James's epistle to counteract salvation by faith alone and promote works-righteousness, Luther struggled to place James alongside New Testament gems like Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. Instead, Luther found solace in the teaching that has since become for his namesake, the Lutheran Church, the chief article: justification by grace through faith. Is it any surprise that Luther heard those words and cringed? "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24).³

Even after so many years, Christianity has not quickly forgotten what Luther said about James. In fact, almost every commentator or exegete who undertakes the topic of James's justification echoes those same, almost 500-year old words: "St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw." While this does not mean that each of these writers actually considers James to be an epistle without any substance, it is an acknowledgement of the difficulty James still poses today's reader. Perhaps the question remains, why is this so? Why is this still an issue almost 500 years after Luther's death? Surely there must be a clear answer to this question, for why else have Protestants not heeded Luther's words and pitched James from the canon?

The issue gets thornier still when Christians begin to compare James with Paul. Obviously, Paul speaks at length about justification, and in Romans he explains that God has declared humanity "not guilty" of sin on the basis of his grace. As such, person can do nothing

1. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: American Edition*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 362.

2. James B. Adamson, *James: The Man & His Message* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), ix.

3. This particular translation from the *New International Version—1984 Edition* is essentially the same in most modern English translations, including the *New Revised Standard Version*, the *New English Translation*, the *New American Standard Bible*, the *English Standard Version*, the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, and the *New King James Version*. The only differences among these translations include minor variances on the subject of the sentence ("person" versus "man") and the translation of ἔργων ("works" versus the more expansive "what he does").

to earn this verdict. A person can only benefit from God's verdict through faith. This teaching is the heart and core of the first five chapters of Romans, and perhaps no clearer summary exists than Romans 3:28 where Paul says, "We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."⁴ And therein lies the problem. When this verse is placed side-by-side with James 2:24, James's words seem the exact antithesis to Paul's famous declaration. Unless Scripture can disagree with itself, this serious question needs to be resolved.

All of this speaks to the heart of the issue: does James disagree with Paul on justification? In order to answer this difficult question, this study will first view the matter in light of the answers that others have given, focusing especially on those Christians who share a high view of Scripture as God's Word. Their views will help narrow the possibilities as they show what the real points of contention are. From there, this study will consider Paul's purpose in writing Romans and the biblical doctrine of justification as he expresses it in Romans 3:27–4:3. A brief consideration of Paul's words in these particular verses is useful to this study in several ways. This section of Scripture clearly and concisely convey Paul's argument that a person is justified by grace through faith and not by works, and it does so with language that appears to contradict James 2:24 directly. Furthermore, Paul also uses Abraham as a primary example of how his justification is true. This last point will quickly lead into a study of James because James also uses Abraham to demonstrate his seemingly different justification. As this study considers James, it will first look at the background of James's epistle, his soteriology, and his purpose in writing. With that background as an aid, the reader can truly appreciate the point that James makes in James 2:14-26. Ultimately, the thesis question will resolve itself when the reader compares Romans 3:27–4:3 and James 2:14-26 exegetically, sees that these two authors are writing to different audiences for differing reasons, and finds them to be in harmony with one another.

Although this thesis is technical in nature, it is far more than just a practice in exegesis. As the author to this paper, I find the answer to this question compelling and practical for numerous reasons: (1) I can think of several instances in my short lifetime when I shared my faith with someone, and when the discussion came to justification, the question arose, "But what do you Lutherans do with James, chapter 2?" This has shown me that this question is not only

4. All biblical quotations come from the *New International Version–2011 Edition*, unless otherwise noted.

on people's minds, it often misleads them. (2) While those in my fellowship see harmony between James and Paul, experience has taught me that our pastors often defend James by pointing to other Scripture and quietly (even unknowingly) sweeping James under the rug. A Christian may rightfully look to clear sections of Scripture to help answer difficult questions, but this methodology tends to overlook the truth that the Holy Spirit is trying to communicate to us in this chapter of the Bible. (3) Many Christian commentators also agree that these two writers are in harmony, but their reasons for this unity vary. Finally, as with any other answer, we cannot maintain this conclusion unless we first present clear evidence to support it. (4) Although there are many answers to this question, few ultimately address the alarming point James seems to make when he plainly says, "You see that a person is justified by what he does, and not by faith alone." And, (5) as the chief article of belief for confessional Lutherans, we can never seek to understand the teaching of justification too fully. Since this passage, perhaps more than any other, easily lends to a misunderstanding concerning God's declaration that we are "not guilty," we do ourselves a disservice if we do not strive to understand it fully.

To conclude the introductory thoughts, the purpose of this thesis is not simply to arrive at a more assertive conclusion about what James actually meant. Though this is the ultimate goal of the thesis question, it is not properly the final purpose in answering this question. While many have neglected James over the years, he has so much to teach Christians that the one who does not listen to him should be ashamed. Through a careful exegesis of these two inspired authors, James's reader will be able to come to a more assertive conclusion about how James agrees with Paul. But more importantly, after reaching this conclusion, James's reader can appreciate the point that he makes as an inspired author of God's Word. James is not just a problem to deal with. His words are inspired, Spirit-breathed wisdom that have a meaning here, now, and today.

Before beginning it is worth noting several presuppositions behind this thesis. First, this work employs an historical-grammatical method of interpretation to answer the thesis question.⁵ Therefore, it is not the purpose of the thesis to dispute a critical viewpoint concerning James's canonicity. Doubt concerning James's authenticity would certainly affect the question, but this thesis affirms that, as a part of the canon, James must agree with Paul since they are both Spirit-

5. The translator who employs the historical-grammatical approach seeks two things in interpretation: (1) to understand the Bible in its historical setting, and (2) to understand the Bible within the nuances of the language in which it is written. In these two areas, this method of interpretation shows a respect for the message as God's Word. For this reason, the Word is not subject to critical revision due to human biases.

breathed writers. In addition, this thesis is purposely written in a way that focuses one's attention more on James than on Paul. The comparison between the two is useful for answering a difficult question, but since most Christians know more about Paul, the majority of the thesis will focus on James's teaching and background. Finally, Scripture teaches both an objective aspect of justification, that God has justified the entire world and taken away its sin (Ro 5:18; Jn 1:29; 2 Co 5:19; 2 Pe 2:1), and a subjective aspect of justification, that the individual sinner benefits from that gift through faith alone (Ro 3:28; Gal 3:11; Eph 2:8). Throughout this study the reader can assume that by "justification," the author is speaking to the subjective aspect of the term.

Part 2—Literature Review

Because of the obvious nature of what is at stake in James 2, it is hardly surprising that scholars have written much about the topic of James's justification. This thesis could examine the literary treatment of James 2 in any number of areas, but the focus will be on three significant areas. First, this literature review will consider the heterodox teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which submits to a synergism that promotes works for salvation and does not agree with Scripture. Then, the review will consider what the early church fathers and ecclesiastical writers had to say about James. Finally, the review will conclude with a more extensive treatment of contemporary Christian authors who agree that James is not promoting works-righteousness, and yet disagree about the exact point James is trying to make.

The Roman Catholic Position

In consideration of the Roman Catholic position, one does well to look to Robert Sungenis. In his book, *Not by Faith Alone*, Sungenis makes the clear case that justification before God cannot be by faith alone. Rather, "James is teaching that we must intentionally and categorically add works to faith in order to effectuate and complete justification."⁶ Sungenis defends this point with James 2:14-26:

James makes it clear when he opens the discussion in James 2:14 that he is setting up a salvation context by asking the rhetorical questions, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?" . . . It is not called "unqualified faith" or "nonjustifying faith." Apparently James does not want to

6. Robert A. Sungenis, *Not by Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997), 137. Robert Sungenis is a well-known Catholic apologist who serves as president of Catholic Apologetics International.

give the impression that as long as faith is of a sufficient quality then faith by itself can save. Faith and works are two separate entities: one believes, the other acts . . . Hence considering that James has chosen language which specifies not the quality of faith but the addition or subtraction of works to faith (e.g., 2:14: "you have faith but do not have works"; 2:17: "faith, by itself"; 2:24: "not by faith alone"), one should not understand the question "Can faith save him?" in 2:14 to read "Can that kind of faith save him?", but rather "Can faith alone save him?" or "Can faith, *by itself*, save him?" The answer is an unequivocal no.⁷

Sungenis's flow of thought is simple enough. He perceives a separation between faith and works in James 2. Justification is incomplete without works because a person only has half of the equation. In other words, Sungenis promotes the commonly held Roman Catholic teaching that a person is saved by faith plus works, not merely by a faith that works.

Sungenis's viewpoint will be addressed later in the exegesis of James 2:14-26, but for the time being, its danger should not be underestimated. Although this distinction may seem subtle at first, the consequence is unmistakable. In fact, it is significant enough that even Sungenis concludes, "James is not so much attempting to qualify the faith needed for justification as he is saying that one must consciously add works to faith in order to be justified. A person, to be justified, must persevere to his last breath in this conscious decision to add works to faith."⁸ When one's emphasis is on striving "to his last breath" to do works, there is no place for the biblical concept of justification by faith alone. The focus is off Christ. Grace is no longer by grace alone. Justification ultimately depends on oneself. For this reason, anyone who sees in James's words an elevation of works apart from faith, as a necessary part of salvation, is going down the dangerous path of synergism. Sadly, this is a conclusion that many people today reach when they read James's words.

The View of the Ancients

Sungenis's thoughts accurately describe the Roman Catholic Church back through Luther's time, but a question might arise about how much further back the synergistic interpretation of James 2 had crept into Christianity. Has this heresy afflicted the Church all along? How about the testimony of the church fathers and ecclesiastical writers? Were they

7. Ibid., 126, 136. This quotation is actually a compilation of smaller quotations, but I have attempted to preserve Sungenis's rationale as closely as possible.

8. Ibid., 175.

mislead by what James had to say, or were they firmly monergistic? Cyril of Alexandria provides insight into these questions as he addresses the topic directly:

On the one hand, the blessed James says that Abraham was justified by works when he bound Isaac his son on the altar, but on the other hand Paul says that he was justified by faith, which appears to be contradictory. However, this is to be understood as meaning that Abraham believed before he had Isaac and that Isaac was given to him as a reward for his faith. Likewise, when he bound Isaac to the altar, he did not merely do the work which was required of him, but he did it with the faith that in Isaac his seed would be as numberless as the stars of heaven, believing that God could raise him from the dead.⁹

Thankfully, Cyril's opinion was not just the exception to the rule. It was a commonly held belief among many early Christian writers. While these men were cognizant of Paul's justification by faith, they saw no discrepancy in the way James described justification by works. This understanding generally came from a distinction between prebaptismal and postbaptismal faith.¹⁰ Paul's concept of justification, which focuses on conversion and comes only by grace, was prebaptismal faith. James's concept of justification, which conjoins works with faith as a natural result of faith, was postbaptismal faith. This distinction was certainly useful. It allowed these men to agree with Paul that they could never hope to please God with their works, but proclaim with James that anyone who thought he could believe without works was "out of his mind."¹¹ As numerous early Christian writers concluded in response to James's epistle, mere words of faith are insincere unless they are supported by works, because "belief and action are intrinsic to faith."¹²

The Issue among Today's Scholars

The early church fathers and ecclesiastical writers provide a good starting point, but their testimony finally does little to answer the technical issues that arise with this study. For these, James's present day reader benefits from the embarrassment of riches produced by today's Christians who have studied this question carefully. While not all of these scholars concur on how James and Paul agree, this author has found numerous scholars who unite in their efforts to

9. Gerald Bray, ed., *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, vol. XI of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 32.

10. *Ibid.*, 27.

11. *Ibid.*, 31. This quotation is an observation by Oecumenius in his *Commentary on James*.

12. *Ibid.*, 27. This list includes Augustine, Bede, Oecumenius, Origen, Leo, Hilary of Arles, and Chrysostom.

see a harmony between the two. These scholars often focus the discussion on the three terms that are found in both Romans 3:28 and James 2:24: πίστις, ἔργον, and δικαιοῦ.

The word πίστις generally encounters the least amount of disagreement. Scholars understand that throughout chapter two James often uses the term πίστις in a different way than Paul does. Sharyn Dowd explains,

Paul never uses *pistis/pisteuō* to mean a mental agreement with a theological construct that has no implications for behavior . . . In Paul's writings, the subject of *pisteuein/echein pistin* is always one for whom "Jesus is Lord" (Rom 10:9), a confession possible only under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). The fact that James can speak of the "faith" of demons shows he knows a use of the term that is foreign to Paul's thinking.¹³

Dowd suggests that Paul always seems to use faith in a subjective manner, which internalizes itself within a Christian and trusts in the message that was received. On the other hand, James is comfortable using πίστις in an objective way that merely conveys "head knowledge." C. Ryan Jenkins explains that this sense of πίστις is "a more restricted sense to connote an intellectual assent to theological truth, but without the confluence of that assent with an internal confiding trust in and love of those truths."¹⁴ The quotations could continue at this point, but there is no need. Commentators have reached unanimity in understanding that throughout James 2:14-26, James uses an objective sense for faith that contains no real trust or belief.

With the word ἔργον, the debate begins to heat up. In general most writers find a distinction between the two authors' use of ἔργον. This distinction is based on that fact that in Romans 3:28, Paul adds the qualifier νόμου to ἔργον. Tim Laato summarizes the conclusion that many writers draw from this for James's definition of law:

The Pauline polemic against "the works of the Law" is lacking. The relevant expression itself is lacking. James does not at all go into a discussion of the conditions for the salvation of Gentiles (cf. Acts 15!). He is interested exclusively in the right conduct of Christians. The special Jewish customs are not at all taken into account. James sets his own accent. He reduces the Law applicable to the congregation to the love command

13. Sharyn E. Dowd, "Faith that works: James 2:14-26," *Review & Expositor* 97, no. 2 (March 1, 2000), 202, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2013). Sharyn E. Dowd is an Associate Professor of the New Testament at Baylor University.

14. C. Ryan Jenkins, "Faith and works in Paul and James," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 633 (January 1, 2002), 65, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 28, 2013). C. Ryan Jenkins is the executive director of the Reformed-based Sola Gratia Ministries.

(2:8-11) . . . The reforming activity of James therefore is not driven by Judaizing tendencies. It is called forth by his concern for true Christianity.¹⁵

The potential implications of this alleged contrast are noteworthy. If James shifts the focus from Mosaic "works of the law" to generic acts of love that the Lord himself commanded when he walked on earth, it influences the context in which he presents his justification. In connection with this point, many scholars attempt to validate James's justification. However, at the same time, this distinction is not unanimous. A few scholars, including the notable Douglas Moo, disagree that *ἔργων νόμου* is a technical expression that refers only to ceremonial observances of the Sinaitic Covenant.¹⁶ More must be said here, and this point will be covered in detail later.

The debate finally reaches full throttle with the word *δικαιόω*. When it comes to answering the thesis question, no issue is more significant than the question of what James meant by *δικαιόω*. This is why James's reader can be thankful that the majority of today's Christian scholars explain the word in one of two ways. The first explanation is that James is talking about justification in a declarative sense meaning "to declare righteous," similar to Paul's use of the term. The second explanation is that James is talking about justification in a demonstrative sense meaning "to show/prove to be righteous," different from Paul's use of the term.

Robert Rakestraw summarizes the declarative interpretation of justification when he says, "*dikaioo* in James is used in a certain declarative or judicial sense—the pronouncing of one righteous, as in a court of law, on the basis of some observable criterion or criteria. This is the dominant meaning of the term in the LXX, in the Pseudepigrapha, and often in the NT."¹⁷ Rakestraw hints at the main argument that the advocates of a declarative justification use: because a declarative use is by far the most common definition for *δικαιόω* in the Bible, it makes sense to translate the word in this way. While this viewpoint will be addressed later on, it must

15. Timo Laato, "Justification According to James: A Comparison with Paul," trans. Mark A. Seifrid, *Trinity Journal* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 1997), 65-66, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 28, 2013). Timo Laato is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

16. Douglas J. Moo, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 140. Douglas Moos is a well-known New Testament scholar who was heavily involved in the translation of the 2011 edition of the *New International Version*. He is a widely published author who now serves as the Kenneth T. Wessner Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School.

17. Robert V. Rakestraw, "James 2:14-26: does James contradict the Pauline soteriology?" *Criswell Theological Review* 1, (September 1, 1986), 40-41, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2013). The *Criswell Theological Review* is a Southern Baptist periodical.

be noted that its proponents are careful to make a clear distinction between this, a "subsequent" or "final" declarative justification, and Paul's "initial" declarative justification. R. Bruce Compton explains it in this way: "When Paul claims that one is justified by faith alone, apart from works, he is referring to works that precede salvation. Conversely, when James insists on works as necessary to justification, he has in view works that follow and validate salvation."¹⁸ This is how the advocates of declarative justification solve the thesis question, and in this way God can "justify" a Christian on account of works. Works are essential in the sense that they must exist for a person to be declared righteous when God judges.

Dr. Ronald Fung summarizes the other side of the argument as he calls for a demonstrative use of justification. Fung considers the various understandings of the declarative approach and concludes, "This view is possible, but cannot be said to fit particularly well with, let alone be required by, the context."¹⁹ Instead, Fung finds another option that does suit the context: "The remaining option is to understand the term 'justified' in the more general, demonstrative sense of being vindicated, proved or shown to be just, as in Mt. 11:19; Lk. 7:35; Rom. 3:4; 1 Tim. 3:16."²⁰ Fung summarizes the main argument that proponents of demonstrative justification use: though a demonstrative use is not common, it is an established translation of the word, and the context of James sustains this translation. For James works "show" or "prove" that a person has been made righteous. Works are essential in the sense that they must exist to prove genuine the faith that declares a person righteous in God's sight.

This brief literature review has helped narrow the topic, but it has also introduced some challenging questions that have no immediate answers, especially regarding the term *δικαιόω*.²¹

18. R Bruce Compton, "James 2:21-24 and the Justification of Abraham," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 2, (September 1, 1997), 44-45, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 30, 2013). R. Bruce Compton is a Professor of Biblical Languages and Exposition at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary. Interestingly, his view is not very different from the early Christian writers who looked at this issue as one of pre- and post-baptismal faith.

19. Ronald Y K Fung, "'Justification' in the Epistle of James," in *Right with God* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Pr, 1992), 153. Ronald Y K Fung is best known for his work on the newest volume on Galatians in the *New International Commentary of the New Testament*.

20. Ibid.

21. The issue is further complicated since scholars divide evenly on how they should understand *δικαιόω*. In a study of the sources consulted in preparing this thesis, I found that the writers who clearly opined on the matter viewed *δικαιόω* as follows. *Declarative*: Moo (*James*), 134-135; Scaer, 90-91; Compton, 45; Rakestraw, 40-41; McKnight (*James*), 255-256; Lenski, 588-589; Mayor, 103. *Demonstrative*: Adamson, 205-206; Fung, 153-154; Jenkins, 77-78; Maxwell, 376; White, 346-347; Blomberg and Kamell, 136-138; Martin, 91; Varner, 115-116.

Therefore, no more can be said until one takes a closer look at Paul and James's settings and considers their arguments in context. Additionally, the question concerning the meaning of *δικαιόω* is so significant that *δικαιόω* will be treated in a separate excursus afterward. When all of the evidence has been considered, this thesis will find that James had in mind a demonstrative justification when he uses *δικαιόω* in his epistle.

Part 3—Paul's Context

A review of Paul's Epistle to the Romans is immediately eased by the fact that many of its background issues are not disputed. Details regarding its authorship, the integrity of the text, and its composition are accepted widely and unanimously. Quite simply, the apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians sometime during his third missionary journey (c. 57 AD).²² More could be said about these details, but it is not the purpose of this thesis to delve deeply into facts that are already well established. However, as Paul's reader considers other issues such as his audience and his purpose in writing, it is worth delving deeply. Not only are these questions more challenging, they are significant for Paul's soteriology, which in turn is important for his teaching of justification.

Paul's Audience in Rome

While Paul's audience was in Rome, what did it consist of? Jews? Gentiles? Both? Before answering that question, it is helpful to understand the Jewish roots in Rome. Records only date the earliest Jewish presence in Rome to 139 BC, but scholars estimate that the Jewish population in Paul's day had already reached fifty or sixty-thousand.²³ With an established presence, it is only fitting that the synagogue was a part of this Jewish community. Still, the particular flavor of Judaism in the empire's capital was unique. Unlike other places in the empire, the synagogues in Rome were mostly independent and self-sufficient.²⁴ This setup would serve a young Christianity beautifully. Moo lays out a feasible scenario that demonstrates how Christianity could come to such a locale: "The most likely scenario is that Roman Jews,

22. Michael P Middendorf, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture; Romans 1–8* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 5-7. On these pages Middendorf gives a brief summary of how this conclusion is reached.

23. *Ibid.*, 10.

24. *Ibid.*

who were converted on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:10), brought their faith in Jesus as the Messiah back with them to their home synagogues. In this way the Christian movement in Rome was initiated."²⁵ Whether this happened after that first Christian Pentecost is uncertain, but these synagogues certainly would have retained ties to Judaism that kept them coming to Jerusalem for the major feasts. There their independence may have allowed them more freedom to hear, embrace, and bring back the gospel message back home.

The synagogue, which was always Paul's first stop on his missionary journeys, was also his foothold in Rome. Just as Paul always sought the nearest synagogue when he entered a new city, so also he would address this letter to those Christians in the churches in Rome. And again the question presents itself: whom would these synagogues include? Both Jews and Gentiles, of course. The mixed-synagogue setting was already commonplace throughout Asia Minor,²⁶ and that was before Paul brought Christianity's universal teachings. Therefore, this setting can also be assumed in the more eclectic city of Rome with its loose, and already Christian, church structure. Internal clues from the book support this conclusion. Paul addresses Jewish listeners on some occasions and Gentiles on others, and he discusses their relationship to one another.²⁷

Paul's Purpose in Writing

All of this leads to the crux of the issue: what was Paul's purpose in writing to these Jewish and Gentile Christians? This is precisely where commentators begin to disagree, because the bulk of the letter does not seem to prove the purpose that Paul implies. Colin Kruse explains,

The purpose for which Paul wrote Romans has been the subject of extensive debate. Part of the problem presented by the letter is that in 1:1-15 and 15:14-16:27 Paul implies that he was writing to prepare the way for his visit to Rome and a subsequent mission to Spain, while seeking prayer support for his impending visit to Jerusalem with the collection. However, such a purpose does not seem sufficient to explain the long theological and ethical sections of the letter (1:16-11:36, 12:1-15:13). Any satisfying solution to the problem of purpose, therefore, must show how the theological and ethical

25. Douglas J. Moo, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 4.

26. Two examples include in the cities of Pisidian Antioch (Ac 13:16) and Iconium (Ac 14:2) where Paul enters synagogues that include both Jewish and Gentile worshippers.

27. Paul addresses Gentile listeners in 1:5,6, 11:13-32, 15:7-12, Jewish listeners in 2:17-29 and 4:1(?), and Jewish matters in 2:17-29 (boasting based on the OT law) and in 4:1-25 (Abraham as an example). As for the connection between Jews and Gentiles, see 1:14-17, 2:9, 3:9,29, 9:24,30-32, 10:12, 15:8,9,27. Interestingly, Paul sometimes speaks vaguely (in the 3rd person) as if a group were not even there to hear him: concerning the Jews in 3:1,2 and 9:1-5, and concerning the Gentiles in 2:14,15 and 15:14-22. Obviously, this is a mixed audience.

sections of the letter relate to the purpose implied in Paul's statements at the beginning and end of the letter.²⁸

Though an in-depth search into these matters would require significant study, one can easily surmise some general truths about Paul's reason for writing Romans. Obviously, Paul meant in some way to lay down the basics of Christianity. In fact, his expansive summary almost resembles a dogmatics textbook. Even those scholars who deny this as a purpose by itself are nonetheless forced to emphasize the book's deeply theological character.²⁹ And finally, it makes sense that Paul would write in such length to a place he had never visited. Not only would he want to ensure that the gospel remained pure without the teaching of an apostle, his situation while writing Romans promotes such treatment.

The past battles in Galatia and Corinth; the coming crisis in Jerusalem; the desire to secure a missionary base for this work in Spain; the need to unify the Romans around "his" gospel to support his work in Spain—all these forced Paul to write a letter in which he carefully rehearsed his understanding of the gospel, especially as it related to the salvation-historical questions of Jew and Gentile and the continuity of the plan of salvation.³⁰

Moo is not the only scholar to reach this conclusion. Leon Morris adds, "If Rome was to be his base, the Romans would need to be assured of his message and theological position. Thus such a weighty epistle is very much in place."³¹ In other words, Paul's purpose was to prepare the Romans so that, once he arrived there, he would have a solid base of operations for his next missionary journey. Not only would he strengthen these distant Christians in their faith, they would also be equipped to support him as he pressed westward to proclaim the gospel where it had never been heard.³²

28. Colin G. Kruse, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 6-7. Colin Kruse is a senior lecturer in New Testament theology at the Melbourne School of Theology in Australia.

29. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 16. Here, Schreiner details several scholars who take this opinion.

30. Moo, *Romans*, 20-21.

31. Leon Morris, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 17. Leon Morris is a widely published evangelical author who served as Visiting Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

32. This is evident even among those writers who think that Paul's primary purposes lie elsewhere. Kruse looks at 15:15,16 and identifies the primary focus of Romans as Paul ministering "to believers for whom he had apostolic authority" (11). Nonetheless, as a secondary purpose, even Kruse admits that Paul is probably using Romans to pave the way for his next journey.

Along with these purposes comes an issue that is important for the thesis question. It is an issue that Paul spends much of his time discussing. As his reader considers the first half of Romans, it becomes clear that Paul was fighting a Jewish type of works-righteousness that disputed salvation by faith alone. This does not mean that the Jews in Rome were advocating such a belief, but for whatever reason, Paul found it necessary to take issue with Jewish legalism and speak against it in detail.³³ Some scholars struggle to understand how this relates to Paul's purposes as he prepared for his visit to Rome and a subsequent mission trip. However, at the very least, Paul's exhaustive treatment of this issue demonstrates that this works-righteousness could undermine everything he sought to accomplish after he got there.

Paul's Soteriology

This last point leads into Paul's main theme, which corrects this error and focuses on soteriology. Paul states this theme in 1:16,17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" This righteousness through faith answers the opposition that works-righteousness poses to the gospel. Even more, it is Paul's focus because it results in salvation. Therefore, it forms the key to Paul's mission work since it is for all people everywhere. Here at last one can begin to see how Paul's justification fits into the puzzle:

The theme of the letter is the gospel. And the message of the gospel is that God brings guilty sinners into relationship with himself . . . this message is nothing more than what we call justification by faith. And justification by faith is central to Romans and to Paul's theology also because it expresses, in the sphere of anthropology, a crucial element in Paul's understanding of God's work in Christ: its entirely gracious character.³⁴

With this as his foundation and context, Paul begins his great discussion on justification.

33. Schreiner, 18-19. Schreiner does not think that the Jews in Rome were committing these errors. Although he does not develop his thoughts fully, he does not find any evidence from Paul's manner of discussion that this false teaching reflected the beliefs of these Jewish Christians. Regardless, whether or not this was a problem in Rome takes nothing away from Paul's purposes: to disagree with Jewish legalism.

34. Moo, *Romans*, 29.

Part 4—Paul's Justification: an Exegesis of Romans 3:27–4:3

In chapter one Paul discusses the wicked nature of humanity and God's wrath against disobedience. In chapter two Paul brings the message closer to home as he makes it clear that nobody is exempt. Even the Jews, God's chosen people with his holy law, cannot boast because they too are disobedient (2:17ff). Therefore, Paul says, "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin" (3:20). Only now can Paul's audience appreciate his theme as he reminds them, "Apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (3:21,22).

In light of this background, Paul says to his listeners, "***Where, then, is this boasting? It has been excluded. On the basis of what law? On a law of works? No, but on the principle of faith.***"³⁵ (3:27, Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη. διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως.) Paul returns to the Jewish boasting (καύχησις) from earlier and engages his audience with the rhetorical idea "where (ποῦ), then, is this boasting?" Once again, Paul specifically wants to speak to Jewish Christians. These members of God's chosen nation might especially be tempted to boast "on the basis of a law of works" (διὰ νόμου τῶν ἔργων) and assume righteousness before God.³⁶ But Paul stands firmly on the ground that a boast relying on the law has been shut out completely (ἐξεκλείσθη³⁷). No (Οὐχί), he emphasizes, it is not through works that they can boast. Their boasting is excluded "on the principle of faith" (διὰ νόμου πίστεως).³⁸

35. The translations in this section and in the section on James 2:14-26 are based on the *New International Version–2011 Edition*, with adjustments from this writer's exegesis.

36. Kruse, 194.

37. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303. The aorist passive, along with the totality of the word's meaning, makes it apparent that the one who boasts through works of the law is unequivocally barred from salvation.

38. Literally, νόμου πίστεως means "law of faith." What does Paul mean if faith is what secures God's righteousness and not the law? Many scholars resolve this by translating both these examples of νόμος as "principle." Although this is a valid translation of νόμος in Romans (Kruse notes seven examples among its 74 appearances in Romans on 195-196), it does not match the context of 3:21 and 3:28 where νόμος simply means "law." However, Moo suggests that although "principle" does not suit νόμου τῶν ἔργων, it may just fit νόμου πίστεως (*Romans*, 249-250). This conclusion may seem strange if νόμου τῶν ἔργων cannot mean "principle of works," but Paul means to contrast the νόμου τῶν ἔργων he has been talking about all along. In addition, such an interpretation is not unprecedented. Paul shows a similar contrast in chapter seven where he finds a different νόμος at work that fights God's νόμος. "We know that the law (νόμος) is spiritual" (7:14), versus, "So I find this law (νόμον) at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me" (7:21). Certainly, this is not the God's law fighting itself, but a different

Paul explains himself as he dives into the heart of his teaching, "***For we conclude that a person is justified by faith alone, without the works of the law.***" (3:28, λογίζομεθα γὰρ δικαιούσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.) Paul has laid his groundwork so thoroughly that he feels his audience can easily conclude (λογίζομεθα³⁹) what this means for their salvation. What he has just said in verse 27 finds its basis (γὰρ⁴⁰) in this principle: an ἄνθρωπος—Jew, Gentile, whoever—is justified by faith. Works have no role in the process (χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου). Because of this it is proper to translate the simple πίστει in this section like Luther did as "a man is justified by faith *alone*." Even though the Greek adjective μόνος is not found in this section, "it is noteworthy that recent Catholic scholars agree that this inclusion of 'alone' correctly expresses Paul's theology."⁴¹ This is exactly what Paul means by justification throughout Romans. The status of spiritual righteousness comes solely by God's action as judge. God is the one who makes the declaration of "not guilty"⁴² that pardons the sinner. Paul consistently makes it clear the only way one can benefit from this message is by the God-given faith that trusts in it.⁴³ In summary, Paul's soteriology is bound up in a declarative, forensic justification by God's grace, which benefits through faith alone.

Here it is worth clarifying a question from the literature review: does James's generic ἔργων contrast Paul's more specific ἔργων νόμου? Many scholars think that it does. They believe Paul is talking about ceremonial observances of the law in Romans 3:28, which they find lacking

principle fighting against it. This kind of wordplay fits Paul's purposes in chapter three as well as any other since he intends to extinguish boasting in works. (For other interpretations, see Middendorf, 295 and Morris, 186.)

39. *BDAG*, 597. λογίζομαι generally denotes a belief held because of deep consideration, in a mathematical or rational way.

40. Kruse, 196. While the apparatus varies between γὰρ and οὖν, Kruse finds that the evidence for γὰρ is slightly more impressive and the context favors it. This verse sets up the precedent (γὰρ) for verse 27 and not the conclusion (οὖν) to be drawn from it.

41. Kruse, 197 (fn. 71).

42. Moo, *Romans*, 227. Moo explains that δικαιώω as a legal term is the intention here since Paul cannot mean "to make righteous" in this context. Rather, justification is a declaration about the sinner who is not righteous (3:10-20) that he is nonetheless righteous in God's sight. For this reason the traditional Lutheran explanation that God declares unworthy sinners "not guilty" is a fitting representation of Paul's justification.

43. Paul is always careful present faith as a passive agent throughout Romans. Paul always refers to faith as the means through which justification is obtained (διὰ + genitive) and not the basis for that justification (διὰ + accusative). In other words, faith is never a work that somebody must do to be justified. Perhaps the clearest example of this is when Paul discusses election in 8:28-30. There, justification follows predestination as a result of God's gracious election. Faith comes entirely as a gift from God, and only in this sense does faith justify.

in James 2:24. However, although Paul does seem to be talking about Jewish ceremonial laws with ἔργων νόμου, this is only because Paul wants to emphasize that even Jewish laws are excluded in boasting.⁴⁴ After all, Paul is speaking directly to a Jewish error in this section. Nevertheless, in Paul's thinking these ἔργων νόμου are representative of the whole. Throughout Romans Paul does not just exclude a Jewish legalism based on the Mosaic Law. Paul excludes any good deed that merits salvation before God. This will become clear in just a few verses where Abraham has no reason to boast in his works (4:2, ἔργων)—generic works that existed long before the Mosaic law was established, and yet, works that parallel ἔργων νόμου here.⁴⁵

Perhaps Paul can already imagine that some will disagree with this position. This is why he introduces a rhetorical question (with ἤ⁴⁶) and asks, ***"Or is God only the God of Jews? Is he not also the God of Gentiles? Yes, he is God of Gentiles too, because there is only one God. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by that same faith."*** (3:29,30, ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν, εἶπερ εἷς ὁ θεὸς ὃς δικαιοῦσιν περιτομῆν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.) Paul's οὐχὶ clearly expects the "yes" answer he is about to receive. As Paul appeals to God's "oneness" (εἷς), he introduces a truth that a Jew cannot dispute.⁴⁷ Since there is only one God, he must be the God who justifies all people—Jew or Gentile, circumcised (περιτομῆν) or uncircumcised (ἀκροβυστίαν)—by the same faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως⁴⁸).⁴⁹ For this reason, boasting in the works of the law cannot result in salvation. If there is only one God, this boasting would exclude those from salvation who do not have his law.

44. Compton, 25 (fn. 24).

45. Ibid. Further proof for this conclusion is found throughout Romans. Paul's concern in the letter is that all people are dead in sin and cannot employ any kind of meritorious deed for salvation. More specifically, Romans 9:11-12 defines these works as anything done to merit a response from God. Jewish ceremonial observances certainly fit under this umbrella, but Paul's prohibition of works for salvation extends beyond them.

46. *BDAG*, 432. "ἤ oft. occurs in interrog. sentences α. to introduce and to add rhetorical questions."

47. When Paul mentions God's "oneness," it is an obvious appeal to the important Jewish creed, the *Shema* (Dt 6:4): "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is *one* [emphasis added]."

48. Some commentators think it is significant that Paul uses different prepositions (ἐκ versus διὰ) for the Jews and Gentiles. Paul intends no distinction here. The articularized τῆς πίστεως indicates that the faith of the Gentiles is the same as the Jewish πίστεως right before it. To reflect this detail, numerous translations render the definite article as, "He will justify . . . the uncircumcised through the *same* [emphasis added] faith." In addition, Paul often uses these prepositions interchangeably "in general expressions applicable to all ('from faith,' ἐκ πίστεως, in 3:26; 'through [the] faith,' διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως, in 3:22,25, and again in 3:31)" (Middendorf, 301). For more examples where Paul uses these prepositions interchangeably, see Morris, 188.

The implications of Paul's message were striking for the Jews and for the law they treasured so dearly. The Jews "identified the law so completely with their nationhood and self-understanding as Jews," and "many Jews would think that Paul's line of argument *did* nullify the law."⁵⁰ Again, Paul has already anticipated the cry of disapproval that a Jewish opponent might hurl against him (this time, the shout of "antinomian!"). To this he replies, "***Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? May it never be! Rather, we uphold the law.***" (3:31, νόμον οὐ καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστάνομεν.) With as strong a negative as possible (μὴ γένοιτο⁵¹), Paul refutes the charge that he has nullified (καταργοῦμεν⁵²) the law. Instead, Paul declares, "Rather we uphold the law" (ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστάνομεν).

How can Paul make this claim after fighting so much against boasting in the law? What does Paul mean to communicate with the νόμος that he suddenly wants to uphold? Schreiner presents a compelling explanation when he understands this νόμος simply as,

A reference to the commands of the law . . . This fits with νόμος designating the prescriptions of the law in Paul. It also recalls (Rom. 2:26-27) and anticipates his positive comments on keeping the law (8:2-4; 13:8-10). The moral norms of the law still function as the authoritative will of God for the believer. The idea is not precisely that the law is fulfilled by faith in Christ, but rather that those who have faith in Christ will keep the law.⁵³

49. Morris, 187. "In an unexpected line of approach Paul tackles the subject from the standpoint of monotheism. Since there is only one God, it is unthinkable that the way of approach to him should be such that in principle only a small proportion of the people he has made can approach . . . The Jews insisted that there was only one God; they rejected the god of the heathen as no more than idols. Very well. Paul invites them to reflect on what that means."

50. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*. Vol. 38a of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 193.

51. The optative μὴ γένοιτο is grammatically the strongest way to express disagreement in Greek.

52. *BDAG*, 525. καταργέω means, "to cause someth. to lose its power or effectiveness, *invalidate, make powerless.*"

53. Schreiner, 207-208. Thomas Schreiner is a professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Schreiner details two other popular interpretations and convincingly explains why they are unsatisfying: (1) "The law is established in convicting and condemning sinners, preparing the way for faith in Christ. This view is unpersuasive because that emphasis is found in Rom. 2:1–3:20, not in 3:21-30. One has to leap over the existing context in identifying conviction as the function of the law in verse 31." And, (2) "The law is established insofar as it testifies to faith. Verse 21 supports this interpretation, for the law and the prophets bear witness to righteousness by faith . . . Nevertheless, the interpretation proposed for verse 31 here is still flawed . . . The connection between the establishing of the law in verse 31 and 'the law and the prophets' witnessing to righteousness by faith (v.21) is not apposite. Paul does not say there that the νόμος testifies to the righteousness of God, but that the νόμος καὶ προφήται do so. The latter term embrace the Scriptures as a whole, while νόμος by itself focuses on the prescriptions in the Mosaic law."

This understanding is appropriate because Paul does not nullify the law "by this faith" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). Instead, Paul uses faith to establish (ιστάνομεν) the law.⁵⁴ Faith may be Paul's focus, but faith gives new birth to the law. Even though the law is not a means of salvation, it is a testimony of God's holy will for all people of all time. Paul will focus on this topic of sanctification more in the second half of Romans when he examines the practical application of justification in the lives of believers. Paul is whetting his reader's appetite for what is to come and ensuring that any Jewish opponents do not stop listening.

Although Paul has expressed his point, one could argue that he has not provided ample proof for it. Paul provides that proof as he begins chapter four by saying, "**What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered about this? If Abraham truly was justified by works, then yes, he had something to boast about.**" (4:1,2a, Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα; εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραάμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα.). Here Paul appeals especially to Jewish sentiments when he calls Abraham "our forefather according to the flesh" (τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα⁵⁵). Paul tugs at his listeners' emotions and make his appeal with this close, physical connection to a cherished ancestor.⁵⁶ And what did the most significant Jewish patriarch find when it came to the whole matter of works, faith, and justification?

The Jewish legalists would claim that Abraham was "justified by works" (ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη), a common thought in Judaism during that time.⁵⁷ If this was the case, Abraham certainly "had something to boast about" (ἔχει καύχημα) and Paul's argument from before cannot stand. Nevertheless, Paul is justified by what Scripture has to say, "**But he cannot boast before God. What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and God credited his belief to him as righteousness."**" (4:2b, 3 ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν. τί γὰρ ἡ γραφή λέγει; Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ

54. Moo, *Romans*, 255. "The stress on *faith* as establishing the law suggests that it is law as fulfilled in and through our faith in Christ that Paul thinks of here."

55. Middendorf, 317. Middendorf notes that it is grammatically feasible that *κατὰ σάρκα* belongs to "discovered" (εὐρηκέναι) and indicates what Abraham found when it came to physical works. However, its most likely antecedent is τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν, which immediately precedes it.

56. This is heightened by the fact that προπάτωρ is an unusual word, a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. As our ears perk up with an unusual, rare word, so would Paul mean for his Jewish Christian readers to take notice of this emotive appeal.

57. Dunn, 200-201. Dunn proves this point by looking especially to Jewish rabbinical teachings, but one need not go that far. Jesus' interaction with the Jewish leaders of his time essentially demonstrated this to be true.

καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.) Paul knows that if Abraham himself could not boast about his works when face to face with God (πρὸς θεόν), nobody else can. And so Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

This citation is useful to Paul's purposes because it does everything to remove Abraham from the equation. Abraham is the passive recipient of the verb "credited" (ἐλογίσθη), which means he had no role in the process. The Hebrew text of Genesis 15:6 reinforces this point since God is actually the subject of the active verb "credited" (וַיַּחְשְׁבֵהוּ).⁵⁸ Additionally, the Hebrew idiom ל + חָשַׁב (εἰς + δικαιοσύνην⁵⁹) generally suggests a situation where something is credited to somebody that does not inherently belong to that person.⁶⁰ Furthermore, works do not play a role in this passage. Instead, this verse points to Abraham's trust in the message, which stemmed from faith and not from works.⁶¹ Paul does not even consider Abraham's faith to be a work that caused his justification. This is why emphasizes that Abraham had absolutely no grounds for boasting. Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, belief is mentioned for the first time in the Bible in Genesis 15:6, and it directly connects its bearer to justification.⁶² Faith that believes is the only thing God credits to a person as "justification."⁶³

One could continue into chapter four and extend this study on justification, but Paul has thoroughly proven his point in these eight verses. The only way a person is righteous in God's sight is because God has declared this person "not guilty" through what Christ has done.⁶⁴ The

58. וַיַּחְשְׁבֵהוּ לְיִשְׁרָאֵל בְּיַהֲוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֵהוּ לְיִשְׁרָאֵל

59. Wallace (47-48) share that the inclusion of εἰς in is not particularly significant. Εἰς + accusative often replaces the Hebrew ל and denotes the predicate nominative in Greek OT quotations.

60. Moo, *Romans*, 262. Moo provides several examples in the Old Testament where the idiom indicates this understanding: (1) Sacrifices that are given to a person's benefit (Lev 7:18; Nu 18:27,30), (2) Shimei, who confesses his sin and asks David not to hold his guilt against him (2 Sam. 19:20), and (3) the general situation of a sinner who can do nothing, and yet one to whom God does not credit sin (Num. 25, Ps. 106:31). In each case, "crediting" means asking somebody to regard another in a way that "overlooks, or does not respond to, the facts of the case."

61. Paul shows this in 4:5 where πίστις takes the place of πιστεύω and is credited to Abraham as righteousness. Faith and trust, which come from the same Greek root, are the same thing.

62. Kruse, 205.

63. Although the English translations generally translate this as "righteousness," Paul uses δικαιοσύνην to speak of justification in this context. Middendorf explains, "Greek has the obviously related noun, adjective, and verb, δικαιοσύνη, δίκαιος, and δικαιόω. English has 'righteousness' and 'righteous' for the first two, but again lacks a corresponding verb. Normally, English switches to 'justify,' which confuses those who miss the connection within the Greek (and Hebrew) word group" (92).

64. Christ's role in justification, though not the focus here, is plentifully visible in 4:24–5:2.

only way a person can benefit from this declaration is through faith, because works cannot make righteousness one's own. And as far as Paul is concerned, this justification brings about salvation in full. As he summarized for his listener in chapter one, salvation begins and ends with the faith that alone justifies.

Part 5—James's Context

While certain background issues in Paul's letter to the Romans are clear and provide obvious starting points, James's letter encounters questions at every turn. This makes studying James's context unusually challenging. Dan McCartney explains,

All these questions of introduction, authorship, dating, original audience, text, genre, and canonical acceptance are tangled together, and even the meaning of the text and the questions of introduction are interlinked. As a result, no obvious starting point presents itself. The question of authorship, for example, depends on when we date the letter and on the history of its use in the church, but dating is heavily dependent on identifying the original audience as well as the author, and the identity of the original audience is tied up with the author, date, and genre as well as the meaning of certain of James's statements. Change any piece, and the whole puzzle must be assembled differently.⁶⁵

Because of this it is fitting to begin with what a person can infer simply by reading James's epistle.

James's Style

James's style in writing is both impressive and distinct. Joseph Mayor notes what many scholars after him have also noticed: "I should be inclined to rate the Greek of this Epistle as approaching more nearly to the standard of classical purity than that of any other book of the N.T. with the exception perhaps of the Epistle to the Hebrews."⁶⁶ James's writing includes standard elements of classical Greek such as alliteration and wordplay. He also speaks with an extensive vocabulary that includes many *hapax legomena*⁶⁷ that are not found in the Septuagint

65. Dan G. McCartney, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 2. Dan McCartney is an adjunct professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

66. Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), ccxlv. Joseph Mayor is famous for producing one of the best early commentaries about James in the modern era. Today, every commentator on James references him in some way or another.

67. A *hapax legomenon* (or *hapax*) is a rare word that only appears once in the Bible.

or the New Testament, but are found elsewhere in classical Greek literature.⁶⁸ Curiously, however, despite these indicators of a classically capable author, the epistle also shows an unmistakable Semitic flair. James uses attributive genitives that resemble the unmistakable Hebrew construct state that any first-year Hebrew student knows well.⁶⁹ His love of praxis (using *καὶ* to join two sentences where classical Greek would use a subordinate clause) and the Hebraic *ידּוּ* (*יִדּוּ*, "behold") point to a Semitic background.⁷⁰ He uses words with an obviously Jewish flavor.⁷¹ James even writes in a cyclical manner, unlike the classic linear argumentation in Greek writings, but very much like the Old Testament.⁷² Thus, James's reader faces a curious contrast: a polished Greek writer who talks about Jewish matters in a Jewish way.

Furthermore, this unique style does not neatly fit among the categories of other New Testament works. The epistle of James seems to lack organization as the author moves from point to point without a clear structure. In this sense the letter resembles the wisdom literature that the Jews knew well from the Old Testament and the intertestamental period.⁷³ Nevertheless, while James's letter is similar to wisdom literature, it does not neatly fall into the category. Wisdom is not at all central to the book as a whole, and James does not include the brief proverbs that are distinctive to wisdom literature.⁷⁴ In response to these inconsistencies, Moo suggests a twist on the common claim that James is writing wisdom literature:

Perhaps the closest we can get to anything specific is to think of James as a sermon or homily. The author, separated from his readers by distance, cannot exhort them in person or at length. So he must put his preaching in written form, using a letter to cover briefly the main points that he wants them to understand."⁷⁵

68. McCartney, 5.

69. Ibid., 3-4. Examples of these attributive genitives include *ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησιμονῆς* (1:25, "hearer of forgetfulness") for "forgetful hearer," and *εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ* (1:11 "beauty of its face") for "its lovely appearance."

70. Ibid., 6.

71. Ibid., 7. One example is James's use of *γέεννης* ("hell") in 3:6, which was a Graecized form of the Hebrew *גֵּהֶנְמֹ*, and was unknown outside of Jewish circles. Another example is his use of *συναγωγὴν* in 2:2, which was known outside of Judaism (as a general "meeting place"), but plainly signifies a Jewish "synagogue" in the letter.

72. Ibid., 31.

73. Moo, *James*, 8. "The letter speaks directly about wisdom in a central passage (3:13-18, cf. also 1:5), and the brief, direct, and practical admonitions found at many places in the letter resemble the style of wisdom books from the OT (e.g., Proverbs) and the intertestamental period (e.g., Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon). Moreover, some of the concerns of James are also key concerns in these wisdom books (e.g., speech, dissension, wealth and poverty)."

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

There is value in this viewpoint. It fits the circumstances of an estranged pastor and a persecuted flock. When a person considers James's purpose in writing, this seems exactly the scenario that the author faced. This becomes noticeable when a person understands more about who James was, who his audience was, and when he wrote his epistle.

The Historical James

James begins his letter by saying, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). With nothing more than these plain words, he leaves it up to his reader to determine which James he is. Several possibilities exist from the biblical record: Was this James the son of Zebedee, a member of Jesus' inner circle? Was this James the Less, the silent disciple of Christ about whom little is known? Was this James the Just, the half-brother of Jesus himself and head of the Jerusalem Church? While a few scholars discuss this question at length, there is no reason to doubt the traditional assertion that this letter was written by James the Just of Jerusalem.

Ultimately, most people find it difficult to believe that any other James in the New Testament was famous enough to have written this epistle.⁷⁶ Peter Davids explains, "Indeed, in primitive Christianity there was only one James who was so well known and who assumed such a transcending position that his mere name would identify him sufficiently, James the brother of the Lord. Without doubt, James purports to be written by him."⁷⁷ As can be expected from the letter's style, one is certainly looking for a Semitic individual who was well versed in Jewish ways.⁷⁸ It just so happens that this particular James earned the title "Just" because he was a Torah-respecting leader. This makes him a likely candidate for this letter, which is focused on

76. McCartney (9) shares that the closest candidate would be James son of Zebedee, but scholars generally conclude his death was too early to allow him to have authored this epistle. His death is recorded in Ac 12:2, shortly before the death of Herod Agrippa I (Ac 12:23), which Josephus dates c. 44 AD.

77. W. G. Kümmel, as cited by Peter H. Davids, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle of James; A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 4. Peter Davids is a professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University and a part-time professor at Houston Graduate School of Theology.

78. Scot McKnight, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 31. McKnight discusses a common dispute that critics of this view hold: the early leaders of the church were "uneducated and ordinary men" (Ac 4:13). Thus, a Galilean like James could not write the polished Greek that the writer of this epistle demonstrates. To this McKnight simply responds, "Here we have the logical fallacy of applying what may have been the general situation statistically to a particular person. There are always exceptions to the average." Even more, this argument ignores that God poured out gifts on his early leaders that did not seem to match their humble beginnings. (e.g., Ac 2:7, "Aren't all these who are speaking [in tongues] Galileans?")

righteous deeds. Even more, this letter bears many small but striking similarities to a letter that James penned in Acts 15 from the Jerusalem Council.⁷⁹ Although these points are not conclusive by themselves, they just happen to build up an argument that supports the long established tradition of authorship.⁸⁰ Therefore, it is reasonable to make this conclusion the starting point.

James's Scattered Audience

More convincing proof for this James's authorship is found in the audience to whom he wrote. Again, since James approaches them with a simple introduction and provides no further credentials, one can assume that his audience must have immediately known who he was without this information. With that in mind, what audience best knew James the Just? The answer to this question also happens to be the traditional audience for the book of James. Namely, a Jewish audience in and around Israel would certainly listen to James the Just, their leader in Jerusalem (Ac 12:17, 15:13, 21:18). In support of this are several direct and indirect clues within the book of James that imply this kind of audience.

As for the direct clues, James refers to these people as "the twelve tribes scattered (*διασπορᾶ*) among the nations" (1:1) who are still gathering in the Jewish synagogue (2:2, *συναγωγῆν*). The inclusion of synagogue meetings and the terminology of "twelve tribes" and "Diaspora" do not necessitate a Jewish audience, but these references do provide a relatively clear starting point that first assumes Jewish readership. In support of this, a "scattering" would fit the Jews who had been forced out of Jerusalem in the persecutions of the early church (Ac 8:1). Also, James's inclusion of the Old Testament confession of the *Shema* (2:19) would have had significance only for Jews.⁸¹

The proof for this audience builds further with the more indirect clues. James discusses certain geographical and climatic features that are characteristic of no other Mediterranean

79. McCartney, 26. For example, James uses *χαίρειν* in the greeting of both letters (Ac 15:23; Jas 1:1). While this is the standard greeting in Hellenistic letters, it only comes up elsewhere in the NT in Claudius Lysias's letter to Felix (Ac 23:26). As another example, James describes God's name being called "upon" people in both sources. This passive form of *ἐπικαλέω* with *ἐπί* + accusative is not idiomatic Greek and is only found in these two places in the NT. Two examples may not prove much, but they are representative of the numerous similarities that commentators have found between these accounts. For a more complete study, see Adamson, 21-24.

80. Moo, *James*, 10-11. Moo goes on to explain that once the Church accepted James the Just as the book's author, the matter was settled until the criticism of the seventeenth century.

81. David P. Scaer, *James: The Apostle of Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 29. For more information about the significance of the *Shema*, see footnote 47.

setting but Palestine.⁸² He also refuses to address issues that would be more typical among a Gentile audience (such as Paul's polemic against sexual immorality, drunkenness, idolatry, slavery, etc.). Instead, he treats the more conventionally Jewish problems of class relationships between the rich and poor and a deceitful tongue.⁸³ And lest the reader forget, James's Semitic style would suit this Jewish audience quite appropriately. The natural understanding of all this evidence is that a Jewish individual was writing for a scattered Jewish audience in and around Israel.

Dating James's Epistle

The time at which the epistle was apparently written demonstrates all of these assertions more extensively. The general premise of the letter includes a Jewish society that appears much the same as the one seen in the gospels. Adamson remarks,

The Epistle includes rich farmers, merchants, and financiers as well as the distressed and oppressed poor. The two classes are found in sharp contrast in a period of comparative quiet, free travel, and arrogant wealth, which ended in the Jewish War and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, of which catastrophe the Epistle contains no mention . . . Nor is there any hint of a permanent breach with Judaism desolated by national defeat . . . Allusions to blasphemy and judicial harassment (2:6) recall the actions not of the Roman state (e.g., persecutions of Domitian or Trajan), but of the Jewish Sanhedrin; and these, we agree, "do not go further than anything described in Acts 8:1,3; 9:2 (compare 26:10); 11:10—in fact, not as far."⁸⁴

On the other hand, a late dating (after 70 AD) requires that the Jewish nation had been decimated by Rome. But this is untenable since "the loss of Jewish rank and riches also meant the loss of power to oppress. No loss of power is apparent in his Epistle; the opposite, rather, is the case (2:6,5:1ff)".⁸⁵ Along with this, if James the Just authored this epistle, his likely death date of 62 AD assumes that he had written it sometime earlier.⁸⁶ How much earlier could James have

82. Davids (14) points especially to the description of autumn and spring rains (5:7, *πρόϊμον και ὄψιμον*) that were known only Israel. McCartney (25) finds a distinctly eastern-Mediterranean setting in: (1) the mention of the *sirocco* (a scorching east wind) common in Palestine (1:11), (2) the chaotic nature of the sea which reflects a common Jewish aversion (1:6), and (3) the salt springs that are a unique feature in Palestine's Rift Valley (3:11).

83. Adamson, 27. James Adamson is the former Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Santa Rosa, California. He has earned a Ph.D. from Cambridge University for his study of the epistle of James.

84. Ibid., 25. The end of the quotation is taken from J. A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*.

85. Ibid.

86. Moo, *James*, 16. James's death date comes from Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.200-201). Though caution is advised in basing an argument on such a claim, it is nevertheless a small cog in the greater picture of dating James.

written this letter? Several indicators within the epistle seem to indicate that it was considerably earlier than 62 AD.

The first indicator is the total absence of the Jerusalem Council from the letter. Obviously, the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 was a significant event in which James played a major role. However, in a letter that revolves around various good deeds, James does not even allude to an event that concerned itself with various aspects of the law. Instead, " James consistently speaks positively of the law . . . there is no indication that anyone thinks of the law negatively, but only that some professing believers are failing to live in accordance with it."⁸⁷ That seems to suggest that James wrote his epistle before the Jerusalem Council. Consequently, if this is true, the book's circulation precedes circa 49 AD, the commonly accepted date for the Jerusalem Council.

Other indicators confirm this assertion. The simple church order of the synagogue is evident in James, contrasting the later, more developed church offices of bishops and deacons that are commonly found in Paul's letters.⁸⁸ Then, there is the "primitiveness of James's theological framework." McCartney elaborates on this "primitiveness" when he says,

The significant theological issues that occupied the minds of Paul, John, the authors of Hebrews and 1 Peter, and other NT writers—for example, the nature of redemption and the application of it to Jews and Gentiles, the significance of resurrection, the dynamics of sacraments, and the nature of the church—are only nascent or are simply absent in James.⁸⁹

On the one hand, a person will want to avoid the thought that Christianity's teachings evolved over time. On the other hand, it is proper to point out that certain theological terminologies (which describe changeless Christian truths) did evolve over time. This point is extremely compelling because it demonstrates what makes James unique among New Testament writings. James recasts Jesus' "kingdom of God" independently from the rest of Scripture.⁹⁰ Little in

87. McCartney, 17.

88. Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 6. Kistemaker notes that the one term of ecclesiastical hierarchy in James (πρεσβυτέρους in 5:14) was a common designation for leaders in Israel.

89. McCartney, 15.

90. Ibid. McCartney does mention one exception to this: James 5:12 ("Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no," ἦτω δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ Ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ Οὐ οὐ), which is echoed by Paul in 2 Co 1:17 ("so that in the same breath I say, 'Yes, yes' and 'No, no,'" ἵνα ἢ παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ Ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ Οὐ οὐ). However, this memorable statement from Jesus was likely circulated before the New Testament was written. Even Matthew employs this saying (Mt 5:37, "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'," ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναὶ ναί, οὐ οὐ.), and he probably wrote closer to James's

James bears linguistic similarity to the rest of the New Testament. But this does not mean James is a renegade. Quite the opposite, "James depends more than any other NT author on the teaching of Jesus. It is not that James directly quotes Jesus . . . It is, rather, that he weaves Jesus' teaching into the very fabric of his own instructions. Again and again, the closest parallels to James's wording will be found in the teaching of Jesus."⁹¹ James so closely connects to Christ's teachings because he wrote shortly after Jesus' time and had no other Christianized terminology to utilize.

When all of these details are considered, they suggest that James wrote his epistle early, likely within the period of 45–50 AD. The vast majority of non-critical, Christian commentators has also reached this conclusion that James is one of the earliest books of the New Testament, if not the earliest epistle.⁹² That conclusion ties everything back together. An early date supports the idea that James the Just wrote to Jewish Christians scattered from Jerusalem, because this scenario fits the epistle's implied world better than any other option.⁹³ With that the epistle's homiletical style also fits back in, because James communicates with authority in a way that is reminiscent of the Jewish sermons from this period.⁹⁴ "We can well imagine these early Jewish Christians leaving their homes, trying to establish new lives in new and often hostile environments, and, because of the sense of dislocation, losing some of their spiritual moorings. James, as their 'pastor,' would naturally want to encourage and admonish them."⁹⁵

James's Purpose in Writing

When James's epistle is seen as a message for a scattered congregation, his purpose in writing becomes clear. Moo gives an insightful look into this when he discusses how James

time. Of course, Matthew also speaks in-depth about the kingdom of God. Without delving too deeply into the matter, there is reason to think that at some point James may have had contact with Matthew and/or his gospel.

91. Moo, *James*, 7.

92. The following authors all date James early (45–50 AD) before any of Paul's epistles were written or widely circulated: Moo (*James*), 25-26; Scaer, 29; Adamson, 25-31; McCartney, 16-17; Mayor, cxlvi-cl; Lenski, 503-504; Kistemaker, 18-19; Blomberg and Kamell, 35; Davids, 21-22; and Jenkins, 71.

93. Those who doubt James's canonicity and assume a pseudonymous author support other options. Answering a critical approach is not the purpose of the thesis, but Appendix A does address this matter briefly.

94. Kistemaker, 4-5. Jewish sermons typically included "the use of dialogue, the method of addressing a synagogue audience with the term *brothers*, and the numerous subjects mentioned in the letter of James." These are all characteristics of James's epistle. As for James's authority, he includes 54 imperatives in the letter, not counting participles that function imperatively. Truly, this is appropriate language for the leader of the Jerusalem Church.

95. Moo, *James*, 11.

frames his argument: "Testing figures prominently in both the opening (1:2-4,12) and closing (5:7-11) sections of the letter, where James uses some similar vocabulary to make the link fairly obvious. Testing, then, while perhaps not the topic of the letter, is nevertheless, James suggests, the context in which it must be read."⁹⁶ Not only is this conclusion natural for an audience facing persecution, it fits the aural culture of James's world.⁹⁷ The fact that James begins and ends his letter with the theme of testing shows that this is something significant he wants his readers to use to frame the rest of their listening.⁹⁸ James writes what he does to help his audience overcome the temptations they would encounter in times of testing. And what would these temptations involve?

The natural tendency would be to throw in the towel and to give up. It could be tempting for a once-burning Christianity to lose its zeal and become tired and apathetic in the struggle. People might keep up appearances on the outside, but inwardly their passion would fade. That James identifies this problem is apparent throughout his exhortations whenever he describes a person who says something good without following up on it.⁹⁹ James calls this condition *δίψυχος* ("double-minded," 1:8, 4:8). A double-minded person talks the Christian talk but refuses to walk the Christian walk. This hypocrisy "was as much a problem in Judaism as anywhere else," and it would have been a special temptation for new Jewish Christians to fall back into past sins.¹⁰⁰

In a similar vein the tired and apathetic Christian might also be tempted to become lazy, giving in to antinomianism since Christ has fulfilled the law.¹⁰¹ This temptation would have been especially strong for the Jews who had converted to Christianity shortly after the time of Jesus. "In light of the liberating nature of the gospel, many Jews would have gladly welcomed

96. Ibid., 44.

97. An "aural culture" is one in which people are used to hearing messages rather than reading them. This was the case in many ancient cultures before written works were commonplace.

98. Davids, 37.

99. James displays this contrast throughout his writing. He describes the difference between listening to God's Word and actually forgetting what it says (1:19ff), between encouraging a poor man and actually favoring the rich (2:1ff), between holding to faith and actually rejecting works (2:14ff), between praising God and actually cursing humans (3:1ff), between acting humble and actually being selfish (3:13ff), and between claiming to follow God's ways and actually clinging to the world's ways (4:1ff).

100. McCartney, 55.

101. Antinomianism means that someone has no use for the law and therefore sees no obligation to comply with it. While a focus on antinomianism may not be as apparent as the one on double-mindedness, James assumes this problem throughout the letter. This is clear enough in the section of 2:14-26 where James fights the belief that works are separate from faith and thereby unnecessary. Such a viewpoint naturally has no use for law.

its freedom from the oppressive requirements of the Law. However, apparently some Jewish Christians thought that freedom from the Law gave them a freedom to sin."¹⁰² These believers needed support from their pastor to take sin seriously, to endure through trials, and to remain firmly on the path to eternal life.¹⁰³ Therefore, James reminds his listeners that a Christian does not just pay lip service to God's Word.

James's Soteriology

Perhaps one question remains: though James speaks a lot about practical matters for the suffering Christian, where is Christ in all of this? And the related question: what is James's soteriology? Regrettably, it seems that some people are so caught up in the issues of 2:14-26 that they miss the beautiful (if condensed) gospel that James has for his audience. If James's reader fails to persevere through the trials that he warns about (1:15), his immediate encouragement is, "Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. *Every* good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He *chose* to give us birth *through the word of truth*, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" (1:16-18; emphasis added). There is only one conclusion possible:

In no way can James' concept of salvation be regarded as synergistic. Christians are Christians because of God's will and not man's. "Of his own will he brought us forth." This rebirth from above happens at the Father's good pleasure . . . James shares with Paul, Augustine, and Luther himself a view of salvation that sees a depravity in man so severe that self-salvation is impossible. God is the only cause of salvation.¹⁰⁴

James confirms this in 1:21 when he says, "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." A person can do nothing to acquire salvation if God is the one who plants salvation in his people. Again, James is straightforward in 2:5 when he adds, "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" For James it all boils down to a God-given faith that trusts in God and clings to him for his grace. And just so that one does not sneak works back in as a solution, James clarifies, "For

102. Jenkins, 72.

103. In line with this, eschatology is another prominent theme that many commentators find in James. This insight is useful. It helps explain why James emphasizes works in 2:14-26. For more information, see Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36 of *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 42.

104. Scaer, 61.

whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (2:10). A person must keep the law perfectly to earn a way to heaven, but nobody can do that. Therefore, works will not suffice to inherit the kingdom. Just like Paul, James believes that humanity is totally depraved and cannot save itself.

Even so, although James is clear in his soteriology, it is strange that he only mentions Christ's name twice (1:1, 2:1) and otherwise says nothing else about him. But there are certain details about the context of this epistle that we simply will never know. On the contrary, James knew his audience better than anyone else could. This is why he preaches in the way he does. After reaffirming their salvation clearly, though briefly, James had ample reason to focus on other matters. As best as today's reader can tell, that reason involved special instructions from a pastor regarding the sins of double-mindedness and antinomianism. Evidently, James knew that he needed to emphasize these problems and their solution more than anything else. With that in mind, James writes what he does in 2:14-26.

Part 6—James's Justification: an Exegesis of James 2:14-26

Despite the variety of topics that James treats in his epistle, the section of 2:14-26 is straightforward. This is apparent with the thought that brackets the section in both verses 14 and 26: the connection between faith and works.¹⁰⁵ James White explains, "James 2:14-26 forms a single argument: verse 26 could be quoted immediately after verse 14 and the meaning would remain intact. Hence, a single point needs to be ascertained from the section."¹⁰⁶ That single point is simply that faith without works is not genuinely faith. Not only is this thought extant in these two verses, this exegesis will show how it is James's theme throughout the entire section.¹⁰⁷

James introduces this section by saying, "*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? This kind of faith is not able to save them, is it?*" (2:14, Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχῃ; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;) James begins with a rhetorical, "What good is it?" (Τί τὸ ὄφελος;), which he uses

105. Ἐὰν **πίστιν** λέγῃ τις ἔχειν **ἔργα** δὲ μὴ ἔχῃ (2:14), and **ἡ πίστις** χωρὶς **ἔργων** νεκρά ἐστίν (2:26).

106. James R. White, *The God Who Justifies* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001), 133. James White is the director of Alpha and Omega Ministries, an evangelical Reformed Christian apologetics organization in Phoenix, Arizona.

107. Moo, *James*, 119-120.

to introduce a premise he disputes.¹⁰⁸ In fact, James does not only disagree with this premise, he shows concern over it when he asks, "this kind of faith is not able to save him, is it?" (μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;) James makes it clear by the inclusion of μὴ, which expects a "no" answer, that more is at stake than his own disapproval of such a belief as a pastor. Both the content and context of this verse show that James is concerned because he sees his readers' eternity at stake. In this verse James worries that they cannot be saved (μὴ σῶσαι αὐτόν;) if they hold to an erroneous belief, and he just finished discussing eternal judgment (κρίσις) in 2:12,13.¹⁰⁹

What was the erroneous belief that has James so worried? Apparently, a temptation existed for James's readers to claim (λέγω¹¹⁰) saving faith (πίστιν τις ἔχειν), but they had no works to accompany that faith (ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχῃ). Again, James's crusade against double-mindedness is apparent, and in this particular case, the subtle danger of antinomianism accompanies it. Someone might sound Christian on the outside, but if no one knows it from the way this person acts, faith becomes an empty vessel that conflicts with God's desire for a believer to follow his law.¹¹¹ Besides the claim of faith, nothing else shows this person to be a Christian. James is worried about full-blown hypocrisy, that a mere outward claim to faith misrepresented what was really an inner lack of faith. Undoubtedly, James has his half brother's teaching in mind, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them" (Mt 7:19-20).

This is why James asks, "Can *such* a faith save him?" The definite article ἡ supports this translation, for "the use of the article . . . points back to a certain kind of faith as defined by the author."¹¹² When ἡ πίστις is defined by the previous clause, James is really asking whether a

108. Davids, 120. This expression is a common marker in Greek literature that indicates a writer's disapproval with a particular viewpoint.

109. Jenkins, 70. Additionally, a few scholars think that James is not talking about eternal salvation in this section. They therefore solve the thesis question by approaching it from the aspect of a physical deliverance from earthy trials. In view of the κρίσις in the previous verse and the eschatological links throughout the letter (1:21, for example, which obviously talks about an eternal salvation), this viewpoint is easily dismissed.

110. While λέγω generally means, "to say," in this context "to claim" (which several English translations adopt) accurately portrays James's intentions. White explains, "It is plainly (James's) intention to contrast the mere *claim* existing only in the realm of words with the true possession of real faith that is demonstrated by something more than speaking" (334).

111. A theme that is prevalent throughout the Bible, but particularly obvious in James 1:20: "Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

112. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 219.

"workless faith" saves. James does not want to dispute that faith saves a believer. In fact, by including faith as the subject of this question, James keeps it as the focus. However, James is worried about what kind of faith saves, and he makes it clear by the *μή* that a superficial faith has no saving qualities. As the literature review shared, *πίστις*, at least here in James, is "used in a more restricted sense to connote an intellectual assent to theological truth, but without the confluence of that assent with an internal confiding trust in and love of those truths."¹¹³ If James were to rephrase this into language that included both of these properties, he would really be saying, "Can a fake faith save him?" or "Can a mere claim to faith save him?" It is important to view the entirety of this section in this light. This question guides James's argument and explains why he gives the answer he does in 2:24. James never once asks whether genuine faith saves without works. James only asks whether faith without works is the genuine faith that saves.¹¹⁴

To support his point, James gives a simple illustration: "***Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?***" (2:15,16, *ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς εἴπη δέ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν, Ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὄφελος;)* Another *ἐὰν* indicates this is the same situation headed by *ἐὰν* in the previous verse, for this verse illustrates what James means in verse 14 by someone who has words but not works.¹¹⁵ A poor soul is without clothes, and yet the best a Christian brother or sister can offer are "only words: 'Goodbye, goodbye, be warmed and be fed—only I can do nothing for you!'"¹¹⁶ "Instead of food and clothing, the needy receive 'cold deeds with warm words,' which ring as hollow sentiments."¹¹⁷ James's readers might not have readily concluded, "what good is it?" along with him before, but common sense now demands that they affirm his rhetorical question. Mere words of well-wishing are no good to a brother or sister in need. Only action proves that a person truly means such words.

113. Jenkins, 65.

114. Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16 of *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 129.

115. McKnight (*James*, 232) also sees a connection between verses 14 and 16 in the repetition of *τί τὸ ὄφελος*, which forms an *inclusio* with 2:14. For an explanation of an *inclusio*, see footnote 133.

116. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 579.

117. Ralph P. Martin, *James*, vol. 48 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 85.

James summarizes his argument with the words, *"In the same way, faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself."* (2:17, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστὶν καθ' ἑαυτήν.) As James looks back at the previous few verses, he wants his reader to conclude (οὕτως καὶ¹¹⁸) that this particular kind of faith (again, note the definite article) is dead (νεκρά). Though James has been using the terminology πίστις all along, how clear it is that this is not really πίστις at all. After all, the best attribute James can give it is the status of being dead. At best, this πίστις only resembles faith as adequately as a corpse resembles a human being.¹¹⁹

To make sure nobody misunderstands him, James repeats that the only faith he disapproves of here is one that "does not have works" (μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα) and "is by itself" (καθ' ἑαυτήν). Notice the implications:

Obviously, the reverse of this assertion would be that faith that does possess deeds would be a living faith that, we would then assume, can save. Saving faith, by nature, will ἔχῃ ἔργα, possess deeds. Dead faith, by nature, is useless due to the fact that it lacks a *constituent part of saving faith*, that being evidence of its existence in the form of deeds. Already one conclusion can be drawn: The contrast in this passage is not between faith and works but between *dead faith* and *living faith*.¹²⁰

Faith is James's focus. He has no interest in overcoming saving faith. Therefore, James discusses "faith" versus faith: false faith that does not produce works versus genuine faith that does produce works. In connection to this point, notice that "faith itself (not merely the believer!) has (ἔχῃ) works."¹²¹ James is methodically trying to convince his reader that works will demonstrate faith because true faith must have works.

With this in mind, James moves to his next thought as he considers a related issue that needs to be addressed. James says, *"But someone will say, 'One has faith; Another has deeds.' Prove to me your 'faith' without deeds, and I will prove to you my faith by my deeds."* (2:18, Ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις, Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγὼ σοὶ δεῖξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.) In this verse James's present-day reader encounters what has

118. *BDAG*, 742. The standard meaning of οὕτως καὶ is to "[summarize] a thought expressed in what precedes," or to "[draw] an inference fr. what precedes *so, hence*."

119. Scaer, 88-89. "The use of the word 'dead' suggests the corpse imagery. A dead faith has all the organic parts of a living faith but has no movement and does not do anything. It is just there. The vital force is missing."

120. White, 338-339.

121. Laato, 62.

been called "one of the most difficult New Testament passages in general." At the same time, this passage "is not *a crux interpretum* . . . the general sense of the verse is clear enough in its context, but the exact nuance of the words is indeed difficult."¹²² The questions vary: Is this James's ally or an opponent who is speaking? Since Greek does not natively possess punctuation, where do the speakers change? How does one understand the pronouns here?

In short, James introduces an imaginary interlocutor (the vague *τις*) whom he employs to prove his point. The adversative *ἄλλ'* at the beginning of the section suggests that the interlocutor disagrees with what James had to say in 2:14-17. But the interlocutor emphasizes that he has works (*κατὰ γὰρ ἔργα ἔχω*), which seems like an argument in support of James. As a result, some have concluded that James employs the interlocutor as a defender of his position.¹²³ However, James's style here is a diatribe, a well-known device in ancient writing that employs an interlocutor to raise objections against the writer's own viewpoint.¹²⁴ Therefore, to make sense of this discrepancy, several exegetes favor taking the pronouns *Σὺ . . . κατὰ γὰρ* generically as "one has faith, the *other* has works." An impersonal use of personal pronouns is a unique solution,¹²⁵ but this interpretation does the least violence to the Greek text.¹²⁶ Additionally, it fits the context well. In the whole of 2:14-26, James seeks to combat inauthentic faith that separates itself from works. Consequently, it makes sense for an opponent to say the two are "unconnected items

122. Davids, 123.

123. For more details about this interpretation, see Scot McKnight, "James 2:18a: the unidentifiable interlocutor," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, no. 2 (September 1, 1990): 546, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2013).

124. The adversative *ἄλλ'* and the *τις* (whose parallel in verses 14 and 20 is an opponent of James) both support the diatribe. To this point, Moo (*James*, 127) adds that James's words here (*ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις*) are similar to examples of diatribes elsewhere. Most notable is an example in 1 Co 15:35-36 (*Ἀλλὰ ἐρεῖ τις, Πῶς ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί; ποίῳ δὲ σώματι ἔρχονται; ἄφρων*). Paul uses the same introductory formula as James, and he also voices disagreement by calling his interlocutor "foolish" (though Paul uses the synonym *ἄφρων* instead of James's *κενέ*).

125. Moo cites only one other example of this in Greek literature (*James*, 129). Davids argues that *ἄλλος . . . ἄλλος* would have indicated this understanding more closely (*James*, 123). However, despite this lack of evidence, a good number of scholars favor this interpretation because it otherwise fits in well. Among this thesis's sources are Moo (*James*), 129; Davids, 124; McCartney, 160; Mayor, 100; McKnight (*James*), 363; Kistemaker, 93. As a result, I tentatively lean in this direction, understanding the issue to be a complicated one.

126. Blomberg and Kamell share another popular interpretation that demonstrates the so-called violence that can be done to the text. Namely, when only the first three words of verse 18 are taken as the interlocutor's speech: "The questioner addresses James, 'Do you [even] have faith [at all since you stress works so much]?' James's suppressed reply would then be 'yes,' and he continues explicitly, 'and I have works. Show me your faith . . .!' But this view switches speakers at an unusual point. 'And I' reads far more naturally as the second half of the objector's words rather than as a follow-up to a suppressed" (133). Obviously, this is not an easy issue.

pertaining to one's faith . . . faith in God saves, and works are an option. This means then that πίστις is understood here as James criticizes it, as faith which does not issue into works."¹²⁷

Regardless, no matter how a person interprets this verse, James's point is simple: faith and works are not separate, unrelated concepts. This is why James naturally picks up the dialogue with, "I will show you my faith by my deeds" (καὶ γὰρ σοὶ δείξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν). James is so eager to prove (δείξω¹²⁸) his faith because he knows that a mere claim to faith amounts to nothing (2:14). But he is able to prove the genuineness of his faith by works (ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου). This is the key. This is why works are so important in James's theology. James realizes that if somebody cannot provide an external demonstration of faith, the internal reality is in doubt.¹²⁹ James continues to view faith as the saving agent, but if he wants to show his faith, he will do so with works. This is James's fear for the interlocutor who refuses to follow God's law. If he will not show his faith with the works of obedience that come naturally for the Christian, does he even have faith?

Ultimately, James realizes that this antinomian approach is dangerously symptomatic of a deeper problem: "***You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.***" (2:19, σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουσιν.) This is a natural, yet shocking conclusion for James to make as he responds to the interlocutor who says that works do not matter. James's insinuation is apparent: the confession of this interlocutor is outwardly no different from the personal conviction of a demon. Even a demon intellectually accepts the true God, but this does not make the so-called πίστις of a demon saving faith.¹³⁰ Clearly, James means "you do well" (καλῶς ποιεῖς) in a sarcastic manner, because the implications of what he says are stunning. Dowd explains,

127. McKnight, "The Unidentifiable Interlocutor," 363.

128. Moo, *James*, 130. The verb usually means "show" in the NT, but "the verb can also mean 'prove, demonstrate' (e.g., Matt. 16:21; Acts 10:28), and the only other occurrence in James (3:13) has this meaning: 'Let [the wise person] demonstrate on the basis of his good conduct that his works are done in the humility of wisdom.' James, then, may not be challenging the objector to reveal faith by actions, but to prove that he has faith by what he does—something that James himself is fully prepared to do."

129. White, 341. "James calls for a demonstration that is (1) personal, and (2) observable. In 2:18 this challenge is in the form of an argument . . . 'Show me' is the challenge: it is placed squarely within the human realm. It involves providing observable evidence within the realm of human knowledge. Therefore, it must involve *external* demonstration, not merely the claim of the existence of an *internal* reality (faith)."

130. The grammar also supports this conclusion. Fung explains that James indicates an intellectual assertion only with πιστεύεις ὅτι instead of the internal commitment of πιστέω followed by ἐν, εἰς, or a dative (151). BDAG supports this interpretation in entry 1aβ for πιστεύω (816).

With a sarcasm worthy of Paul, he pretends to praise the interlocutor's claim to have faith because he affirms the basic claim that sets Jews and Christians apart from the pagan world: "God is one." "You do well!" . . . He says, in effect, "So, you are a monotheist. Congratulations! You have now achieved the spiritual maturity of a demon!" That demons are orthodox is the view of other New Testament writers as well (Mark 1:24; 5:7; Acts 16:17; 19:15). But since demons are by definition damned, any "faith" that can be attributed to the most implacable opponents of God's reign is certainly "not able to save" anyone (2:14).¹³¹

James has certainly caught his Jewish listeners' attention. They all made the same confession "God is one" twice daily in the *Shema*.¹³² This message is not just for James's imaginary opponent. James wants all of his readers know that if faith is merely outward confession, it amounts to nothing. In light of this, James goes on to make his strongest appeal yet. "***You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is dead? Was not our father Abraham justified for what he did after he offered his son Isaac on the altar?***" (2:20,21, θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστιν; Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνευέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον;) Verse 20 forms an *inclusio* with verse 26,¹³³ which shows that James is entering into a new section here. But in this new section James continues to address the interlocutor with the 2nd person singular verb (θέλεις, continuing the σὺ from the previous verse) and the vocative (ὦ ἄνθρωπε).¹³⁴ With his strong phraseology, "Oh foolish man!" (ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ), James makes it clear that this opponent may reject his premise with a hard heart. Therefore, James "turns to two excellent models from the Hebrew Scriptures to prove his point to a Jewish audience."¹³⁵

131. Dowd, 198.

132. Mayor, 100. For more information on the *Shema*, note the discussion in footnote 47.

133. An *inclusio* is where the same (or very similar) words are placed at the beginning and end of a section to bracket that section as one thought. Here, the two verses contain almost entirely the same phraseology (2:20, ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστιν; 2:26, ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστιν). The only exception is the different predicate adjectives (ἀργή vs. νεκρά), which hardly matters since James uses these two words interchangeably. Additionally, it is worth noting that the ἀργή of verse 20 presents the most significant textual variant in this section. Some scholars (see Blomberg and Kamell, 136 (fn. 56)) prefer James's wordplay with ἀργή (ἀ + ἔργον, similar to catchwords James uses in 1:2-8) and think that the variant νεκρά is too easily imported from 2:17 or 2:26. However, the majority of evidence (both ancient and widespread) prefers the reading of νεκρά. If νεκρά is the true reading, it would further strengthen the *inclusio* and point to 2:20-26 as a self-contained unit.

134. Many commentators are unanimous on this simple point regarding the interlocutor, which will be very important later to help define James's δικαιοῦ. (White, 334; McCartney, 161; Moo (*James*), 131; Blomberg and Kamell, 135-136; Martin, 90; Davids, 126; Kistemaker, 95) Other commentators simply do not discuss whom James addresses here or do not say enough to discount the interlocutor as a possibility.

135. Blomberg and Kamell, 145.

James's first figure is none other than the prominent Abraham, whom all Jews referred to as "our father" (ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν). Certainly, this inclusion would cause his Jewish Christian audience to listen, but notice what James says about Abraham. "Was not our father Abraham justified for what he did?" (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη;) Instead of using a μή like before, which his audience may have expected, James uses οὐκ to show that he actually expects a "yes, Abraham was justified (δικαιώω) by works." Obviously, the most important question here revolves around the proper meaning of δικαιώω. Since this question is so significant and multifaceted, it will be treated in a separate excursus. For the time being, this passive form of δικαιώω will simply be rendered as "to be justified."

To explain how Abraham could be "justified by works," James immediately defines his works as, "having offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (ἀνεέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον). Of course, James is speaking about the famous sacrifice of Isaac that Abraham was ready to offer on Mt. Moriah. But what does James mean by the participle ἀνεέγκας? This participle could have a causal ("because he offered up"), temporal ("after he had offered up"), or instrumental ("by offering up") sense, but the significance of the participle is its aorist tense.¹³⁶ This means that it "is logically, at least, prior to the verb 'justified' in the main clause."¹³⁷ No matter how the interpreter renders the participle, Abraham's justification was somehow based on this sacrifice he was ready to offer. Again, James has made it clear to his interlocutor that he cannot separate works and faith. Even Abraham's example shows that works are important.

James explains this further when he says, "***You foolish man—You see that his faith was working together with his deeds, and you see that his faith was brought to its goal by what he did.***" (2:22, βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη.) This point is so clear that James says his interlocutor can simply see it (βλέπεις¹³⁸). In other words, James is saying, "You can easily see that real faith includes works, because just like I

136. Blomberg and Kamell, 137. "James may intentionally have not qualified the participle in order to leave both causal and instrumental options open." While we like to pinpoint specific uses of Greek participles, James is not concerned enough to clarify the ambiguity. Instead, James is concerned about the logical order of this participle in relation to Abraham's justification.

137. Compton, 37.

138. *BDAG*, 179. While a writer may use βλέπω in various senses, it most often connotes the very physical sense of sight. There is no reason to depart from this definition here. James simply points his interlocutor to the obvious work that Abraham accomplished in offering Isaac on Mt. Moriah, which anybody could perceive.

proved my faith to you before, Abraham proved his faith by what he did." As the subject of this sentence, James makes it clear that faith must come first, and it must always be the focus.¹³⁹ However, faith is not just a confession without any driving force. Faith constantly works together (*συνήργει*¹⁴⁰) with works.

James does want to draw special attention to works, for the *καὶ* also attaches *βλέπω* to the second half of this verse as well. This makes the meaning of *ἐτελειώθη* especially significant. Does James mean to contradict himself when he says that the interlocutor can see faith is "completed" or "perfected" by works? Here it is worth noting that the verb *τελειόω* more generally means, "bring to an end, bring to its goal/accomplishment." It only achieves the more distinct meanings of "completed" or "perfected" in context.¹⁴¹ When a person keeps this in mind, James's purpose is single-minded as he stays focused on faith,

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son not only showed his faith to be real, but also through his obedience his faith actually "grew up." Abraham's faith was not mature until he acted upon it. In the process he learned more about God's character, further bolstering his faith. His confidence in God's trustworthiness was "brought to the goal for which it was intended."¹⁴²

This is preferable to translating, "his faith was perfected by works," because that would imply Abraham's faith was imperfect before he did any works.¹⁴³ James wants to emphasize works, but he is not about to do it in a synergistic way that makes works a saving component of faith. James has already made it clear in the wider context of the epistle (1:21, 2:5,10) that works play no role in a person's salvation. Even so, in 2:14-26 James affirms that genuine, saving faith will nonetheless produce works. As such, the idea that Abraham's faith matured and was "brought to its goal" supports James's intentions well.

So that his interlocutor does not misunderstand him, James elaborates on this topic even further by quoting Genesis 15:6, a familiar passage to his listeners, "*And the scripture was*

139. The predominance of faith over works shows up again and again on a grammatical level in James. In this verse James conjoins *πίστις* and *ἔργα* for the seventh and eighth times (out of ten) in 2:14-26. In every instance (with the exception of 2:18 where the interlocutor purposely separates *πίστις* and *ἔργα*), *ἔργα* is subordinate to *πίστις*, either as an object to its subject or a prepositional phrase to its object.

140. Laato, 63. Laato aptly notes that, as the only imperfect in the book, the progressive action of *συνήργει* is particularly emphatic.

141. *BDAG*, 996.

142. Blomberg and Kamell, 137.

143. Lenski, 592.

confirmed that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend." (2:23, καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἡ λέγουσα, Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.) Here, one must conclude that if James were promoting a blatant synergism, he just destroyed his own argument.¹⁴⁴ As the study on Romans 4:3 detailed, this passage completely removes Abraham from the equation. No work of Abraham contributed to his receiving righteousness (δικαιοσύνην). This righteousness was entirely God's gift through faith (Ἐπίστευσεν). Thus, James balances his argument by including this passage. On the one hand, James does not want anyone to think that works contribute when God "credits righteousness" (ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην) to someone.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, James includes this passage to show the connection between works and faith.

The key words that make this connection are "and it was fulfilled" (καὶ ἐπληρώθη). With καὶ James connects the discussion of Abraham's faith in this verse with his works in 2:21,22, and with ἐπληρώθη James shows that God's declarative justification of Abraham (Ge 15:6, Js 2:23) was fulfilled by what Abraham did later in his life (Ge 22, Js 2:21). In other words, Genesis 22 fulfills Genesis 15 in a probative sense.

To say that Genesis 15:6 was "fulfilled" is to say that the event recorded there was "proven" or "confirmed" or "shown to be true." James does not deny that Abraham was given a righteous standing before God on the basis of his faith, nor that this occurred well before he offered Isaac in obedience to God's command. Rather, James emphasizes that Abraham's faith was a true, saving faith and that God's verdict in Genesis 15:6 was reconfirmed in Genesis 22 on the basis of the works that Abraham's faith produced.¹⁴⁶

Compton understands πληρώω in view of the historical reality of Genesis 15:6. Since Genesis 15:6 had already happened, Genesis 22 "fulfilled" it by reaffirming its truth.¹⁴⁷ James's ἐπληρώθη

144. Scaer, 93. "It is preposterous that a writer as careful and so literally gifted as James would have chosen an Old Testament passage proving the exact opposite of what he was attempting to demonstrate."

145. Rakestraw, 46. "While the argument could proceed smoothly from v 22 directly to v 24 (and would certainly seem to *strengthen* the argument thereby!), James adds v 23 to emphasize the faith-foundation."

146. Compton, 41.

147. William Varner, *The Book of James a New Perspective: A Linguistic Commentary Applying Discourse Analysis* (n.p.: Kress Biblical Resources, 2010), 114. The English word "fulfill" often conveys the idea of a prediction or prophecy, but "Gen. 15:6 is a past tense indicative statement, not a future prophetic announcement. The verb πληρώω here means 'give true or full meaning,' as it does in Matt. 5:17 and Gal. 5:14."

means that Genesis 22 has given "true or complete meaning" to Genesis 15:6.¹⁴⁸ It proves that Abraham did have the faith that God credited to him. To say it in another way, "Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son richly filled his earlier profession of faith with fuller meaning."¹⁴⁹ Abraham's faith was perfectly salvific by itself, but he proved its authenticity when he later acted according to that faith.¹⁵⁰

After much buildup, James finally gets to the application of his sermon when he says, "**My listeners—you see that a person is justified by what he does and not only by a claim to faith.**" (2:24, ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.) James's lesson to his interlocutor should not be taken in isolation, and now James uses the 2nd person plural (ὁρᾶτε) to apply the lesson to all of his listeners. What James has illustrated with various pictures he makes into a general truth that anybody (ἄνθρωπος) can apply: "a person is justified by what he does (ἐξ ἔργων) and not only by faith (ἐκ πίστεως μόνον)." Again, it is important to remember the context in which James spoke these words. When James says this, he means to say that a person is justified by works and not by a fake faith that exists only as a claim.

The grammar of this verse further adds to a proper understanding of the section. With ὁρᾶτε ὅτι James continues to point towards the probative nature of good works. Unlike a verb of perception (like ὁράω) plus a participle, the construction with ὅτι generally connotes "an intellectual apprehension merely, an opinion or judgment."¹⁵¹ Just as the interlocutor could easily observe how Abraham's works proved his faith, so also James tells his listeners to do the same thing here. In addition, the inclusion of μόνον seems significant since this is the only place in the Bible where it is actually used with πίστις. However, as an adverb μόνον more readily

148. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (United Bible Societies: New York, 1988), 405. Louw and Nida list this as a legitimate meaning for the verb when there is no prophecy involved.

149. Blomberg and Kamell, 137.

150. Interestingly, the context of Genesis 15:6 shows that Abraham specifically believed God's promise to provide him with offspring. In Genesis 22 Abraham demonstrated through his actions that he still believed God's promise. As he prepared to sacrifice his only son, Abraham trusted that God would keep that promise, even if he had to raise Isaac from the dead. (Heb 11:17-19, "By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.")

151. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 1041.

modifies the whole clause and not just *πίστεως*.¹⁵² Thus, James is really saying, "you see that a person is justified . . . *not only* by faith." This translation does not directly connect *μόνον* with *πίστεως* (as many English translations suggest with "faith alone"), but *πίστις* is obviously the fake faith that James has been talking about all along. James does not need a modifier to indicate this. Instead, James uses *μόνον* because he does not want to undermine the intellectual aspect of faith. This will not benefit if it is all there is, but it is an essential part of faith. When James's reader combines the two grammatical points concerning *ὀρᾶτε* and *μόνον*, the message is simple: a Christian combines the knowledge of faith with trust in that faith, and trust expresses itself by works.¹⁵³

As James goes into the last couple of verses, he reinforces his argument by introducing a second significant figure from Jewish history. ***"In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute justified for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."*** (2:25,26, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐτέρα ὁδῶ ἐκβαλοῦσα; ὡσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.) With *ὁμοίως* James means to show that Rahab is a parallel case to Abraham himself.¹⁵⁴ This is a surprising addition. All Jews looked up to Abraham as a prominent figure, but Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute (*ἡ πόρνη*, as James makes special emphasis of here). Nonetheless, James finds reason to include Rahab as he rounds out his argument. With this example James "implies that anyone is capable of acting on his or her faith—whether a patriarch or a prostitute."¹⁵⁵ Abraham had received an explicit command from God, but "(Rahab) carries out God's will without command. She is in fact a better example than Abraham in demonstrating that faith must express itself in works, as she acts in response to no specific directive."¹⁵⁶

152. Davids, 132. Compton also admits that if *μόνον* modified *πίστεως*, it would certainly fit James's purposes well, but this "assumes a rare use of the adverb as an adjective" (44). On the other hand, he notes, "The adverb as modifying an implied verb 'justified,' [is] supplied by ellipsis from the first part of the verse" (43).

153. While some commentators have made a point to discuss James's use of *ἐκ*, I do not find much value in attempting to attribute a very specific understanding to the preposition here. Paul himself proves that Greek prepositions are somewhat ambiguous when he uses *ἐκ* and *διὰ* interchangeably to describe how a person is saved "through faith" (see footnote 48 for more discussion).

154. Lenski, 597.

155. Moo, *James*, 143.

156. Scaer, 94.

No matter who someone is, and no matter what obvious (or not so obvious) way this person has to follow God's will, he or she will want to have good works just like Rahab. These will show that one's faith is not the purely confessional faith that to demon can have (2:19). Rather, it is genuine faith that has works (2:17) and therefore can show itself to others (2:18b, 2:21), to God himself (2:23), and even, in light of James's serious warnings (2:14,20,26), to oneself. If faith is "without works" (*χωρὶς ἔργων*), it is truly like "the body without the spirit" (*τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος*). It is an empty shell of a body, unable to do anything because inwardly it has no life. But if a person has works, he or has a living faith (with *πνεύματος*) that is not dead. James's approach is certainly counter-intuitive, but it accomplishes his purposes well.

The hearer expects the visible and external (body) to correspond to works and the invisible and interior (spirit) to correspond to faith, especially since faith cannot even be known to exist unless it is demonstrated by works (2:18b). But the expected correspondences would not serve the argument. James regards faith as the lifeless shell that must be animated by active works. He has already said that faith without works is dead (2:17). The manner in which he constructs this final similitude portrays intellectual assent to propositions without the life-giving force of active commitment as nothing but a cadaver.¹⁵⁷

Real faith is more than just lip service. This was the message that James's audience needed to hear as they were confronted with the dangerous paths of antinomianism and double-mindedness. The law itself, and whether a person follows that law, actually does matter. If faith dismisses the good works that follow the law, it is not really faith, because faith includes the fruit that identifies it. Mayor's simple explanation is appropriate here: "as a tree is perfected by its fruit, so faith by its works."¹⁵⁸ Although good fruit does not cause a tree to be healthy, it testifies whether the tree is healthy, because a healthy tree will have good fruit. Likewise, good works do not cause a person to be saved, but they do testify whether a person is saved, because a believer will have good works.

Part 7—An Excursus on James's Use of Δικαίω:

With the exegesis as a background, James's reader is finally able to tackle the thesis's biggest question: what does James mean by *δικαίω*? James's focus in this section is clear by

157. Dowd, 202.

158. Mayor, 104.

now, but why does he connect justification with works when Paul absolutely refuses to do so? In short, does James disagree with Paul on justification? As was mentioned in the literature review, there are two ways to understand James's *δικαιόω*. James could be using *δικαιόω* in a declarative sense where, similar to Paul's use of the word, he points to God's subsequent or final declaration of "not guilty" based on the works of a Christian who has already come to faith. Or, James could be using *δικαιόω* in a demonstrative sense where, in a way that Paul never uses the word, he points to works as what a Christian has to show that faith is real

The scholars who advocate James's use of a declarative justification in 2:14-26 will generally point to four main proofs: (1) A declarative use of *δικαιόω* is by far the most common meaning for this verb. (2) Since James quotes a clear example of declarative justification in Genesis 15:6, he must be talking about declarative justification in the remainder of 2:20-26. (3) The similar language between Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 shows that James is responding to Paul and using his definition for justification. And, (4) verse 14 determines that the focus in this section is on acquiring salvation, not just on a demonstration of faith. However, as compelling as each of these points sounds, they are disproved when one considers the context of James's world and the specific message of 2:14-26. This excursus will counter these four assertions in reverse order.

James is Not Focusing on Salvation

(4) Verse 14 determines that the focus in this section is on acquiring salvation, not just on a demonstration of faith. Moo defends this viewpoint in contrast to the demonstrative view when he says, "More important is the overall thrust of this passage, established by the broader context, in which the issue is what constitutes the 'true religion' that will survive the judgment of God (1:21-27; 2:12-13), and by the specific question raised in v. 14: will "that kind of faith" save a person?"¹⁵⁹ However, although the matter of judgment is an important consideration for these verses, Moo has mistaken James's motivation for writing 2:14-26 with its focus. His reader's salvation may be the catalyst for what he says, but James's focus in this section is different:

The issue then may be indeed called soteriological; but caution is advisable here. As we noted before, James' concern is not "how to get in" but "how to stay in." Saving faith is

159. Moo, *James*, 135.

for him something lasting, not just initial. He addresses people who are already Christians, not potential converts. The aspect of the *iustificatio impii* is not his scope.¹⁶⁰

James is not worried about detailing how the wicked are justified. A proper understanding of salvation was not a problem for James's audience, and this was not what they needed to hear. Instead, James concerns himself with what kind of faith is able to persevere until the last judgment. In other words, James focuses not so much on salvation as he does on the kind of faith that procures salvation.

James's argument throughout 2:14-26 bears this out. He "does not comment on *ἐδικαιώθη* (v. 21) or *ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην* (v. 23). He draws no direct connection to the themes of salvation in v. 14."¹⁶¹ Instead, James worries about whether his audience's claimed faith is real faith, and that concern fuels his writing here. Since James realizes that his listeners may struggle in this particular area, he focuses on what real faith looks like and how it must have works to be genuine. "This main point is directly stated at least four times in this discourse: at the beginning (2:14), middle (2:17,20), and end (2:26)."¹⁶² James wants to prove faith. For this reason, a demonstrative justification that proves a person's faith is appropriate for his purposes.

James is Not Responding to Paul

(3) *The similar language between Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 shows that James is responding to Paul and using his definition for justification.* This point is straightforward. When you lay the English of these two verses next to each other, they appear to parallel each other directly.¹⁶³ In addition, each author quotes Genesis 15:6, and they include the same perspective of Abraham as "father (*πατὴρ ἡμῶν* in Jas 2:21, versus *προπάτορα ἡμῶν* in Ro 4:1). As a result, many have concluded that James is specifically responding to Romans 3:28 and must intend the same kind of justification as Paul.

160. Wiard Popkes, "Two interpretations of "justification" in the New Testament: reflections on Galatians 2:15-21 and James 2:21-25," *Studia Theologica* 59, no. 2 (January 1, 2005), 138, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 28, 2013).

161. *Ibid.*, 135.

162. McCartney, 161.

163. Moo, *James*, 140. Moo demonstrates this simply by laying the English verses against each other:

"Jas. 2:24:	A person	is justified	by works	and not by faith alone
Rom. 3:28:	A person	is justified	by faith	and not by works of the law."

However, after considering these sections in exegesis, this conclusion does not fit. For starters, James uses slightly different vocabulary when he focuses only on ἔργων and not on the ἔργων νόμου that are Paul's focus in Romans 3.¹⁶⁴ In addition, although James's "not by faith alone" seems directly to contrast Paul's "by faith alone," the reader of this thesis does well to recall that Paul never actually uses the word μόνος with faith. James's inclusion of μόνος, on the other hand, shows that he is talking about faith differently than Paul and has in mind a separate issue.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the inclusion of Abraham as a (fore)father is weaker evidence yet for James's reliance on Paul. All of the Jews thought of Abraham as their father,¹⁶⁶ and the inclusion of this language in each reference does not signal a connection between the two authors.¹⁶⁷ As for the fact that both James and Paul use this specific verse, it is hardly surprising:

It is clear that the author knows of Gn. 15:6 and its place in the Abraham tradition . . . the Jewish haggadic tradition used this verse so James uses it. No dependence on Paul is implied . . . The use of this particular scripture is not surprising quite apart from Paul, for Jewish exegesis frequently joined 15:6 to the Abraham tradition as a timeless sentence written over Abraham's life.¹⁶⁸

Once a person removes the alleged interaction with Paul in these few verses, everything else in James points to a date that predates Paul.¹⁶⁹ This is significant because even if James does have some vague knowledge of Paul's teachings,¹⁷⁰ he has the flexibility to use δικαιόω

164. Davids, 131.

165. Fung, 156. "It seems more likely, therefore, that the phrase 'by faith alone' is to be interpreted not with reference to Paul but *by its own context*: the term 'faith' here is a concession to James's opponents' use of words, being a reference to the merely verbal falsely-so-called faith of vv. 14,17,19,20 (*cf.* 26)."

166. NT examples include Mt 3:9; Lk 1:73, 3:8, 16:24; Jn 8: 39; Ac 3:25, 7:2, 13:26; Ro 9:7, 2 Co 11:22.

167. Never mind the fact that James has the perfect opportunity to show he is referencing Paul with the rare προπάτορα (*a hapax* in the NT), but instead opts for the common πατήρ.

168. Davids 128-129. Moreover, this is a convincing argument about why the inclusion of the *Shema* in these two accounts does not necessitate a connection. Just as Jewish exegesis frequently joined Ge 15:6 to the Abraham tradition, so also the *Shema* would have been a normal part of any Jewish listener's life.

169. Here, it must be noted that Romans was probably not the earliest of Paul's epistles. The epistle of Galatians, which also treats justification in depth, is considered Paul's earliest epistle. Scholars vary on the date of its composition, but the general consensus is also the earliest date, around the Jerusalem Council in 48 or 49 BC. Therefore, James's letter would predate even Paul's earliest use of δικαιόω in writing. For a more detailed look at this matter, see F.F. Bruce, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: the Epistle to the Galatians; A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 43-56.

170. Davids makes this point when he says, "It is possible that James is reacting to Paul, but if so it is a Paulinism so garbled and misunderstood that every term is redefined" (51). Likewise, most commentators speculate about how much James knew of Paul's teachings. While this argument is interesting, it must be secondary to

differently from Paul. "James was most likely writing earlier than Paul and thus not intentionally using the same vocabulary with contrasting meanings. Had James known how Paul would later phrase things, he might have altered his language here."¹⁷¹ But since Paul had not yet solidified *δικαιόω* as a technical term in a declarative, forensic sense, James's interpreter must allow him the flexibility to use the word in a different sense.

James is Not Talking about Declarative Justification

(2) *Since James quotes a clear example of declarative justification in Genesis 15:6, he must be talking about declarative justification in the remainder of 2:20-26.* Compton is one author who suggests this point when he says, "Both James and Paul cite Genesis 15:6 in the course of their discussion of Abraham's justification (Rom 4:3; Jas 2:23) . . . The righteousness in view is not something Abraham had demonstrated; on the contrary, it is what God granted or imputed to him"; therefore, "justification means for James what it means for Paul: God's declaring someone righteous."¹⁷² This point seems compelling, and it is true that James believed in the same doctrine of justification that Paul believed in. Nonetheless, as was discussed in the last point, it is not necessary for James to use the same terminology of *δικαιόω* to describe Paul's teaching of justification.

To state the obvious lesson gleaned from the exegeses, James brings up Genesis 15:6 for a different reason than Paul. While Genesis 15:6 clearly indicates God's declarative justification of Abraham by grace through faith, James uses it only as supplementary material so that he can show how Abraham's Genesis 22 deeds demonstrated this Genesis 15 faith. Genesis 22 is James's focus, a reference that would bring to mind for any Jewish listener God's subsequent statement, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Ge 22:12). This action showed to everybody, including God, that Abraham had the faith that Genesis 15:6 claimed. (Of course, according to his omniscience, God already knew this.) Abraham's works justified him in the sense that they proved his faith was genuine, which is James's focus throughout 2:20-26. This assertion finds further validation in the fact that the

James's main purpose in this section: to comment on what genuine faith looks like. If emphasizing a response to Paul masks this focus, the approach is in error since it goes against what James clearly says

171. Blomberg and Kamell, 140.

172. Compton, 28-29.

verb *δικαίω* does not even appear in 2:23, the only verse in this section that speaks to declarative justification. James only uses the noun *δικαιοσύνη* in 2:23. Instead, James uses the verb *δικαίω* in his own way, as a demonstrative justification that means something different.

James is Not Using the Most Common Meaning of *Δικαίω*

(1) *A declarative use of *δικαίω* is by far the most common meaning for this verb.* This point raises the biggest question. No matter how well a demonstrative use of *δικαίω* fits James's situation, the word must first have the ability to mean, "to show to be just" or "to prove to be right." Then, there must be a legitimate reason contextually to use this less common meaning within James 2. Does a demonstrative use of *δικαίω* comply with these two principals?

The Lexical Use of *Δικαίω* throughout Scripture

Here the proponents of declarative justification have a strong argument, for "that is the dominant meaning of the term in the LXX, in the Pseudepigrapha, and often in the NT."¹⁷³ In the New Testament "it is seldom that one cannot detect the legal connexion."¹⁷⁴ As for the Septuagint, "The verb occurs 44 times in the LXX, usually in legal settings. Especially relevant are those texts in which God is pictured as the judge before whom one pleads one's case (1 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 43:26; Mic 7:9) and who passes judgment on the lives of men and women."¹⁷⁵ Even in the Hebrew Old Testament, *δικαίω* generally comes from the piel or hiphil stems of the Hebrew root *קָדַשׁ*, which usually means, "to declare righteous, justify," or "to justify the cause of, save."¹⁷⁶

But is there a logical fallacy here? Since a declarative sense of justification is the most common meaning for this word, many scholars assume that wherever this word is used it must be talking about the declarative justification of a judge. Nevertheless, this completely ignores the

173. Rakestraw, 40.

174. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 214.

175. Moo, *James*, 134. Note: In this thesis, I have avoided using the word "vindicate" to describe either a declarative or demonstrative justification. Due to the ambiguity of this word in English, it often promotes confusion on this topic. Moo clearly uses "vindicate" to support a declarative justification, but both sides often use this word to try to prove their viewpoint.

176. Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles August Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 776.

fact that there are some legal situations where *δικαίω* comes from the opposite perspective as well: from the defendant who is trying to prove his or her innocence. These examples may not be as common, but they do appear in all of these sources, in both legal and non-legal settings.

For example, despite Paul's heavy use of declarative justification, one example of demonstrative justification is found in Matthew 11:19 (similarly, Luke 7:35) where Jesus says, "but wisdom is proved right (*ἐδικαιώθη*) by her deeds."¹⁷⁷ In this passage wisdom proves herself genuine by outward deeds, which is similar to the idea in James 2:14-26. Even more compellingly, the demonstrative use of *δικαίω* actually appears in Paul's writing. In Romans itself Paul says, "What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right (*ἀν δικαιοθῆς*) when you speak and prevail when you judge'" (3:3-4). Paul does not mean to undermine his teaching of justification here. He simply wants to show that it is possible for a person to be proved right just by speaking. Likewise, in 1 Timothy Paul says, "He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated (*ἐδικαιώθη*) by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (3:16). The exact interpretation of this "vindication" is a subject of debate, but it is clear that the Spirit did not declare Jesus righteous as a judge would. Rather, the Holy Spirit showed Jesus to be the Messiah while he was here on earth. In summary, these examples certainly legitimize a demonstrative translation for *δικαίω*, a fact that the New Testament lexicographers attest.¹⁷⁸

The Septuagint and Hebrew Old Testament also contain this understanding. In Isaiah 43:9 the prophet says, "All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble . . . Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right (*δικαιοθήτωσαν, יקריצו*) so that others may hear and say, 'It is true.'" Although this is clearly a legal setting, this is just as clearly a demonstrative justification where defendants are asked to prove their innocence. Similarly, in Genesis 44:16, "What can we say to my lord? . . . How can we prove our innocence? (*δικαιωθῶμεν, יקריצו*) God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." When Joseph confronted his brothers about stealing his cup, they

177. A question for another time: does this help to promote an early date for Matthew, before he was influenced by Paul's terminology? The only other use of *δικαίω* in Matthew may also have this meaning (Mt 12:37).

178. See *BDAG*, 249, and Louw and Nida, 744.

knew that they could not prove their innocence in his court. Again, the point is clear: a demonstrative use of *δικαίω* is unusual, but its use is well established throughout the Bible.¹⁷⁹ Even the secular Greek writings from Bible times contain this meaning. Liddell and Scott show this when they give "proved, tested" as valid understandings of *δικαίω*'s passive voice, and "hold or deem right, claim or demand as right" as valid understandings of its active voice.¹⁸⁰

The Lexical Use of Δικαίω in 1 Clement

Perhaps the most compelling proof that *δικαίω* could have a demonstrative sense in James comes from shortly after the time of Christ. Clement of Rome, who died right at the end of the first century AD, uses the verb *δικαίω* in a way that is significant for this study. Professor David Maxwell explains as he examines a quotation from 1 Clement,

"[Let us] be justified (*δικαιοῦμενοι*) by deeds, not words." This statement occurs in the context of an exhortation to humility in which Clement urges people not to boast, but to let their praise come from God and from others. A little later, he states the same idea in different words: "Let the wise manifest (*ἐνδεικνύσθω*) his wisdom not in words but in good deeds; let him who is humble-minded not testify (*μαρτυρεῖτω*) to his own humility, but let him leave it to others to bear him witness." In all of Clement's exhortation against boasting, the question is not how one becomes righteous, but how one appropriately shows that righteousness to others. As in James, the choice is between works and words, not works and faith. In this context, the most natural reading of Clement is that he uses "justify" (*δικαίω*) to mean "show to be righteous." Not only does this support the point that he is making in his exhortation against boasting, but it is confirmed by the fact that he actually uses the verb "show" (*ἐνδείκνυμι*) later to make the same point in a parallel passage.¹⁸¹

Clement, as another early Christian author, shows that he is comfortable using *δικαίω* in an obviously demonstrative sense. When the contrast is between words and works (i.e., between the

179. These passages are two of the clearest examples of demonstrative justification in the OT, but further study would benefit the reader here. Consider Ge 38:26, Jer 3:11, and Ez 16:51-52 for examples that suggest a type of justification that is not declarative. Rather, it is based on the moral actions of wicked people who prove themselves to be more "just" (morally speaking) than those whom one would expect to be "justified" (by God). Also, consider the extensive use of *δικαίω*/δικαιοῦμαι in Job (11:2, 13:18, 33:2, 34:5, 40:8) for more examples that seem to suggest a non-declarative justification.

180. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 429.

181. David R. Maxwell, "Justified by works and not by faith alone: reconciling Paul and James," *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 377-378. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 28, 2013). David Maxwell is the Director of Graduate School and an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

claim and the proof), Clement also uses *δικαίω* differently than Paul. While Clement does not quote James, he is completely applicable to this study. In a similar context he uses the exact same terminology (*δικαίω*, *δείκνυμι*) in the same manner that James did.

However, even more striking for this study is how Clement again uses *δικαίω*, two pages later in 1 Clement, to mean something entirely different. Maxwell explains,

In the second example, Clement employs "justify" (*δικαίω*) in the Pauline sense. Here the contrast is not between works and words, but between works and faith. He states, "We who by his will have been called in Christ Jesus, are not justified (*δικαιοῦμεθα*) by ourselves, or by our wisdom or understanding or piety or the deeds which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith by which Almighty God has justified all men from the beginning of the world."¹⁸²

Clement is not an inspired author of Scripture, but his use of *δικαίω* is invaluable for this lexical study. "In 1 Clement, then, we have independent confirmation that 'justify' (*δικαίω*) can mean two things: 'reckon righteous' as in Romans 4, and 'show to be righteous' as in James 2.

Furthermore, the factor that determines which sense is intended is whether the implied contrast is between works and faith, or works and words."¹⁸³ Additionally, this is within Christian writing that is after Paul. If Clement is comfortable enough using *δικαίω* in a demonstrative sense and is fully aware of Paul's teaching, today's reader should afford James the possibility of using *δικαίω* in the same way.

The Contextual Use of Δικαίω in James

It is clear by now that the Greek language allows James to use *δικαίω* in a demonstrative sense. But that does not answer whether this the most likely sense of the word in James 2. In fact, while there is evidence for a demonstrative interpretation, some scholars still assume that if *δικαίω* has a primarily declarative meaning in the Bible, James must intend that meaning.

Unfortunately, two exegetical fallacies display themselves in this conclusion. The first is called illegitimate totality transfer in which "the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word's entire semantic range."¹⁸⁴ This quickly leads to another exegetical fallacy in which the interpreter assumes that a "word

182. Ibid., 378.

183. Ibid.

184. D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing House, 1984), 62.

always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning—a meaning usually derived either from a subset of the evidence or from the interpreter's personal systematic theology."¹⁸⁵ Often this conclusion comes from etymology and how the word is used elsewhere. In the case of *δικαιόω*, this assumes the legal condition of a judge's declaration.

Unfortunately, both of these fallacies ignore the immediate context around *δικαιόω*. This is unfortunate because "the principle of contextual interpretation is, at least in theory, one of the few universally accepted hermeneutical guidelines."¹⁸⁶ A variety of meanings can be "called up" or "activated" with any given word, but the only meaning that actually matters is the meaning intended by the speaker. "Other aspects of the meaning simply do not occur to us, neither to the speaker nor to the hearer."¹⁸⁷ This is an important rule for any language, to which Greek is not exempt. Without proper understanding of a given word in context, the reader can make a sentence mean something entirely different from what the author intended.

Consider how this works in the English language. The verb "cleave" generally means "to split" or "to divide." While this is easily the most common meaning for the word, it will not fit the *King James Version's* translation of Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Here, "cleave" plainly means the exact opposite of what a person would normally expect. Alternatively, consider the verb "bolt," which generally means "to lock" or "to close" something in a secure manner. Again, although this is the expected meaning of this word, it will not fit the sentence, "he bolted for the door." Finally, consider the verb "justify" and its use within the body of this paper. In this thesis justification comes up a lot with Paul since he focuses on justification in its declarative sense. As a result, a person might mistakenly assume that every use of the English word "justify," at least in reference to Paul, would indicate declarative justification. However, note the word "justified" on page 18 of this thesis, in the sentence before the Greek for Romans 4:2b-3 (listed with its context in the footnote below¹⁸⁸). Despite the aforementioned assumption, the context

185. *Ibid.*, 45-46.

186. Moises Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 25.

187. *Ibid.*, 140.

188. "If this was the case, Abraham certainly 'had something to boast about' (*ἔχει καύχημα*), and Paul's argument from before cannot stand. Nevertheless, Paul is justified by what Scripture has to say, **'But (he can)not (boast) before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and God credited his belief to him as righteousness.'**"

around this particular "justify" clearly shows it to be an example of demonstrative justification. Genesis 15:6 authenticates ("justifies") what Paul says in his argument.

Now take this principle and consider what sense δικαιόω has in James. Since context is a primary indicator of a word's meaning, helping the reader pick from its lexical meanings, perhaps an accurate assessment of James's intention is simply to ask what English word(s) the reader expects to find in place of δικαιόω in James 2:14-26. (To aid in this task, Appendix C includes the English text of 2:14-26, but with the English translations for δικαιόω left blank.) The answer? In the context of chapter two, James's reader expects a demonstrative meaning for δικαιόω. "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did?" "You see that a person is proved right by what he does." "Was not even Rahab the prostitute shown to be right by what she did?"¹⁸⁹ On this point McCartney makes the apt observation: "For James, 'justify' is a synonym not for 'save' (cf. 2:14) but for 'show' or 'prove' (2:18)."¹⁹⁰

The reader can expect demonstrative justification because this is exactly James's focus. James certainly could have focused his attention elsewhere, whether on the salvation (2:14) or the righteousness (2:23) that he mentions in passing. Nevertheless, "as the concluding statement of the entire passage, v. 26, does not come back to 'justification,' it seems that vv. 21-25 are a digression on the special topic of 'justification' with the intent to place it into the right relation with faith and works."¹⁹¹ These five verses are a response to James's opponent who separates faith and works, and what does James want to tell his interlocutor? James wants to prove his faith by the characteristic of faith that his human audience can clearly observe: works. James explicitly says this in 2:18,19, and the examples of Abraham and Rahab are parallel to this as a continuation and reinforcement of this point. Therefore, it makes sense to understand δικαιόω

189. A special consideration for today is what translation best reflects a demonstrative δικαιόω? Some of the more formal equivalent translations take undue liberties with the word and translate it as "was put right with" or "made right with God." Nonetheless, for the most part, today's translations simply render the passive forms as "was justified." This translation is legitimate given the ambiguity of the English word, but it may not be the best since many Christians associate justification with God's verdict upon human beings. The *New International Version—1984 Edition* takes a step in the right direction since it translates verses 21 and 25 as "was considered righteous." However, it inexplicably translates the word differently in verse 24 and retains the ambiguous, "was justified." Here, the *New International Version—2011 Edition* is superior since it translates all three of these instances as "was considered righteous." The *New Living Translation* also does well since it translates all three instances as "was shown to be righteous."

190. McCartney, 164.

191. Popkes, 133.

demonstratively since James means works to be probative. A declarative sense would only draw focus away from this. The character of faith is James's focus, not the process of salvation.

All this brings up another question: why does James insist on using *δικαιόω* at all? Certainly, a demonstrative *δικαιόω* fits his purposes well. But if *δείκνυμι* also served James's purposes well enough for his "proof" in verse 18, why does he use *δικαιόω* when it can be misunderstood? Unfortunately, this question is flawed because it comes from James's subsequent reader and not from his original audience. Undoubtedly, James's word choice for his original hearers was clear. After all, what author writes to be misunderstood? Since the context of 2:14-26 supports the understandable, if unusual demonstrative meaning for *δικαιόω*, it is unreasonable to question further James's use of this particular word. That would assume he thought about it in the same way that his present-day audience does in a different setting almost 2,000 years later.¹⁹²

Furthermore, when a person accepts that James could use this word in this way, it is easy to see why James would choose *δικαιόω*. While a simple *δείκνυμι* would suffice for James's purpose, it could not catch all the legal ramifications that *δικαιόω* carries with it. With *δικαιόω* James captures the motivation behind his promotion of works. James is worried because the last judgment is at stake (2:12-14). Therefore, James emphasizes that it takes real faith to be innocent in God's courtroom when he judges. James wants his reader to have a faith that is able to demonstrate itself before anyone who looks for it. Only that kind of living faith can stand before God as judge.

Finally, if this conclusion is challenging to see today, it may be because of the importance that Christianity places on forensic justification. Because Christians have turned to "justification" as the term that encompasses the heart of God's gospel message, it is tempting to interpret James's justification in that light. However, James wrote before Paul and apart from today's theological influence. In what he had seen and heard, he was probably unaware of such a particular association for this word. But James was aware of his audience's malady, and he answered it in the best way that he knew. This pastoral motive explains why James approaches

192. This is to say nothing about a variety in vocabulary. As a gifted Greek writer, James will obviously use the entirety of the language available to him to communicate his point. Therefore, James's change from *δείκνυμι* to *δικαιόω* can be explained just as easily as his change from *βλέπω* to *όράω* in verses 22 and 24. Namely, there need not always be a specific reason to employ variety. Good writing simply involves variety.

this issue in such a simplistic way. Perhaps it goes without saying, "a man is 'proved to be right' by what he does and not only by faith." But is that not the point of good preaching? To say something in an unambiguous, straightforward way? To use the obvious to penetrate a hardened heart? To compel the sinful nature to face its own sin? Yes, James knew exactly how to touch his first listeners' hearts.

Part 8—Comparing James's and Paul's Teachings on Justification

Neither Paul nor James in and of himself represents the whole of Christianity; neither at that time nor now. The church "has placed both together [in the canon] and thereby has emphasized that one cannot hear the one without the other." But it must really hear *both*, so that the full range of Christianity can be seen and become effective. If honestly and without subtractions Paul as well as James is heard, then there can be found a way to reconcile the "separated brothers."¹⁹³

Indeed, critics have often separated Paul and James, but they are kindred spirits who shepherded their respective congregations in the way that was needed. Here are two Spirit-carried writers who wrote in different styles, used *δικαιόω* in different ways, and fought different battles. And yet, despite those differences they still agreed on all of the essentials. When James stands on his own in his own context, not only does his apparent conflict with Paul disappear, he has just as much to teach his present-day listeners as he did his first-century congregation.

They Wrote in Different Styles

Paul wrote to the Romans with what resembles an in-depth, dogmatics textbook. Because of this, it is unsurprising that Paul treats declarative, forensic justification in such depth. This message is significant for all Christians who follow in Paul's footsteps, and among them are those called to shepherd them. If a pastor today set out to write a dogmatic overview of Scripture's highlights, he would focus on justification in the manner and depth that Paul did. Likewise, if James had set out to write an in-depth, dogmatic overview of Scripture's central doctrines, he may have done the same. But James's style is obviously different, and it is different for a reason. James's implied readers apparently needed his exhortation not just to "talk the Christian talk" but also to "walk the Christian walk." Therefore, it is unsurprising that James extensively treats the good works that fulfill God's requirements. Likewise, when a pastor today

193. Franz Mußner, as cited by Laato, 45. I do not know whom Mußner quotes within this quotation.

sets out to combat a lazy and apathetic spirit, he might plead with his listeners and focus on good works in a style similar to what James used.

However, while a pastor might want to model himself after James in the face of such errors, it seems to this author that sometimes pastors are afraid to preach too much about good works. A little fear is good here. A pastor will always want to be careful to let the gospel predominate, just as Paul did. That way the focus stays on Christ as the only way to salvation. But if one's faith has become so lethargic that this person sees no reason to support it with anything, the gospel cannot predominate. Although such an approach claims to rely solely on Christ, its refusal to let Christ's love motivate sanctified living shows this faith is a dangerously weak faith, and potentially only faith in name. At this point, the faithful pastor will not want to focus on the finer points of justification. He will want to talk about the importance of living like a Christian. The pastor who does not encourage his flock in this manner will not shepherd them in the way they need him to serve them.

Every pastor will ask himself what spiritual misunderstandings his flock needs addressed. If one of these misunderstandings is a lack of appreciation for good works, James models an approach that today's pastor is wise to follow. Good works are not insignificant—to be mentioned only in passing because the pastor feels like he must. Good works are a special point of emphasis. They are immensely practical. They demonstrate the most important possession of the Christian. Yes, James speaks strongly in favor of good works, but he had every reason to speak this way. And if James was comfortable talking in this way, every pastor should consider how important it is to emphasize works strongly in the proper setting.

They Used *δικαιόω* Differently

In some ways it is entirely unfair to make a big deal out of justification, because James himself does not make a big deal out of justification. While Paul uses *δικαιόω* to explain the complexities of how God saves lost sinners through faith in his declaration, James simply uses *δικαιόω* to describe the works that authentic faith produces. The exegeses and the excursus have already covered this point exhaustively, and no more needs to be added to their argument. In summary, James cares so much about this because only one who has been blessed with a faith that demonstrates itself can be saved. The one who has not been blessed with such a faith cannot be saved, because this person does not actually have faith.

Here especially, James and Paul show themselves to be Christian brothers. The only reason James speaks so much about works is so that he can characterize genuine faith. Like Paul, James's chief emphasis is faith and not works. But in some ways it is easy to lay claim to the faith that Paul emphasizes, and that is why James prompts his listener to ask tough questions about what it means to have faith. Everyone who reads James's epistle is wise to apply these questions personally. Only the person who, like James, sees faith in view of the last judgment will also see the danger of a hypocrisy that merely holds to intellectual faith. This false faith will fail at the end of time, and just like Paul, this is the last thing that James wants for his readers. But with works the Christian has clear, demonstrable evidence that his or her faith is not superficial. It is living and active. Works do matter, but not because they save. Works matter because they are a natural witness to the faith that will, as Paul would say, "justify" in God's court.

They Fought Different Battles

"Paul and James are not antagonists facing each other with crossed swords, they stand back to back, confronting different foes of the Gospel."¹⁹⁴ Paul's battle is obvious enough. He addresses a Jewish legalism that tries to place good works in the proper place of faith. This is a natural problem for Paul to combat since his audience consists of fallen human beings. The inborn *opinio legis* is always there to push and prod a person to do anything to earn some sliver of salvation. However, the human nature is so corrupt that even when somebody avoids the danger of a works-righteousness that values the law too much, it quickly swings too far in the opposite direction. If legalism is at one end of this pendulum swing, then antinomianism is at the other end.

Antinomianism was James's concern. Whoever wanted to separate works and faith was obviously somebody who placed no value on the law that requires good works. A person must read James in this light, because the battle of antinomianism that he fought was different from the battle of legalism that Paul fought. If James had prescribed the same medicine to his malady that Paul applied to legalism, he would be guilty of spiritual malpractice. "Faith alone," without an emphasis on fruits of faith, would only confirm James's erring listener in spiritual sickness. Instead, James needed his listener to see that if faith is purely intellectual assent, it is dead. Dead

194. Rakestraw, 34.

faith is not good for anything, especially at the last judgment where it matters the most. For this reason, not only does the law matter, it needs to be emphasized. The gospel must predominate, but it cannot predominate without the law to balance it: both to show the need for gospel and as a barometer for faith that shows its natural response to the gospel.

The wise pastor will want to look at his congregation and ask which of the two battles of antinomianism and legalism he needs to fight. Even more, a pastor will want to consider whether the fight against legalism has quickly become the default battle without careful thought. Legalism's antidote of "faith alone" is a magnificent teaching that will always be needed in a fallen world. However, might some pastors take the great battle of the Reformation, the same battle that Paul fought, and overemphasize it in a present-day context that is different? In that situation, when the fruit of the gospel is not carefully proclaimed, can the sinful nature twist even the most glorious message of "faith alone" and cling only to the empty faith that James warns about? Is it possible this, at least in part, has helped account for moral decay among some Christians today? These questions are not meant as absolutes that assume a specific answer. Nor are they meant to undermine the gospel that Paul so strongly promotes. Nonetheless, every pastor ought to consider whether he is standing on the same battlefield as James. If so, James should have his voice heard, for the pastor has found a powerful ally in James.

They Agreed in Every Way

James and Paul prove themselves likeminded in all the important areas. This is why "the memory of James is defamed if he is considered an apostle of works. He deserves, along with Paul and even before him, the title 'the apostle of faith.'"¹⁹⁵ James and Paul are both proponents of faith, and they defend this precious treasure from its various enemies. A properly functioning faith is the beginning and end of James's discussion. "Faith is held in high esteem by James; hence he wants to keep it uncompromised. He is fighting against a falsification of faith which disconnects it from works. He argues against a concept which for him is totally unacceptable and virtually incomprehensible."¹⁹⁶ When James's reader sees this, all conflict with Paul disappears, because Paul too believes that a living faith will work.

195. Scaer, 96.

196. Popkes, 134.

Paul confirms this throughout Romans. As he says in Romans 3:31 itself, "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." Despite his focus on justification in this section, Paul still asserts that the law matters and must not be thrown away in an antinomian overreaction. This is why Paul promotes the law throughout the book of Romans. In Romans 2:6,7 Paul says, "God 'will repay each person according to what they have done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." Paul is plentifully clear throughout Romans that works do not earn heaven. Nevertheless, God will grant eternity to the Christian who has a faith that produces works. Also, consider what Paul says in Romans 6:15-18.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

For Paul, a Christian is entirely under grace. But a Christian under grace does not exchange the law for a license to sin. This Christian is instead free from sin and a slave to righteousness. Faith is free to serve the one to who gave it life.

Paul elaborates on this theme of freedom and slavery (albeit, with different words) in Romans 8:6-14:

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

Paul's words here could be a commentary on James 2:14-26. The sinful mind is dead, and therefore, it cannot submit to God's law. On the other hand, the mind controlled by the Spirit is

alive, and therefore, it acts. But Paul does not take this for granted as an inevitability that will happen. Instead, Paul tells his listeners that they have an obligation to fight the sinful flesh and live by the Spirit. Even more, when these " misdeeds of the body" are "put to death," it is because this person is "led by the Spirit of God."¹⁹⁷ This is exactly James's focus. If somebody claims faith, James has every reason to see good works. These are indicative of the Spirit's presence in one's heart. If James does not see these deeds, he worries because all he can see is a "mind governed by the flesh" that is "hostile to God." James, along with Paul, knows that this sinful mind can only lead to death.

When James stands on his own, he ends up saying the exact same thing that Paul did in Romans, and he has a valuable message to share with all Christians.¹⁹⁸ James's epistle is a treasure to the New Testament Church for which Christians can praise God. After all, if faith is the most important possession, a Christian will want to be able to guard it from every attack. As useful as Paul is in this endeavor, James provides a defense that Paul did not need to emphasize in the same way. With that in mind, there is no disagreement between James and Paul, only a difference in terminology for the same basic teachings. Both authors agree that a person is saved by faith alone, but they use *δικαιόω* to defend this faith from different enemies for different audiences. Paul responds to legalism and answers how a person receives salvation. James responds to antinomianism and answers what this faith looks like.

Part 9—James's Justification: a Timeless Message

With the last point, the thesis question has been answered. But what about the thought that began this paper? How does one explain Luther? If there really is a genuine answer for the apparent disagreement between Paul and James, why did Luther not see it as one of the most gifted theologians ever? Certainly, that point alone is damning evidence for James, at least until Luther's reader looks at the same thing that helped resolve James's "controversial" language: his context. Luther's world was different from today's world. Luther's chief opponent was the

197. Moo, *Romans*, 498. Moo defends this point based on the *γάρ* of Romans 8:14 ("For those who are led by the Spirit . . ."), which gives the reason for the statement that comes before it.

198. Proof for James's demonstrative righteousness is certainly evident in the remainder of Paul's epistles and the rest of the New Testament. Although it is not the scope of this thesis to treat every parallel to James's teaching in the New Testament, Appendix B briefly treats the topic for those who are interested in it.

Roman Catholic Church that added good works to God's grace for salvation. Therefore, Luther's fight was the same as Paul's fight against those Jews who insisted on adding various works to justification. This makes it no surprise that Luther discovered the gospel for the first time in Paul's Romans. There, Luther learned that God has justified the sinner completely by grace, through faith alone, and that nothing else is needed for God's promise of salvation. Luther's aversion to James is a topic for a different time, but at the very least, Luther can be defended when his readers understand his context. Luther's opponents improperly used James to deny the biblical teaching of justification by faith, and Luther naturally fought back.¹⁹⁹

With that being said, a more careful examination of Luther's works paints a slightly different picture. Often, Luther would quote James in his sermons as authoritative Scripture.²⁰⁰ Sometimes, Luther even used James to interpret difficult passages of the Bible.²⁰¹ The point is simple: Luther had his own personal struggles with James, but he still considered James to be valuable Scripture with a message for Christians.²⁰² In fact, Luther even supported James's teaching of demonstrative justification. In his preface to the book of Romans, Luther considers the faith Paul so vigorously defends and says,

O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.²⁰³

Luther knew that genuine, living faith is not a static thing. He believed, quite simply, that faith must have works. How else could he say that it is "impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly"? In Luther's eyes a claim that "talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works" meant nothing if this person "does not do such works." Of course, this is exactly

199. For details on how Luther's opponents did this, see John M. Brenner, "Luther and James," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (Fall 2006), 300.

200. *Ibid.*, 300.

201. *Ibid.*, 301. This is significant since Luther always viewed Scripture as its own interpreter.

202. Although people generally gravitate toward the "epistle of straw" comment, Luther speaks about James positively in another place and says, "Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God" (395). The impartial scholar will not be selective when it comes to Luther's treatment of James.

203. Luther, 370.

James's point. Had Luther lived in a different time, he may have used this selection from the preface of Romans to praise the "epistle of straw" itself. After all, James spoke a message that was pertinent even in Luther's day.

Likewise, James speak volumes today because his message is a timeless one that God wants all of his redeemed to know: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? This kind of faith is not able to save them, is it?" The answer to this question is "no," because such a faith clings to Christ only in name. Simply bearing the label "Christian" will do nothing for a person at the end of time. Thus, James encourages his listeners, as "believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1), to back up their words with actions. Ultimately, James emphasizes that at the root of the believer is Christ, who alone is the way to salvation. For this reason, James zealously guards faith and ensures its authenticity so that Jesus Christ, the only proper object of faith, remains the object of his people's faith.

The issues raised by this thesis are important ones that any Christian will want to understand better. Justification is the greatest treasure that Christians possess. In this way alone do Jesus' saving merits apply to his redeemed, and for this reason, justification should always be elevated as the chief article. As a result, a Christian will want to safeguard justification in every way. James provides a defense for this that is always necessary, perhaps now more than ever. If faith is not living, if faith is not acting, if faith is not doing, is it actually faith? Does it actually hold to salvation in Christ, who alone saves? Indeed, James writes words of inspired, Spirit-breathed wisdom that have just as much meaning today as they did for his first audience. May James's reader always strive to apply these words personally and meaningfully. May James's reader be fueled by Christ's greatest act of love on the cross to do good works. May James's reader genuinely believe that works do matter, but not because they save. Works matter because they are the barometer that proves the reality of an otherwise invisible faith. Works matter because they are the spirit that must be there if the body is alive. Works matter because they accompany the salvation that comes only with confidence in Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Appendix A—Canonicity of James's Epistle

Often, questions about James's epistle result in questions about its canonicity. After all, if James's message seems so objectionable, could it be because his work is not authentic? Many liberal scholars take this approach and suggest a pseudonymous author for James, but there is no reason to go to this extreme. Throughout history Christianity has fully realized James's place in the canon, and no compelling reason exists to suggest that it was ever seriously disputed.

James's authority as Scripture is acknowledged by the early church fathers who quoted James throughout the third and fourth centuries. The earliest clear quotation comes from Origen in 253 AD.²⁰⁴ This might not seem like an early enough date for a true work of the canon, but that is only because this conclusion is based on clear, irrefutable proof. A person cannot say with absolute certainty that James was quoted before 253 AD. However, quotations from James's epistle almost certainly exist from earlier times, perhaps even as early as the first century. Certain passages in 1 Clement and *The Shepherd of Hermas* convincingly support this supposition.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, since many of James's sayings were similar to Jesus's sayings, it is difficult to distinguish them completely from other gospel accounts.²⁰⁶ In addition, early Christian writers were often not concerned about quoting authors with exact references. They simply assumed their audience would make this connection.²⁰⁷

At the end of the fourth century, the Council of Carthage was the first council (whose record still exists) to adopt today's 27 New Testament books as canon.²⁰⁸ There, the Council officially attested James's canonicity. Afterward, Christianity did not question James's place in the Bible for centuries. Only recently, with the arrival of the age of rationalism, have questions

204. Davids, 2.

205. McCartney, 21-22. McCartney's most convincing arguments: (1) 1 Clement and *The Shepherd of Hermas* are the first Greek works to use the *δίψυχοι* after James, which had previously been the earliest Greek work to use the word. (2) "First Clement 30.2 quotes Prov. 3:34 in the form found in James 4:6 (which differs from the LXX). Admittedly, this form is found also in 1 Pet. 5:5, but the connection to James becomes clearer when Clement immediately goes on to speak of "being justified by works and not by words" (21). And, (3) James and *The Shepherd of Hermas* have so many similarities (McCartney details the more striking examples in a chart on 21-22) that it is almost impossible to assume it is a coincidence.

206. Moo, *James*, 2.

207. *Ibid.*, 3.

208. Davids, 2.

regarding James's canonicity arisen. Ultimately, it is wise to follow the direction of the early church on this matter since it was much closer to this question than today's critics are.

Interestingly, it is not hard to understand why James's epistle may have taken a considerably longer time (in comparison to other New Testament works) to be accepted by the church. Though many of the other epistles are universal in their scope and audience, James addresses a particular audience that was limited to a specific issue. At the same time, Christianity continued to fall under "Pauline and Gentile philosophical influence, and whereas Paul's theological epistles won ready acceptance, James's practical epistle could not."²⁰⁹ Furthermore, James's intended audience, which subscribed to a Jewish flavor of Christianity, may quickly have dissipated after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.²¹⁰ Along with that event, one might expect James to fall with Jerusalem and never rise again. With all this in mind, the early church had every reason to reject James, and it does seem that this epistle disappeared from the larger picture of Christianity for a little while. But even after that, "the Church critically examined James at the point of apostolicity and antiquity and then approved it."²¹¹ Despite every other reason not to, the church still found a reason to accept James. Simply put, James "proved its value in the life of the church . . . 'The book made its own way because it proved to have spiritual value. It met the definite needs in the lives of individual Christians and their Churches.'"²¹²

James might not enjoy the full attestation that a book like Romans receives, but it has more than enough support to stand on its own. Anyone who doubts this does well to remember,

Canon consciousness arose over time and that later criteria for inclusion in the canon or for canon-like function and status should not be imposed—as also even with the demand for explicit citation as indication of canonical status—on the earliest period. The doubts about James revolved around four issues: the lack of clarity regarding its provenance, its possible non-apostolic authorship, its addressees, and the nature of its theology. But the doubts appear to be more related to *the surging emphasis of Protestant theological concerns and the framing of church teachings according to Paul's theology than to anything else* [emphasis added]. In other words, this very Jewish letter and its practical, if not also commonplace, teachings were of little use to the concerns with christology and

209. Adamson, 38.

210. Moo, *James*, 4. Moo offers the valuable insight, "The evidence we possess suggests that James was not so much *rejected* as *neglected*. While evidence for the use and authoritative status of James is not as early or widespread as we might wish, very few early Christians, knowing the letter, dismissed it."

211. *Ibid.*

212. The quotation within this selection is by J.A. Brooks, as cited by Adamson, 48.

trinity that began to develop in the second century. Nor was the letter of much use for battling Gnosticism. Finally, its Jewishness did not appeal to either Eastern or Western theologians.²¹³

Modern concerns have fueled the discussion about James's authenticity. That alone should warn James's present-day reader not to dismiss him so easily. When these concerns are removed, James's present-day reader is left with an epistle that perfectly suits a first century audience, written by the famous James the Just of Jerusalem. When applicable, this epistle appears to have been quoted and used by the first generations of Christians, and the church later confirmed this use when it saw James as a part of the canon. Since then, James has stood firmly until the last few centuries when every book has faced questions of authenticity on some level or another (including the indisputably authentic Romans). As a result, there should be no doubt about James's proper place in the canon. His letter perfectly harmonizes with the rest of Scripture, and he shares a message that has every bearing on a Christian audience.

213. McKnight, *James*, 30.

Appendix B—James's Justification throughout the New Testament

Paul also speaks about the importance of a faith that works in places other than Romans. Consider the letter to the Galatians, which fights a similar battle against legalism. Despite this emphasis in a shorter letter, Paul still finds room to say, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6). The context of this passage points to forensic justification,²¹⁴ but Paul emphasizes that this saving faith does not lack deeds of love. In fact, this kind of faith is the only thing that counts. Paul makes a similar point to the young pastor Titus when he rebukes false teachers who had promoted circumcision: "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good" (Tit 1:16). While these men claim to know God, their deeds betrayed them. Their deeds were not good works of genuine love.

Perhaps Paul's most stunning example of James's teaching is in the second chapter of Ephesians. Ephesians 2:1-10 is unique in that it provides a clear, yet profound summary of the Bible's central teachings in a single, short section. As Paul slowly builds to his climax in verses eight and nine, he shares one of the most comforting passages in the Bible: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." This is an especially beautiful section of what Paul labels "justification" in other places. But what follows in verse 10? "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." In this pure section of gospel, Paul is comfortable talking about works. Paul does this because he wants to make the point that works still matter, even if they do not save. After all, if someone does not have works, how can this person be God's handiwork? Being God's handiwork is a status that comes naturally only for the one who has been saved by God's grace alone.²¹⁵

The parallels to James's teaching on justification go beyond Paul's letters. Throughout the entirety of the New Testament, this is a special point of emphasis. Jesus' simple illustration of a tree and its fruit in Matthew 7:15-20 has already been noted, but its simple lesson cannot be

214. "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope" (Gal 5:4,5).

215. These are just a handful of passages where Paul promotes good works in a way that is reminiscent of James's justification. Others include Php 1:27; 1 Th 1:3; 1 Co 13:2; 2 Co 10:5; 1 Ti 5:25, 6:18.

emphasized too much. A healthy tree will produce good fruit, just as a healthy faith will produce good works. However, good fruit is not what makes a tree alive and well, just as good works are not what make faith alive and well. Rather, one can tell that a tree is a genuinely healthy tree by its good fruit, just as one can tell that faith is a genuinely healthy faith by its good works. In a similar vein, John warns his readers, "If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth" (1 Jn 1:6). Works must follow words for that claim to be genuine.

If these works do not come, this is a serious problem indeed. Luke reminds his listeners, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Lk 3:8,9). The judgment that comes at the end of time prompts one to ask whether a claim to faith is real. If it is not genuine, the punishment is terrifying. The writer of the book of Hebrews uses this as motivation when he says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24,25).

If there is one section of the Bible that shows James's demonstrative justification most compellingly, it is Jesus' description of the sheep and the goats on the last day. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus describes the last judgment when he will sit upon the throne, separate the sheep from the goats, and pronounce his final verdict. Notice what Jesus points to as he does so: works as evidence that proves the sheep and goats to be innocent or guilty. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink . . ." (Mt 25:35). Here, the Lord Jesus is not trying to establish works as a basis for salvation. Even Christians will be shocked to hear God's reason for his verdict because they cannot place how or when they did anything for Jesus.²¹⁶ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'" (Mt 25:37). Instead, Jesus wants to show that those who have been declared innocent in his court will therefore be able to present

216. While this thesis is not written to bring specific comfort to its listener, perhaps it has done very little to reassure Christians who question their works, and wonder whether they are good enough to sustain their faith. Let this reader be reassured by Matthew's message: a Christian will not even have to look for opportunities to serve. A Christian naturally, even unknowingly serves. One need not question whether his or her works are good enough. Instead, James's warning is for those who purposely disregard good works altogether.

evidence to prove that they are righteous people: born into an "inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Mt 25:34).

James's teaching of justification is not just an anomaly in his book. Scripture teaches it everywhere. The only difference with James is that, to describe this teaching, he uses a word that often carries a declarative meaning. However, here too the remainder of Scripture supports the manner in which James uses *δικαίω*. After all, if a declarative justification should be expected in a context as foreign to Paul as any other New Testament writing, one does well to remember that of the verb's 39 appearances in the New Testament, it never once shows up in the writings of Mark, John, Peter, or in the book of Hebrews. This does not mean that these men have a different gospel than Paul, but these books prove that *δικαίω* is not the only way to describe salvation. The New Testament abides by the same rules of language that any other language does, and these authors chose their unique vocabularies for various reasons that suited their contexts. And yet, it is a marvel that God uses such a common tool like language to share his salvation with a fallen race in many different ways.

Appendix C—Δικαιῶ in Context

The excerpt below is a tool to help the reader understand δικαιῶ in the context of James 2:14-26. The blanks are instances where James uses a form of the verb δικαιῶ. The italicized words are where the text has been improved based on the exegesis of James 2:14-26. The remainder of the text is the *New International Version, 2011 Edition*. As this excerpt is read, the reader ought to ask what words he or she expects to hear in place of the blanks. As long as the reader hears δικαιῶ in a way that is lexicographically defensible, that understanding should show the sense that James intends for δικαιῶ.

James 2:14-26:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? *This kind of faith is not able to save them, is it?*

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

¹⁷ In the same way, *faith*, if it *does not have works*, is dead *by itself*.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “*One has faith; Another has deeds.*” *Prove to me your "faith" without deeds, and I will prove to you my faith by my deeds.*

¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is *dead*? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham _____ for what he did *after* he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

²² *You foolish man*—You see that his faith *was working together with his deeds*, and you *see that* his faith was *brought to its goal* by what he did.

²³ And the scripture was *confirmed* that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.

²⁴ *My listeners* - you see that a person is _____ by what he does and not *only* by a *claim* to faith.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute _____ for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

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