



Epistle of James (Lesson # 19)

James 2:21-23 Faith & Works – Abraham Illustration

A small overview of the book of James

1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James presents himself as a servant of God our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before crucifixion, in unbelief in Jesus as God doing God's work, James was related below, in God's human family, as one under his older half brother, Jesus

After crucifixion, in belief that Jesus is God doing God's work, James was related above, in God's divine family, as one under his older full brother, Jesus

We are commanded to enjoy God's joy, as our faith in God is purified by Him.

James writes here, as God's new in kind & perfectly loved son, that;

it is God's command that we

**enjoy God's joy,
while our faith in God is purified by God.**



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A small overview of the book of James (continued)

We enjoy God's joy, as our faith in God is purified by Him.

1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

God wants us to know His purpose for purifying our faith

God wants to make

our current condition in Christ be conformed to our eternal position in Christ

So, God informs us of the steps of His work on our “new of God's kind” nature

➤ **Step 1** is God's gift of purification (testing) of our faith in Him and His work

➤ **Step 2** is God's gift of endurance,
we become confident now in God and His work

➤ **Step 3** is God's gift of His righteousness,
we become perfect and complete now, lacking in nothing

His and our perfection (righteousness), includes all of the fruit of the Spirit;

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Gal. 5:22-23



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A small overview of the book of James (continued)

**** Illustrations (in James) of God’s work on our “new of God’s kind” nature**

James

*** 1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.**

Abraham & Isaac

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

Rahab

*** 2:25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?**

Job

*** 5:11 Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.**

Elijah

*** 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.**

* English is NASU 1995

** <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/lessons-from-old-testament-characters-in-james/>



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

Observations on verse 21

Abraham was called out of an idolatrous culture into God's culture

He lived under God's specific rule & care, but not under God's Mosaic law

He illustrates God's joyful plan, to purify each man's faith in God, by tests

He was God's choice to be the father of a special God formed nation

God's plan was for His nation to purely reveal God to all the man formed nations

Isaac, Abraham's son, came after many years of God's testing Abraham's faith

Isaac's birth was God's joyful work, enabling Abraham to procreate in old age

Isaac was Abraham's joy as well & he named him Isaac, which means "laughter"

We hear & see God's love toward all of us as He reveals & shares His glory

Isaac's son Jacob (Usurper) God named Israel (Wrestler with God)

Israel's 12 sons are the fathers of the family tribes of God's formed nation, Israel

God will show & share Himself by His nation, Israel, in His 1000 year Kingdom



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***22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;**

Observations on verse 22

**Work “You see”, is the evidence of God’s Son Jesus being trusted by man
Jesus, trusted by a man, will produce Godly good through that man
God’s reality, the object of man’s trust, is the source of Godly good being done
Part of Godly good being done, is the purification of Godly facts trusted by man
Verse 22 restates the purpose of God, to refine each man’s trusted reality of
God, & to reveal His good, His rightness or perfection both to and through him
This amplifies why God wants us to know the basis of His joy and our joy ie; as
He refines our trust in the reality of God, His good, His perfection is revealed
God wants us to see His glory, His perfection, His reality, revealed through us
Only God’s love could extend this privilege to us, to see & reveal Him correctly
He shows us His essence in His prepared works we are privileged to express
Verses 21-22 are God’s Gen 22 commentary of His work through Abraham, God
refined his faith, so he & Isaac could know, trust & show God’s good, correctly**



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23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God

Observations on verse 23

We see God's essence in man when man believes God & His work correctly, this fulfills Scripture, concerning Abraham, Isaac, Rahab, Job, & Elijah

Scripture, Gen 15:6, is about Abraham, 40+ plus years before he offered Isaac, "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness"

Note that God's Spirit tells us the historical sequence of God's dealing with him, first that he believed in the LORD, and then that God declared him righteous

No works, only faith in the LORD resulted in God's declaration of His goodness being now Abraham's goodness or perfection, later He showed His essence

James follows his writing style of explaining the basis of truth after giving truth, so he first gives the evidence of faith in God & His work that can be seen by man

God uses James to do this, so we may know God's plan is a process to mature our "new of God's kind" nature, that we may know, believe, & reveal Him

Abraham believed God, and when men saw the essence of God's goodness lived out in him, they called him "the friend of God"

James 4:4 says God wants us to be His friend not the world's friend; "...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"



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So, is there a conflict between James and Paul about God’s plans for men?

No, emphatically no! There is complementary teaching here about God’s plans.

Both Paul in Romans 4, and James in 2:21-23 speak of *justification*. Justification means “to be declared righteous.” But when reading each book, the question becomes: “Who does the text say is declaring me righteous?” and “What does it mean for me?”

Romans expresses how God is able to declare sinners who place their faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection as “cleansed from all unrighteousness,” even though in this earthly life, we are far from perfect.

James, on the other hand, speaks of how a believer can be “declared righteous” by the surrounding world, which is observing our lives to see if they match what our mouths say. Most observers find what they see is a very offensive truth.

In both cases, the writers use the same word, but what they mean for the believer is quite different. You don’t want to confuse the two.

God sees us now born from above with a new nature and identity. We are positionally completely righteous because God’s Spirit has placed us in Christ to share His righteousness, but we are conditionally growing in both our faith in God, and in letting Christ’s righteousness be revealed through our bodies. Our new man earthly condition is growing into our fixed heavenly position in Christ.



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Some thoughts of application.

Not only is the mature Christian patient in testing (endurance) per James 1, but he also lives & reveals the truth (perfection of God) per James 2

Immature Christians talk their beliefs, but the mature Christians reveal God.

Just hearing God's Word and talking about God's Word can never substitute for God revealing Himself to us and through us.

The Holy Spirit produces inner transformation in every believer, when we believe we are sinners, and that Christ fully paid the penalty of death for our sins.

The Holy Spirit will produce outer transformation as well, unless we quench and grieve Him while He gives & shows the life qualities of Christ to us & through us.

So, we now know this:

God is now showing & sharing Himself through His spiritual men, His Church

May these be the facts we may all have implanted in us from these verses...

Out of the power of God's Word implanted in us by His Spirit, we are blessed to hear and personally know, as His born from above ones, the grace and reality of God's Son Jesus, and the greatness of His work and plans for us.

Are we joyfully looking at Jesus as God now sees Him & reveals Him?



James 2:21-23 Faith & Works – Abraham Illustration

Here is a very brief overview of God's plans for His creation

God originally created man to fill & rule his creation, but man sinned and the earth groans now & most men rejected Christ's love in all His dispensations, even during the 1000 year rule of Christ, so He will separate all that is evil from all that is good.

Then, Christ will create a new earth & heaven and fill it with all His perfected earthly men of Israel & Gentile nations & His perfected heavenly men of His Church

Many believe that at this point, Christ presents His kingdom to the Father, but some see here that Christ fills His new creation, and His perfection is to be unhindered by sin for a time He has determined. Possibly for 1000 human generations?

***(Ex 20:6 & 34:7; Deut 5:10 & 7:9; 1 Chr 16:15; Ps 105:8; Jer 32:18)**

Translations from a Jewish emphasis (The Complete Jewish Bible (1998), the Tanakh (1985 & 1917 editions), and Isaac Leeser's Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Scriptures (1891)) all render these six specific Hebrew passages with the English expression "thousand generations." Two add a seventh passage! (Jer. 32:18).

Christ will finally abdicate as man His perfect kingdom, giving it to God the Father, as the perfectly completed work the Father gave Him to do. 1 Cor 15:24,28

Christ, the perfect union of God and man, will then take up His eternal co-rule with the Father over His perfect inhabited creation. He, as the glorified Son of God, no longer will rule under the Father, but then will co-rule level with the Father, forever.

God through James has a lot more for us

Next week and in the following weeks, we have the examples of Rahab, Job and Elijah, and all the details God led James to write about, in the rest of this part of God's written and designed to be implanted in us, living Word.



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21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

**** 21 Was not Abraham our father, out of works declared good, *when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?* 22 You see because the faith was working together with his works and out of the works the faith was perfected. 23 Indeed was fulfilled the Scripture, the *one* saying, that Abraham has believed the God, and *it* was reckoned to him as righteousness and friend of God he was called.**

***** 21 Was not our father Abraham vindicated by works [justified as to his claim to a living faith] in that he offered his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice? 22 You see that the aforementioned faith was co-operating and working with his works [and thereby was responsible for their production], and by his works was this faith brought to completion in a well-rounded whole. 23 And the scripture was actually and fully realized [brought into operation] which said, And Abraham believed God, and it [his act of faith] was put to his account for righteousness. And a friend of God he was called.**

* Scripture is from NASU 1995, ** My literal translation

*** Wuest's expanded translation



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

21 Ἀβραὰμ [n nom masc s Ἀβραάμ] **Abraham**
ὁ πατήρ [def art+n nom masc s πατήρ] **the father**
ἡμῶν [pronoun pers gen pl ἐγώ] **of us**
οὐκ [adv οὐ] no, **not** used here to intro a question
ἐξ [prep ἐκ] **out of** (objective genitive, object of prep is source)
ἔργων [n gen neut pl ἔργον] **works**
ἐδικαιώθη, [v ind aor pas 3ps δικαιώω] declared good, **justified**
ἀνενέγκας [part aor act nom masc s ἀναφέρω] **he offered up**, sacrificed
Ἰσαὰκ [n acc masc s Ἰσαάκ] **Isaac**
τὸν υἱὸν [def art+n acc masc s υἱός] **the son**
αὐτοῦ [pron pers gen masc s αὐτός] **of him**, his
ἐπὶ [prep ἐπί] **upon**, on
τὸ θυσιαστήριον; [def art+n acc neut s θυσιαστήριον] **the altar**

** My literal translation

Was not Abraham our father, out of works declared good, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?



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* 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

22 Βλέπεις [v ind pres act 2ps βλέπω] you see
ὅτι [conj ὅτι] that, because, since
ἡ πίστις [def art+n nom fem s πίστις] the faith, the trust
Συνήργει [v ind imperf act 3ps συνεργέω] was working together with
τοῖς ἔργοις [def art+n dat neut pl ἔργον] the works
αὐτοῦ, [pron pers gen masc s αὐτός] of him, his
καὶ [conj καί] and, also, indeed
ἐκ [prep ἐκ] out of (objective genitive, object of prep is source)
τῶν ἔργων [def art+n gen neut pl ἔργον] the works
ἡ πίστις [def art+n nom fem s πίστις] the faith, the trust
ἐτελειώθη; [v ind aor pass 3ps τελειόω] was perfected, was completed, was brought
to the point at which nothing was missing.

**my literal translation (in close to Greek text order)

You see because the faith was working together with his works and out of the works the faith was perfected.



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* 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.

23 Καὶ [conj καί] and, also, **indeed**
ἐπληρώθη [v ind aor pass 3ps πληρόω] Danker “cause to abound in content to a maximum” & “complete, w. focus on reaching a peak level of expression or completion - **was fulfilled**, was finished, was completely expressed Note: is passive & factual
ἡ γραφή [def art+n nom fem s γραφή] the Writing, **the Scripture**
ἡ λέγουσα, [def art+part pres act nom fem s λέγω] **the one saying**
Ἐπίστευσεν [v ind aor act 3ps πιστεύω] **he has believed**, he has trusted
δὲ [conj δέ] now, **that is**, mild contrastive conjunction
Ἀβραάμ [n nom masc s Ἀβραάμ] **Abraham**
τῷ θεῷ, [def art+n dat masc s θεός] **the God**
καὶ [conj καί] **and**, also, indeed]
ἐλογίσθη [v ind aor pass 3ps λογίζομαι] He of it was accounted, He or **it was reckoned**
αὐτῷ [pron pers dat masc s αὐτός] **to him**
εἰς [prep εἰς] here with acc, into, to this end, **as**, to be (here as predicate adjective)
δικαιοσύνην, [n acc fem s δικαιοσύνη] perfection, **righteousness**, to be as God designed
καὶ [conj καί] **and**, also, indeed]
φίλος [adj nom masc s φίλος] **friend**, loved, devoted, close companion
θεοῦ [n gen masc s θεός] **of God**, obj/subj genitive, both ways, companion of God
ἐκλήθη. [v ind aor pass 3ps καλέω] **called**, named, addressed as being a real fact

****my literal translation (in close to Greek text order)**

Indeed was fulfilled the Scripture, the one saying, that Abraham has believed the God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness and friend of God he was called.