

## A Simple Exegesis on the Faith in James' Eye Glasses

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### Abstract

The resolution to James 2:18-26 comes by considering James' use of diatribe to understand where his objector enters and leaves the text and where James re-enters the discussion. We showed that the hearing at Jerusalem sets the historical context to James, which lends itself to bring harmony between James's writings and the Pauline discourse on Faith.

**Keywords:** Faith and Works; James' diatribe; Jerusalem Council; Epistle of straw.

### Introduction

Luther in his 95<sup>th</sup> thesis presented the idea of salvation by faith and faith alone (*Sola Fide*). The Christian Church at this point had drifted far from what the early Church was. Bruce (1973) suggested that the Christian church suffered three basic problems: an identity crisis, what to do as religious practices, and the nature and content of Christian beliefs. The early church fought hard to preserve its belief, which is indicated in the New Testament; yet certain unauthorized teachers attempted to replace the Christian doctrine with a nascent form of Gnosticism. The strategy these teachers used was to mingle freely with the Christian converts, and promise enlightenment. This soon led to dissensions and disturbances in the various churches. In the book of Galatians, Paul addresses his audience by challenging them on the fact that salvation comes only through faith.

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?” (Galatians 3:1-4)

Paul here responds to those who were causing trouble in the community convincing Christian Galatians that salvation comes to them by the works of the law. Centuries later, it seems that *salvation by works* was being accepted back in the Christian church, at least until Luther's revolt. Luther in creating his objections against the Church's understanding of faith, found one book in the New Testament quite troubling; for it seemed to go against the idea of *salvation by faith* and faith alone. This was the epistle of James. Luther wrote,

"In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show

you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it." (Preface to the New Testament in Luther's Works, Vol. 35, p. 362).

Calvin, like Luther, believed that scripture couldn't contradict scripture. Therefore, the Roman Catholic's interpretation of James the second chapter contradicted his understanding of Paul (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6). Like Luther, Calvin seemed to find the epistle of James troubling. He thus started from the premise of his interpretation of Paul's writing to dissect James'. The Calvinistic understanding sees no conflict with the doctrine of *salvation by faith* alone. James asked two fundamental questions:

*"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"* (James 2:14)

What was James' intent for these questions? It is the theological response or the interpretation of James' intent that has given way to an erroneous understanding of salvation, which is seeded through Christian theology. Both Calvin and Luther argue that the Roman Catholic's understanding of James contradicts the Pauline doctrine on salvation, which becomes one of the fundamental differences between Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians. Paul's response to the question, "Can that faith save him?", would be that faith alone saves. A man, Paul would argue, could only be justified by faith. Motyer (p.108, 1985) however, had disagreements with Calvin's interpretation of James 2:14-16, for he argued that the person described had real faith. Anselm (1989) argues that,

"the Christian tradition has always equated this salvation with the transcendent, eschatological fulfillment of human existence in a life freed from sin, finitude, and mortality and united with the triune God. This is perhaps *the* non-negotiable item of Christian faith. What has been a matter of debate is the relation between salvation and our activities in the world."

We proceed in addressing this issue of the validity of Luther's concerns about James the second chapter by outlining the problem in the next section. We then bring to light the historical context in the section thereafter, and finally we present a resolution to this issue that harmonizes with the Pauline understanding of salvation (*Sola Fide*).

### **James against Paul (Counted for Righteousness)**

As pointed out earlier, Luther had an objection to the epistle of James and his infamous "epistle of straw" remark, directed to its canonicity. Why did this book trouble Luther so much? There are two statements in the epistle of James that are in opposition to the writings of Paul.

**James:** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith

was made perfect? ... *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.* James 2:21-23 (KJV)

**James:** Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? James 2:25 (KJV)

**Paul:** What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*" Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. Romans 4:2,3 (KJV)

**Paul:** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called,*" concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Hebrew 11:17-19 (KJV)

**Pauline:** By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. Hebrew 11:31 (KJV)

If we take a stand as Luther and Calvin based on the premise that the Bible is infallible, and take a literal reading of these statements, like them, we must wrestle to unite them. Under such condition, these statements by Paul are clearly contradicting those of James. It is possible to invoke one faulty premise after another to achieve some kind of congruency. However, this can only lead to a series of illogical or erroneous conclusions. Within the Christian community, a number of interpretations strive to bring these statements in harmony.

Calvin holds that the works of Abraham is only a demonstration of faith. Other commentators (Law, p.121, 1988; Moyter, p.113, 1985) contend that there are no such distinctions in the text, and as consequence, Abraham's action is a demonstration or confirmation in relation to faith and works. Some have posed that for James, faith and works is a di-unity. Wahlen (2014) in this spirit wrote, "faith and works are inseparable. Like two sides of a coin, one cannot exist without the other." We argue that such an interpretation still lends to the contradictory nature of the statements. Paul clearly argues that only faith without works justifies, meaning that genuine faith will produce good works. However, works can never produce genuine faith, thus removing any notion of di-unity between them and agreeing with Calvin's interpretation. Lodge (p.200, 1981) wrote that James used specifically chiasmic grammar to show the relation between faith and works. Abraham shows that one is not saved by faith alone, which suggests that we cannot escape the construction that work is necessary for salvation. Therefore, there is no way to harmonize this with the Pauline writings.

Calvin contends that Rahab does not show justification by works. Good works are required of righteousness without conferring it. Thus, Martin (p.32, 1982) argues that Rahab's example is only a demonstration of faith.

Nevertheless, how do we reconcile this with respects to James 2 v. 25? Martin (p.99, 1982) is making the same connection as Law (p.137, 1988) and Wahlen (2014), that faith

and works are inseparable. Other expositors find agreement by creating a unity in the text between faith and works that the text itself does not do. Knoch and Schierse (p.190, 1969) write that James' use of Rahab is a representation of God's unfathomable love for sinners. Leahy (p.373, 1968) notes, "Her fellow citizens also had a kind of faith; but she alone acted on her belief and was so justified--was found pleasing before God and saved."

The question that must be asked is: in the language of Paul, can deeds take on their meaning as the fruit of the faith that is both salvific and sound? We found that although much skilled attempts have been made to resolve the contradiction, the evidence to do so does not come from within the context itself, and as a result, fails to provide a resolution. Martin (p.101, 1982) writes that "faith alone saves - but saving faith is never alone; it completes itself in deeds", clearly going against what he in effect agreed could not be separated. These statements are contradictory and are irreconcilable in any present exegeses of the text of James 2:18-26. As such, we must look toward new interpretations of the text that require the contradiction as a necessary condition to harmonize James' interpretation of the relationship between faith and work with Paul's.

### **The Jerusalem Council (the Historical Context)**

It is widely accepted that Stephen was martyred in 34 A.D. and within a year of Stephen's death, Paul became a convert to Christianity. In Galatians 1:18 Paul explains that he traveled to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, which implies that the Jerusalem conference was fourteen years after. This puts the conference roughly at 51 AD. Accepting Paul's chronology we propose the Jerusalem council as the historical context from which we can bring these texts in congruence.

The struggle of faith and works begun in the early Church in the time of the challenges that the apostles faced illustrated in the epistle of Galatians. One could rightly argue that these issues may have come from the Jewish Christians who continued to believe that one must do some sort of work to be saved. As detailed in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, some of the Jewish Christians believed that circumcision was a requirement for salvation and mandated that Gentile believers be circumcised to be saved.

And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, [...] they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. Acts 15:1,2 (KJV).

Why they did go to Jerusalem? What parties went up to Jerusalem? We submit that proponents of both sides of the issue went to the Jerusalem Council to have this problem resolved. Keep in mind that the issue is salvation by works vs. by faith. In Acts 15, the Apostles and elders came together to settle the matter. Peter said:

"Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the

disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” Acts 15:7-11(KJV).

Peter here is agreeing with Paul’s interpretation of the requirement for salvation. Among the council members was James the brother of Jesus and the leader of the church at this time, who also weighed in support of Paul and Barnabas. A letter was sent to the Gentile nations, which reads,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:  
Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “*You must be circumcised and keep the law*” to whom we gave no such commandment it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. Acts 15:23-29 (NIV).

If we were to suggest that James was trying to be political, he would only have done so at the perils of his credibility since his agreement with Paul was in the open public. Paul further recounts the event and why he went up to Jerusalem in Galatians the second chapter. Paul withstood Peter and said,

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain (Galatians 2:16-21).

We argue that to ignore this historical setting here is to miss the fundamental premise for why James is writing to the twelve tribes abroad. James’ position on faith and with Paul is identified. Scholars have argued that the letter’s silence on the issues raised at the Jerusalem Council would indicate that it was written before that event took place. We believe the opposite is true; the issue was about the law and faith, which is what James is writing about. It is the same argument used to say that this epistle was written first as early as 45 A.D (Moyter, 1985), a conclusion that we are in disagreement with. For instance, in the 50's there were turmoil and violence in Palestine, which caused the Jews to become

more and more frustrated with corruption, injustice and poverty (Reiher, 2013). Additionally, Around AD 48, Governor Cumanus seems to historically hold some responsibility in conflicts that caused a schism with Rome in Palestine. According to documentation artifacts belonging to Josephus a number of episodes accumulated leading to brutalities climaxing in war. Reiher goes further to make the case that the author of James is indeed the brother of Jesus. By accepting Reiher's argument this established the connection to the Jerusalem conference. We therefore pose that the epistle of James is a stance against poverty, and action toward caring for the poor in pragmatic ways, which is an indicator that the 50s is the timeline of authorship (Before James' death in 62AD). Josephus clearly points that this period was plagued which much turmoil and religious irregularities.

It is quite obvious that the epistle of Galatians was written little after the Jerusalem Council. Further it widely accepted that this epistle was written by Paul as one of his earliest work with a timeline in the early to mid 50's, and killed in the early 60's. Paul in this epistle made reference to his appearance before the council (Galatians 2:1-10); If our conjecture is arguably possible, then the epistle of James and Galatians were probably written within the same time frame of the Jerusalem Council.

Further, the nature of Paul's writings is quite confrontational which is obvious in Paul's reaction to Peter (Galatians 1:10-14). Proctor (p.37, 2015), in his monolog on the epistles of the Corinthians writes,

“As we approach the end of the initial portion of the letter, Paul's Language becomes more direct, challenging, and personal...as we follow the chapter through and encounter in places some quite confrontational language. ... We feel his intense and committed personality within the text. Indeed we see quite deeply into Paul's character and nature, precisely because he feels that he is under challenge.”

Thus we believe that Paul would have confronted James' statements on faith unless the argument is that Paul is confronting James in the epistle of Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. Since there is no evidence of Paul doing such, therefore, the logical conclusion is for James to be writing out of the events of the Jerusalem Council, and the Epistle of James is not silent on the issue but instead is confronting the problem faced by the Apostle Paul.

### **Is there a difference in the meaning of *justification* between James and Paul?**

By establishing why James is writing his epistle we can return to the issue of James chapter two. Luther believed at first that there was no way to harmonize James 2:18-26 with Paul's understanding of the Gospel. For Luther, faith without works justifies which is the conclusion of the Pauline doctrine: "...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, ... not by the works of the Law; Gal 2:16" That is, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" Gal 2:16. Luther demanding congruency of the scripture later harmonized James 2:18-20 with Paul's writings by saying,

The argument is sophistical and the refutation is resolved grammatically. In the major premise, 'faith' ought to be placed with the word 'justifies' and the portion

of the sentence ‘without works justifies’ is placed in a predicate periphrase and must refer to the word ‘justifies,’ not to ‘faith.’ In the minor premise, ‘without works’ is truly in the subject periphrase and refers to faith. We say that justification is effective without works, not that faith is without works. For that faith which lacks fruit is not an efficacious but a feigned faith. ‘Without works’ is ambiguous, then. For that reason this argument settles nothing. It is one thing that faith justifies without works; it is another thing that faith exists without works. [LW 34: 175-176].

Was Luther correct? Was it just a misuse or misplacement of words? Does the inseparable nature of faith and works mean that works also justify? From Paul it is clear: because works cannot save, therefore works cannot justify. Ward (p.284, 1990) attempts to connect Rahab’s works to James’ parable (2 v. 15-16) highlighting what James means by “*justified*”. Accepting this connection would force one to put forward a different contextual meaning to the phrase “*to justify*”. Thus like Luther, many scholars suggest that we must understand the word ‘*justify*’ in another sense than Paul understands it. Calvin was the first to make the argument that James uses “*justification*” in a different way than Paul does. In essence he concluded that there is falsity to think that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Additionally, Calvin proposed that “works make faith perfect” by pointing to v. 22, which shows that works were the evidence of faith’s true quality. Thus, one may conclude that works are an inevitable demonstration of faith. Let’s consider the statement, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*”, that is, whatsoever a man believes in his heart, so he does. But remember that God knows the heart; so why is it necessary to demonstrate your faith to God if he already knows the heart? We argue that it is not necessary for one to demonstrate his faith before God for his salvation, but faith itself produces the work that is seen in the man.

Further, how does Paul use πίστις *pístis* (faith) in relation to James? Paul sees πίστις as an action. Thus we pledge of the assurance with Christ such that this faith in Christ cannot be *work* but the evidence that its presence in our lives must be done through works. This is opposite to the Jewish tradition which assumes that πίστις as in Abraham’s context for example is *work* (Ward, 1968). Dibelius (1976) points out that πίστις, as used with Abraham’s case is not considered *work* for James. He also notes that v. 14 deals with justification before God. His analysis of James’ view on salvation, as seen in verse 20-24, shows an Abraham ‘not considered a justified “sinner”’ as Dibelius says, but as a righteous man acknowledged and favored by God. Dibelius’ adherence to the Catholic doctrine of salvation is seen in his approach to biblical characters’ examples that he depicts as righteous individuals saved and sanctioned by God, not as transgressors. This results in his opinion about James whom he sees as being shaped by the Jewish interpretation of the text, which influenced Christian views down the line. Nonetheless, it appears that the Author of James wants to connect faith in the same way as Paul did by using Jewish exegesis, but for this to make sense and to reach congruency, verse 14-17 must be separated from verses 18-26.

Paul’s constant theological battle revolved around qualifying *works* in relation to salvation as an inefficacious strategy to merit and obtain God’s favor, while in parallel, placing absolute faith and obedience in Christ as the only salvific key to man’s life (Richardson, 1958). Paul’s point on faith is repeated in the epistle of Ephesians which

reads, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV. On the other hand, James asks the question, can a man's faith save him, yet without ever providing a clear answer. Some would like to suggest that the answer is actually in the statement: "What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?" If we argue that James' understanding of faith and works is different than that of Paul, then we must presume it is similar to that of the brethren who wanted the gentile Christians to keep the law of Moses for salvation. We have however established that James' position at the Jerusalem Conference was in congruence with Paul's. James' point can only be that faith always produces good works in a man who receives salvation. But we are not suggesting that a man is not saved by faith alone contrary to the extreme point that suggests that, "since faith alone is necessary for salvation, one is free from the moral obligations of the law" (Strange, 1991).

Paul argues that justification is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. He refutes those who erroneously think that God saves people by taking into consideration the good things that they themselves do, in addition to their faith. He does so over and over again. The question becomes, how does James see justification? Moo (2000) proposes that, "*justify*" in Paul's understanding refers to how a person gets into relationship with God, while in James it connotes what that relationship must ultimately look like to receive God's final approval. If the need for justification is because of unrighteousness, the argument that James' usage of the phrase "justified by works" cannot be the same as Paul's usage of "*justified by faith*". Justification is necessitated because of the law. In the New Testament, the Greek word for law is "nomos (νόμος)" but we must allow the context to present clear indication of this usage and interpretation. Walvoord (1937) makes the point that,

*Nomos* is used in the sense of any recognized principle in operation whether moral, civil, or natural-law in its broadest sense. It is a comparatively rare use in Romans, but is found a few times. A good illustration may be found in the two instances in 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." In asking the question, "By what law?" Paul uses *nomos* in its most general sense (Walvoord, p. 20).

Understanding what James means by justification is to understand what he understands about the law. "The term "law of liberty" in James 1:25 and 2:12 simply means that the will or commandments of God revealed in His Word (or even in the law itself), since we are partakers of His nature which delights in His will, are not a burden but rather a pleasure" (Osborne, 1952). However, James is making this point because of what he said in v.9 thru 11. Here he is defining unrighteousness which the "law of liberty commends; in that so speak ye, and so do, as they shall be judged by this law". Who are '*they*'? The text is clear: those who transgress the law.

The believer's obedience and liberty is governed and evaluated by the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12), "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), and the "commandments" of Christ (John 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12). ... No creature is ever free from the eternal principle of righteousness inherent in the very character of God and the universe of His creation. James puts "law" and "liberty" together

because they belong together, and ends up by making the phrase "the perfect law of liberty," a designation which could not be true if it destroyed liberty in any way. ... We are at liberty when we walk within the limits of the gospel; and they who delight to do the law are free in obedience; free from the tyranny of their own lust, passions, and inclinations; free from domination of men and opinion and common customs and personal habits." (Cowen, 1999)

Therefore, *justification* for James must be imputed righteousness to the believer. Can we really make the leap from James 2:14 to suggest that James is arguing in v. 24 and 25 that works justify a man? Assuming it was true, would it really be irreconcilable with Paul's understanding on the subject of justification? The Greek word for 'justify' here is the same as the one used by Paul. That word is *dikaioō* (δικαίωω- to render just or innocent), and has contextually the same meaning in its usage across the New Testament. In James 2:25 the context is quite clear in that the text said, "justified by works and not by faith alone". In Romans 4:2 the phrase is the same as in James "justified by works". Paul in Romans 3:28 uses the word 'justify' in the opposite sense, meaning that faith justifies without works. We conclude that the use of the word 'works' here is the same as "works of law" or "deeds of the law", yet Paul in Romans 2:13 says that "only the doers of the law are justified before God". This suggests that Paul clearly teaches that faith must produce works.

The Greek word for works is 'ergon (ἔργον)' which is by implication, an act, deed, doing, labour, and work. There again we must allow the context to indicate the meaning. Thus when Paul say "works of the Law" Akin (1996) has argued that it is best translated as "work of the Torah". Dilbelius assumed like Ropes (1954) that the connection existing between πίστις and ἔργον presupposes Pauline treatment. Yet he denies that James' use of ἔργον is not in the sense of Jewish tradition which sees Abraham faith as works (Ward, 1968). In this he is willing to admit that James misunderstood Paulinism because Paul uses ἔργον as meaning work of the law. Dibelius states that the illustration of a man who does not provide help (v. 15-16) is not an example of faith without works (v. 14, 17) but an analogy of the two. Carter (2001) makes the point,

- For Paul:
  - ✓ Faith is complete trust in, and obedience to Jesus Christ
  - ✓ Works are the outward acts of ritual and adherence to a code to attain merit
- For James:
  - ✓ Faith is belief in Jesus Christ, the resurrection, and salvation.
  - ✓ Works are spontaneous acts of love that spring from the fruits of the Spirit.

However, Paul wrote that love is the fulfilling of the Law, which mutes Carters' distinction. Therefore, even if works for James is "the spontaneous acts of love that spring from the fruits of the Spirit", or as Ward (1968) contends that, "in early Christian tradition the works of Abraham are preeminently his acts of mercy, especially his hospitality", and we argue that this justifies us, Paul would still say that no work can justify us before God. Thus we cannot make any distinction in the kind of works that justifies because only faith justifies.

"He [James] has no idea of disparaging faith, which he everywhere assumes as present and which he highly values. His point is that faith and works are inseparable in any properly constituted Christian life, and he argues this clearly and effectively." (Rose, 1994)

This is only true if we assume that James 2:24,25 conflicts with Paul, and hence, we conclude that James was being deliberate in making the point that only faith justifies a man but this faith demands fruitfulness. Thus we are left to resolve the issue of the term “justified by works” in James 2:24 and 25.

## The Objector

Most commentators on James 2:18 suggest that James goes into a diatribe (v. 14-26) writing style with an imaginary objector as Paul did (1 Corinthians 12) when his objector said, “you have one spiritual gift, I have another, Praise God!” The goal of the diatribe, is to introduce a sort of a “sparing partner” and then proceed to answer the issue at hand (Hartin). James’ objector begins his discourse by saying, “Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from *thy* works, and I by my works will show thee *my* faith.” The objector wants to differentiate between faith and works, and follows his opening statement by driving home his point with an example. “Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder.” That is, it doesn’t prove you have saving faith because the demons believe the same. Carter (2001) contends that James’ use of the word *faith* is not the same as Paul’s, and this difference is demonstrated in v. 19. However, it is widely accepted that James is using an objector here; meaning the difference in position is between James’ objector and Paul. At this point, most commentators suggest that the objectors’ argument ends. They propose that James re-enters back into the conversation with his objections in v. 20 showing the error of the objector by going to the Old Testament. Hartin noted that James’ diatribe usage is seen in v. 9, 14, and 18 as he presents imaginary objections followed by asking rhetorical questions (2:5-7, 14-15, 20-21). Further, MacArthur (p.28, 1990) contends that James “labels the objector foolish, meaning empty, defective: The man is hollow because he lacks a living faith; his claim that he believes is fraudulent; his faith is a sham”. Additionally, Martin (p.90, 1982) comments that the use of the term “foolish man” not only shows a deficient understanding, but a moral error and sin. He notes that both v.17 and 20 show faith without works as dead and ineffectual for salvation.

We therefore, formulate our disagreement to this argument about where the objector ceases to speak and where James re-enters the discourse. Accepting the conclusion above continues to propagate the conflict between James and Paul without any clear resolution. It is quite natural for us to think that it takes some sort of a work in connection to faith to be saved. The Pauline doctrine strongly rejects such an idea in that, if any kind of work is necessary for salvation then Christ’s death is in vain, which leaves us to interpret James differently than all other conclusions have so far.

In actuality, allowing the objector to continue all the way to the end of the chapter removes any tension between James and Paul. We must further remember that it was the objector’s goal in v. 18 to justify that they can produce “faith by works”. The objector claims that they have works and believes that this work is able to justify them. This is the argument in v. 18 thru 26. We propose that James’ point here is related to those teachers that Paul contended with in the Gentile nations. James argues for a faith that works by setting premises in v.14-16, to arrive at the conclusion of v.17 that faith without works is dead. Through a diatribe, James is showing an objector, who obviously is a teacher, starting from a faulty premise still arriving at the correct conclusion. The objector comes to the

same conclusion in v.26 as James in v.17 by using an argument of works. James' point is a faith that works, which contradicts the objector's argument that works produce faith or justify. The objector, therefore, is a metaphor for those Jews who taught that Abraham was justified by his works and made circumcision a requirement for salvation. In Acts 15:5 we read "but there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." Further, it is quite illogical for James to turn around and write an epistle that could so easily be twisted against what he agreed to and contradicts the letter (detailed in Act 15:23-29) he sent to the churches abroad.

James' interjection back into the discussion we argue, actually comes in the third chapter which reads, "be not many *of you* teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment." It would seem here that James is calling out these Jewish leaders who oppose Paul by saying that, "some people have no right to be teachers." James is directly referring to the objector and he goes on to say, "for in many things we all stumble: If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also". James is now addressing the contentions resulting from these teachers' ideas. Taken under this alternative perspective, James' epistle finds its place contextually in the discussion, which reconciles Luther's issue with the third chapter, which he to be found quite random.

## **Conclusion**

Lorenzen (p.231, 1978) points out that most people appear to read the texts through Pauline glasses which he reasoned merely become an illustration of faith working through love (Galatians 5:6), and that works belong to the consequences of faith. He asked the question: is that what the text really says? He then suggested that we should try to be discerning exegetes by being servants of the text, not masters over it. However, he says to conclude, that James reinforces in various ways that works are necessary for justification, even if it is God who gives us the necessary grace to be obedient. Thus this is exactly what James is showing with the objector to present an understanding counter to the objector's conception of the requirement of salvation. Thus the position we have taken in this essay harmonizes James' writing with itself and with the Pauline's construction of faith. Using the Jerusalem Council as our historical context, James too, like Peter, sees salvation through Pauline glasses. We must conclude, as Luther did a few centuries ago, that a man is saved by faith without works, and yet, a man having faith will produce good works. But never must we think that faith and works come together because it is faith that produces works. Paul writes that it is God who works in us to do his good pleasure and this working is a result of our belief in Him.

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