

68. The problem addressed by James has application to believers who do not have a working object for their faith. The principle, “faith without production from a working object is ineffective,” may be applied to various examples in our society.
69. Dr. Thomas Sowell addressed the emerging problem of cultural erosion in our nation over twenty years ago in his book, *The Vision of the Anointed*. Here is an example of how he described that vision and how its application has evolved over the last two decades.

The focus will be on one particular vision—the vision prevailing among the intellectual and political elite of our time. What is important about this vision are not only its particular assumptions and their corollaries, but also the fact that it is a *prevailing* vision—which means that its assumptions are so much taken for granted by so many people, including so-called “thinking people,” that neither those assumptions nor their corollaries are generally confronted with demands for empirical evidence.

Discordant evidence may be dismissed as isolated anomalies, or as something tendentiously selected by opponents, or it may be explained away ad hoc by a theory having no empirical support whatever. What must first be considered are the reasons behind such tactics, why it is so necessary to believe in a particular vision that evidence of its incorrectness is ignored, suppressed, or discredited. (p. 2)

Those who accept this vision are deemed to be not merely factually correct but morally on a higher plane. Put differently, those who disagree with the prevailing vision are seen as being not merely in error, but in sin. The benighted are to be made “aware,” to have their “consciousness raised,” and the wistful hope is held out that they will “grow.” Should the benighted prove recalcitrant, however, then their “mean-spiritedness” must be fought and the “real reasons” behind their arguments and actions exposed. (pp. 2–3)

What all these highly disparate crusades have in common is their moral exaltation of the anointed above others, who are to have their different views nullified and superseded by the views of the anointed, imposed via the power of government. (p. 5)



The prevailing vision of our era ... so permeates the media and academia, and has made such major inroads into the religious community, that many grow to adulthood unaware that there is any other way of looking at things, or that evidence might be relevant to checking out the sweeping assumptions of so-called “thinking people.”³ (p. 6)

69. Here is the expanded translation of:

James 2:20 But are you willing to consistently learn, you vacuous man, that faith without production from a working object from Scripture is constantly useless? (EXT)

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? (NASB)

1. This verse is a question posed by James and it begins with the phrase, “Was not Abraham our father ...? This indicates that James, who is a Jew, certifies that Abraham is the progenitor of the Jewish race.
2. Abraham started out as a Gentile named Abram, the Hebrew proper noun, **אַבְרָם** (*'avram*): “exalted father,” which is used in Genesis 12:1
3. The Lord changed Abram’s name in Genesis 17:1 to **אַבְרָהָם** (*'avraham*): “father of a multitude.” In the context of that chapter, the Lord institutes the ritual of circumcision. It was an outward, physical confirmation of the promise to Abraham that “you will be the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:4).
4. In between these two verses we have the confirmation of Abraham’s salvation in:

Genesis 15:6 Then he had believed in the Lord; and it was credited to his account for righteousness.

5. His salvation occurred previous to this verse. His salvation occurred in his hometown of Ur after which he was commanded to leave the area and move to Canaan, documented in Genesis 12.
6. The pastor of the Jerusalem church is James, who is a Jew. His parents are Joseph and Mary; both are descendants of David of the tribe of Judah. James is teaching a congregation made up of Jews, therefore, he can correctly proclaim to them that Abraham is “our father.”

³ Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulations as a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 2–3, 5, 6.

7. James has advanced in his epistle to James 2:21, where he uses Abraham as a superb example of justification by works. It's a good example because what Abraham did was not possible until he was 120 years old.
8. How old was Abram when he left Haran? He was married to Sarai according to Genesis 12:4 when he was seventy-five years old. Forty-five years had passed before he was commanded to sacrifice his only legitimately born son, Isaac.
9. Abraham did not carry out the commandment to sacrifice Isaac on the spot. No, he was ordered to travel to a specific location to perform the task. His instructions were to leave Beersheba and travel to Mount Moriah where the deed was to be executed. Here is some information on the road Abraham traveled:

A north-south road handled mostly local Palestinian traffic rather than international commerce. It began at Beersheba and reached the central ridge of West Palestine at Hebron; it continued through Jerusalem.
11. The approximate distance between Beersheba and Jerusalem was about 45 miles. Donkeys could travel as much as twenty miles a day, about 15 if carrying a load. So, it was on the third day when these men arrived at Mount Moriah.
12. Abraham had a three-day journey to consider the task ahead of him. On the first day he could have turned back, but he kept going. Same on the second day, but no turning back. Then on the third day he could see Mount Moriah, the site of the sacrifice. He continued his progress toward the objective.
13. Once at the foot of the mount, he dismounted and told his servants to wait with the donkey and said, "we will worship and return to you" (Genesis 22:5).
14. The word "worship" is the verb **שָׁחָה** (*shachah*). Its root meaning is, "to bow down." Abraham did not do this physically, but mentally. He was bowing down mentally for three days running. What he was actually doing was concentrating on the Word of God as the working object of his faith.
15. This application of worship is taught by Jesus Christ in this New English Translation of:

John 4:23 “But a time [**an hour**] is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship [**predictive future active indicative of προσκυνέω (proskunéō)**: referring to the Church Age] the Father in Spirit [**the filling of the Holy Spirit**] and truth [**doctrines learned from Scripture**], for the Father seeks such people to be His worshipers.

v. 24 God is a Spirit, and the people who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.”
(NET)

16. The principle to which the Lord refers is the new dispensation in which true worship is performed under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit Who teaches truth from the Word of God to the souls of positive-volition believers.
17. When a believer grows in grace by acquiring knowledge from imperative moods and passages that direct him to submit to certain behavior patterns, he is obligated to apply them in his personal life.
18. When executed, it is the result of his faith submitting to biblical principles followed by overt action. This is true worship. Without going through this process, activities that are referred to as worship are not.
19. Here are some examples of activities that should be motivated by resident doctrine but instead are “works without faith responding to human viewpoint: (1) pious expressions or posture, (2) observing the Eucharist, (3) singing hymns, (4) handing out tracts, (5) giving money, (6) constructing Jimmy Carter houses in the third world, or (7) winning a Sword drill.
20. True worship is the application of the Word of God to life and circumstances. The single most important issue in the Christian way of life is learning Scripture, retaining it in the soul’s stream of consciousness, and then, in the status of true worship, applying it to life and circumstances.
21. Genesis 15:6 is a report of Abram’s justification by faith in Messiah. James 2:21 is Abraham’s justification by works whose working object for his faith is the Abrahamic Covenant.
22. The doctrinal rationale for Abraham was complete trust in the integrity of God. God has promised him a great nation under the Abrahamic Covenant. He had promised him a son when he and his wife, Sarah, were both sterile. He had seen his son, Isaac, grow to maturity now old enough to extend the family’s chart pedigree which he would later do with his marriage to Rebekah and the births of Jacob and Esau.



23. Therefore, the commandment to sacrifice his son was something he had the courage to do based on divine promises already made to him. Abraham believed that in order for the promises to be fulfilled, God would bring Isaac back to life by resuscitation.
24. Therefore, Abraham was not carrying out a ritual for the sake of doing a ritual. No father, without certain, confirmable guarantees, would harm his son by just blindly “following orders.”
25. Abraham has acquired power in his soul through the inculcation of doctrine, had seen God’s faithfulness toward him, and trusted His veracity was trustworthy beyond question.
26. Therefore, on Mount Moriah, Abraham was justified by works whose working object was directed toward the integrity of God and His promise.
27. What James is confirming, by distinguishing the differences between the two major events in Abraham’s life, is that there are two certifications of a man’s faith.
28. In Genesis 15:6, Abraham was justified by faith when the working object for his faith was the Integrity of God and His Messiah. In Genesis 22:1–10, Abraham was justified by works by preparing to sacrifice his son because the working object of his faith was the Abrahamic Covenant.
29. In order to please God, the believer must come to understand that divine good is the production of works accomplished by means of recall and application of the Word of God.
30. Therefore, two principles emerge: **(1)** A believer’s “works,” or production of divine good, are not the result of doing something he assumes is the “right thing to do.” **(2)** The working object of one’s “works” must find its catalyst and certification in the Word of God under the filling, recall, and application ministries of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: It is at this point in our study that we began the exegesis of James 2:21–26. The phrase, “Was not Abraham justified by works ...” (v.21), took us on an extended study of the life of Abraham, né Abram, from his salvation in “Ur of the Chaldeans” in Genesis 11:31, all the way to his intention to sacrifice Isaac on the altar of wood in Genesis 22:10–12.

That analysis began with lesson 95, and continued to its conclusion in lesson 132, a total of 38 lessons.

(End JAS2-82. See JAS2-83 for continuation of study at p. 821.)