**Justification of Abraham:
James 2 and Romans 4**

teaching by Alex Kurz
transcribed and edited by Nancy Paulson

(James 2:17-24 KJV) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. {18} Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. {19} Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. {20} But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? {21} Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? {22} Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? {23} And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. {24} Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

When we read here in verse 21, was not Abraham our father justified by works. You are probably familiar with the statement Martin Luther made, he thought that James was a straw book and because James chapter 2 appears to contradict Romans 4, he did not think there was a valid place for this epistle to be in the canon of the scripture. So for those saints who are established in the issues of justification unto eternal life, the issue of justification being by grace through faith. Being anchored there in the truths taught by Apostle Paul in Romans 4, it can cause a problem when we come to James 2 and there appears to be a tremendous contradiction: one passage clearly says Abraham was justified by faith and yet you have another passage of scripture that clearly says Abraham was justified by works. How are we going to deal with this?

One tactic is to wrest with the scriptures unto your own destruction. Or we can begin to water down the passages and assume maybe it really isn’t saying what it is saying. Obviously, we do not believe that at all. We believe the scriptures as they are, they mean what they say and the say what they mean.

However, we still have a bit of a dilemma, how can Abraham receive this dual justification, as it were? I think honestly, we do not need to insist that Abraham received eternal life twice. James is going to tell us that, yes, Abraham did receive righteousness unto eternal life and James is not suggesting in the passage that Abraham received eternal life a second time or there was a second round of imputed righteousness. The key is simply understanding what the justification is dealing with because the Word of deals with various types of justification. We tend to limit that term justification to the issue of eternal life, when we are forgiven all of our trespasses and sins, we are given the imputed righteousness of God to our account and therefore we are saved unto eternal life, saved from the consequences, the debt and penalty of sin. If justification is restricted to that definition then we do have a serious problem comparing Romans 4 and James 2. However, the Word of God never restricts that word or term justification to only refer to eternal life, being saved from the consequences of sin.

A dictionary definition for that word justification simply means to vindicate or to speak well of. The idea is you prove or demonstrate something. There are other definitions that we can go to but for our purpose here tonight just keep in mind, technically to be justified or to justify someone or something is to speak well of it, again, to vindicate the worthiness of whatever the person or object is to be believed. And we find that demonstrated in scripture, for example, if we go to Luke 7, we see that concept of justification being used *not* in the concept of eternal life.

(Luke 7:28-29 KJV) For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. {29} And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

The claims that John was making on behalf of God was worthy to be believed and what the believer, in response to the claims John was making, he by submitting to water baptism justified God. Now, it is obvious, that restrictive definition of justification meaning one is given eternal life does not apply, you cannot give God eternal life. So, this justification has a context and what the believer is doing by subjecting themselves to water baptism is basically vindicating God and the truth that is being communicated and revealed to Israel at that time. Look at verse 30:

(Luke 7:30 KJV) But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

How is God justified in this context? Well, if you want to vindicate the claims God is making and if He is worthy to be believed you would submit yourself to water baptism. So the definition as restricted to eternal life is not demonstrated here. Drop down to verse 35:

(Luke 7:35 KJV) But wisdom is justified of all her children.

So, once again, we see the issue of justification here it is the worthiness of wisdom and the work of God’s wisdom. Once again, God, or wisdom in this case, is going to be vindicated. One more example, In 1 Corinthians 4 we see another use of that word justify or justification:

(1 Corinthians 4:1-4 KJV) Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. {3} But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. {4} For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

See what Paul is talking about here in lieu of justification is that he is talking about being shown faithful to the commission, mission, ministry and message committed to him. Paul is not in the business of justifying himself, of trying to validate or legitimize his ministry; he is basically saying that Christ is going to do that. And once again, Paul uses that term "justify", he is not talking about justification unto eternal life. He is talking about his ministry as the steward of the mysteries of God. He is going to be vindicated at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul, a number of times says, "I lie not, but I speak the truth". So, in light of the context, the Corinthians were questioning the legitimacy as an apostle and that is why Paul uses the idea of "I am not going to justify myself, the Lord is going to vindicate me in that day." So, we see how that expression Justification is being used.

Now go to James 2 and then John 3. The key, at least for me, for James 2 is understanding that James is writing to the believers who possess eternal life. So when James begins to say something about Abraham being justified by works he is not suggesting that is how the remnant receives eternal life. Because you do not find, in the book of John the Lord Jesus Christ teaching that one obtains eternal life by way of works. Paul, by the way, given that capstone of progressive revelation, is going to teach the basis for that truth: that justification unto eternal life has always been by grace through faith. We will see Paul teach us that in just a few minutes. Look at what James says in James 1:

(James 1:18 KJV) Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

James is writing to the believing remnant; he is not assuming the unbeliever is going to read the book of James and understand that his works will achieve justification unto eternal life. The assumption (context) is "He has already begotten us". They are born again, they have eternal life. Go to 1 John 5:

The Hebrew Epistles, Hebrews through Revelation, have a number of passages in that canon of scripture that demonstrate the remnant does already have eternal life, it is not dependent on their good works.

(1 John 5:11-13 KJV) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. {12} He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. {13} These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

So, the frame of reference possessed by James, John, Peter and the writer of Hebrews is "You have eternal life." How did they get eternal life? They believed on the Son. Go back to James 2. James acknowledges that Abraham received justification unto eternal life in Genesis 15; that is a non-issue.

(James 2:23 KJV) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: ...

James takes the reader back to Genesis 15. You know who else goes back to Genesis 15 to teach justification unto eternal life? The Apostle Paul, and Paul spends a pretty significant amount of time in Romans 4 taking the reader back to Genesis 15. James has no problem recognizing, acknowledging when did Abraham receive righteous: Genesis 15 - that is a non-issue.

The issue in James 2 isn’t works that can give you eternal life but rather works that can produce a different type of justification. And what the justification James is dealing with is there in verse 23:

(James 2:23 KJV) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Notice there is a colon between the righteousness Abraham received back in Genesis 15, when James concentrates on another type of justification, again, by technical definition, he vindicated something, he proved God worthy of something. The issue is what occurred in Genesis 22 and the declaration that God makes is Abraham is a friend of God. Notice in the context there in verse 21:

(James 2:21 KJV) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

When did that occur in history? That occurred in Genesis 22. See, James is not teaching that Abraham was re-justified unto eternal life. He is teaching two types of justification: one that gave him eternal life and one that declares him to be a friend of God, a reputation which was affirmed in 2 Chronicles and Isaiah.

So, when we look at James 2, the easy answer is that it is written to the twelve tribes that are scattered, but be careful because Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ tell us something about how the twelve tribes receive eternal life. How did John say they received eternal life?

(1 John 5:13 KJV) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Frankly, the Lord Jesus Christ does teach the issue of believing Him unto eternal life:

(John 3:15 KJV) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Now, the object of faith (this is where we need to be careful by rightly dividing the word of truth) we cannot just arbitrarily assume that they are believing the same thing what we are instructed to believe. We are given a message that declares the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ as being proprietary in nature. In other words, it was the sacrificial work by God via His Son as the full perfect, total, complete payment for sin that is worthy for us to believe. Our object of faith, what we place our faith in, is the accomplishments of Calvary. Certainly, in the book of John, Christ has not yet been crucified, so as He instructs the remnant concerning the issue of eternal life it is still the issue of faith.

By the way, there are passages in Paul’s epistles that teach if it is of grace then it is no more of works and if it is of works then it is no more of grace. In those two passages the entire context is of Israel, he is talking about Israel’s justification unto eternal life. Isn’t that interesting? The two passages that teach that works voids faith and faith voids works have to do with Israel.

In John, the object of their faith is different. What Jesus Christ is looking for is faith in the claims He is making: He is the Lord’s Christ - He is the Messiah of Israel and He is worthy to be the Messiah of Israel and He is worthy to be believed in.

(John 3:15-18 KJV) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. {16} For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. {17} For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. {18} He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

That name is preached in the early part of the book of Acts, this Jesus whom ye crucified is both Lord and Christ , the Lord’s Christ, the Messiah, your Messiah. The object of Israel’s faith is to be centered on the claims the Lord Jesus Christ is making concerning His Messiahship.

(John 5:24 KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Did these saints have eternal security? Well, it says, "and shall not come into condemnation". I have always scratched my head and never understood why grace believers want to deny eternal security to the remnant. I never could understand that. The Lord is the one telling us this, "If you have everlasting life you shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Eternal security is taught to the believing remnant.

(John 6:28-29 KJV) Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? {29} Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

(John 6:47 KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Hath - not is going to get, you have everlasting life.

(John 10:27-28 KJV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: {28} And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Was security taught to the believing remnant? Absolutely. The Lord is comforting the remnant with the knowledge that "you might know you have eternal life and you believed on my name and you will never come to condemnation, and you will never perish no man is going to pluck you out of my hand".

(John 11:25-27 KJV) Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: {26} And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? {27} She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

That is the object of their faith: believing the claims that He was making to the nation Israel: he is Messiah.

(John 20:30-31 KJV) And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: {31} But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

So, we see, even in the gospel period, as Christ was ministering to the circumcision, confirming the promises made unto the fathers, as He is out there ministering to the nation it is quite clear eternal life is only possible via faith.

When James says what he does in James 2:23, he understands that’s how Abraham received righteousness. Go to Romans 4 and look at how Paul is going to comment on that righteousness Abraham received. In Romans 4:9, now in context it is Abraham and the way he received righteousness back in Genesis 15.

(Romans 4:9 KJV) Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, ...

Now, wait a minute, is Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles? You notice that Paul talks about the blessedness, "Does it only come upon the circumcision?" Now, you would think the Apostle to the Gentiles would be talking about the blessing that is to come upon the uncircumcision. Do you notice Paul does not exclude the benefit given for the nation of Israel. Paul is very careful. Who was first promised the blessing of righteousness? The circumcision. See, Paul, when he presents the blessedness, look in verse 4 for example:

(Romans 4:4-6 KJV) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. {5} But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. {6} Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

This is a concept of imputed righteousness without works was inherent in the prophetic program.

(Romans 4:8-9 KJV) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. {9} Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only,...

No, it is not an exclusive blessing for Israel.

...or upon the uncircumcision also? ...

You see that blessing in now going to extend to that Gentile.

...for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

(Romans 4:10-11 KJV) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. {11} And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, ...

Now, Paul is talking about both Jew and Gentile, he is talking about both circumcision and uncircumcision, he is talking about both about the seed of Abraham and the nations. You see Paul addresses that fact that the blessing was first promised to Israel, what we learn by way of the revelation of the mystery is that God always intended and He did keep secret the fact that God was not going to restrict that blessing to the seed of Abraham only but it was now going to extend, we now know through the revelation of the mystery given to Paul, to the Gentiles as well. See, you do not see Paul saying that it is strictly a Gentile blessing or a Gentile provision. He springboards off what God intended to do with the nation of Israel. We should finish reading verse 11...

...that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them ...

What is that next word?

... also:

The righteousness that is available to the Gentile is almost a secondary benefit in Romans 4, isn’t that interesting? And Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles.

(Romans 4:12 KJV) And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, ...

That is a descendant of Abraham, a Jew by heredity, racially. But notice the rest of verse 12.

...but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Paul is given further light revelation concerning God’s rightness, God’s ability to give righteousness to both Jew and Gentile, He’s able to do it to the circumcision, not because they are the offspring of Abraham but the circumcision who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had being yet uncircumcised. You see what Paul is saying: even the Jew can only be given imputed righteousness if they walk in the same steps that Abraham took. What did Abraham do in Genesis 15? Abraham believed God and what was the result? It was counted unto him righteousness. Obviously, this is not a new idea; it predates the law. Paul is the one who tells us Israel has to do the same thing. God made the provision for the circumcision.

(Romans 4:13 KJV) For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

You know, hold that thought, isn’t Paul the one that says, for example, in the book of Galatians, when Paul talks about life, eternal life, in relationship to the law he tells us:

(Galatians 2:15-16 KJV) We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, {16} Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Paul’s revelation provides the ultimate answer to the justification unto eternal life of the circumcision, the Jew: it is by faith, it cannot be the works of the law. Look at chapter 3:

(Galatians 3:11-12 KJV) But that no man is justified [that is, unto eternal life] by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. {12} And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

(Galatians 3:21 KJV) Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Paul provides an explanation for the righteousness that is offered to the nation of Israel and it cannot be by the works of the law. Go back to Romans 4 and then go to Romans 11. Here are the two passages that when Paul talks about works canceling faith or grace; they are actually dealing with the circumcision.

(Romans 4:15-16 KJV) Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. {16} Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Paul is actually the vessel used by God to communicate how He has the right to justify anybody because it is not dependent upon works. Notice verse 14...

(Romans 4:14 KJV) For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

It is talking about the circumcision, compare with what Paul says in Romans 4 with Romans 11 where Paul is clearly dealing with Israel.

(Romans 11:6-7 KJV) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. {7} What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

You see how Paul teaches how it is grace and works are diametrically opposed, the two cannot co-work. It is an absolute impossibility. And he is dealing with the nation of Israel. Paul provides light on how God is going to justify the circumcision and it is not going to be by works. Now, with that go back to James 2 and then John 15.

So, please understand that for Israel eternal life comes by way of believing the claims that God has made in Israel’s (or the remnant’s) case of His Messiah-ship, His Lordship, that He is the Christ. Then when we read James 2, the question is, "How, then, was Abraham justified by works"?

(James 2:23 KJV) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

The reason James in writing to the remnant that are scattered out there in that Mid-east Asia area, Cappadocia and Babylonia, is because God is looking for a specific work that will give to that remnant the privilege of being deemed the "Friend of God". And what James is saying in James 2 is: "Do you remember what Abraham did when he was willing to offer up Isaac his son? There was a vindication, a justification, that Abraham received was not that he was declared righteousness but he was declared to be "the Friend of God".

Check out two passages: 2 Chronicles 20 and Isaiah 41 to see Israel understood Abraham’s place as a friend of God. What a high honor to be called God’s Friend!

(2 Chronicles 20:7 KJV) Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

Why was Abraham God’s friend? He believed God was worthy to be trusted even when God said, "You sacrifice your son on that altar." That son was the very seed-line through which God said He would produce a people to occupy a land upon which a kingdom will be established. Wasn’t Isaac a miracle baby? Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah’s womb was dead. Isaac was a special child, he was a product of God’s promise. It was God’s supernatural intervention. Abraham waited a long period for that son and now, God the giver of that child to Abraham says, "Kill Him." Did Abraham hesitate? No, he staggered not at the promise, he did not question, he didn’t doubt, his faith did not waver. God was worthy to be believe and if it means sacrificing the very one God claimed the very seed-line was going to come from then Abraham will sacrifice him. And in doing so, he was called God’s friend.

By reading Isaiah 41, we can see the prophets knew about this. By the way, when Abraham offered up his son is not when he received eternal life; he already received eternal life in Genesis 15.

(Isaiah 41:8 KJV) But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

Isn’t that interesting. The *seed* of Abraham my friend, the seed that God instructed Abraham to kill and he was ready to do that by faith - he is God's friend.

In John 15, the Lord Jesus Christ offers to the believing remnant an opportunity, not only to have a place of preeminence within the kingdom, but to be His friend.

(John 15:12-15 KJV) This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. {13} Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. {14} Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. {15} Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Interesting, He is not going to deal with them as servants anymore, but the opportunity to be called the friends of Jesus Christ, the friend of God. And in the context, verse 12, the commandment Jesus Christ issues to that remnant, to that Little Flock is "that ye love one another". They are to love one another with the same measure and degree of love that He is going to demonstrate to them: a life of selfless sacrifice.

That life of selfless sacrifice is what James is dealing with, it is the need for the remnant to be willing to sacrifice for one another. And what James 2 does is basically bring to the attention of that remnant what Abraham did; he was willing to sacrifice something (his son). Abraham vindicated God and he was then declared to be a friend. Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ told the remnant to be His friend. Notice what James says in James 2:

(James 2:15-17 KJV) If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, {16} And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? {17} Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

You see, James precedes the justification of Abraham by works that occurred in Genesis 22 by talking about the need to live for the brother or the sister who is naked and destitute for daily food. Remember, the Lord’s prayer, which is really the Apostolic prayer, give us this day our daily bread. One of the means of physical provision is the remnant, the Little Flock, ministering to one another. They sold all that they had and shared all things in common, during that 70th week of Daniel when the remnant is not going to be able to participate in the economic system of that day. How are they going to buy food? How are they going to be able to care for their families? So, what James is saying is it is going to take a work of selfless sacrifice to see to it that your brother or sister is clothed upon and fed daily. James is talking about a specific context, a specific period of time, the 70th week of Daniel.

Peter writes about the same thing:

(1 Peter 1:22 KJV) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

What kind of love? Is that just kind of emotional sentiment? "Be ye warmed and filled." Is it sympathy? No, a fervent heart love says, " I identify your lack, I identify that need - you are starving and I am going to sacrifice to ensure that you have daily sustenance. Look at verse 23:

(1 Peter 1:23 KJV) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Peter is writing to those who are already born again, they have eternal life. James says, "we are begotten of God". So then, the justification James writes about is not unto eternal life.

Last passage, 1 John 3, once again the context is in the future, the 70th week of Daniel.

(1 John 3:15-16 KJV) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. {16} Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us...

Remember what Jesus Christ said in John 15, "I want you to love one another just like I loved you. Here is the commandment, ‘Be my friends’." He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. The context is the tribulation period, Daniel‘s 70th .

Abraham - capital F - "Friend" ... what a reputation! In Isaiah, what a designation! You are my friend. That is what Jesus is provoking the remnant to do.

(1 John 3:17-18 KJV) ...But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? {18} My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

The justification in James 2 is clearly what James says it is - to be a friend, to abide by the commandment that Jesus Christ issued in John 15, to be willing to sacrifice and to provide of the physical needs of those brothers and sisters who are going to be destitute during the tribulation period.

By the way, there is a historical application, remember in Acts when they sold all things and then Paul describes those saints as being the poor saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). There is a historical application, they had bankrupt Jews, that remnant of grace, that are not going to see the kingdom, unfortunately, they are poor, there is a need - so these passages do have an application for that time period but more than that, it has a prophetic and dispensational application during the 70th week of Daniel: Don’t just be justified unto eternal life, but be a friend. Now, that designation ... it is James who is instructing the 12 tribes.

It is important to note Paul never tells us to be justified as a friend of God. There is an entire reward system for the remnant that is different from ours. The way God deals with us is the single reward that will be addressed at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul never tell us about rewards, plural, but the reward, singular. But with the remnant it is quite different, one of the rewards that is promised to the remnant has to do with their place and position within the earthly government and their actual geographic location within that kingdom system and another is being called the "Friend of God".