

Faith & Works

1. Martin Luther regarded this epistle with considerable contempt because of this section on faith and works. It did not agree with his understanding of the writings of Paul.
 - a. He called "James" "a right strawy epistle."
 - b. "Strawy" was something of small worth or significance.
2. Many others have questioned the inspiration of the book because of the alleged conflict between James and Paul.
 - a. Paul wrote. (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 4:1-6; Eph. 2:8, 9).

GAL 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

ROM 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "\And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.\" 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

EPH 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- b. James wrote. (Jas. 2:17, 20, 24, 26).
3. On the surface there appears to be a conflict between Paul and James.
4. There are those who emphatically affirm there is a conflict between the two writers.
5. Those who hold the book of James in contempt have failed to discern that Paul and James are discussing different kinds faith and different kinds of works in these passages.
 - a. It is essential that we distinguish between the different kinds of faith and works.
 - b. It will then become clear there is no conflict between Paul and James.

JAM 2:14 What use [profit] is it, my brethren [brothers in Christ], if a man says he has [saving] faith, but he has no [good] works [to show for his faith]? **Can that faith save him?**

1. James envisions a man without works boasting of his faith.

2. He asks the provocative question, “Can that faith save him?”
3. James does not minimize the importance of faith (Jas. 1:3-6; 2:1), but is questioning the validity of faith that does not act. See James 5:16 and compare with James 1:6, 7.
4. Here are some other scriptures showing that faith must be an obedient faith.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, See Rom. 1:5; 16:26
 1 Jn. 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3.
 John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Jn. 3:36

JAM 2:15 If a brother or sister is without clothing [poorly clad] and in need of daily food,

1. The Greek “lei’po” [lay’ po] means “without, lacking.”
 - a. The Greek “gumnos” [goom nos] means “without clothing, ill-clad.”
 - b. See Matthew 25:36; Jn. 21:7; Acts 19:16.
2. There are times when a Christian may be destitute.
 - a. Jesus speaks of poor brothers. (Matt. 25:31-46).
 - b. Luke 6:20; Gal. 2:10; 6:10; Jas. 2:5.
3. We are to do good to all men, and “especially to the household of faith.” (Gal. 6:10).

JAM 2:16 and one of you says to them [the brother or sister], "Go in peace [keep well, prosper, best wishes] be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for {their} body, what use is that?

- The word “epitedeios” [e pee tay day os] means “what is necessary or essential.”

1. The words “go in peace” have the idea of “keep well, farewell, best wishes.” See Lk. 7:50; 8:48; Acts 16:36.	3. Christians must be concerned for the needs of the body as well as needs of the soul.
2. It is of no value to wish one well, but fail to provide for needs.	4. See James 1:27; 1 Tim. 5:8; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Jn.

JAM 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead [lifeless], {being} by itself [alone].

1. James affirms that not all faith is saving faith.
2. He affirms that there is such a thing as “dead” faith.
3. He defines “dead” faith by affirming “it has no works.”
4. A barren, dead faith is no faith at all.

JAM 2:18 But someone may {well} say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your [alleged] faith without the works [if you can], and I will show you my faith by my works.

1. Saving faith manifests itself in works (obedience, actions).
2. James did not believe genuine faith exists apart from works.
3. Faith without works is dead and works without faith cannot save or bless. See Heb. 11:6

“God Is One”

JAM 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder

- . NIV “phis’so” [fis’ so] means to “shudder” [with fear].
1. There are many demons, but one devil. (1 Pet. 5:8; Matt. 4:11).
 2. It is well to be monotheistic, but even the demons believe in one God. (Matt. 8:29).
 3. The demons know there is a God, and so does the devil.
 4. They fear [dread] God, but they do not obey Him.
 5. The Bible teaches there is “one God,” but there are three Divine Persons - God, Christ, the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19).
 - a. **God** (Eph. 4:4-6).
 - b. **Christ** (Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15; 2L9; Jn. 10:30; 14:9). See Isa. 9:6,7; Mic. 5:2.
 - c. **Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:3,4). See Matt.28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Deity implied by Matt. 12:31, 32.
 6. There is “one God” in the sense there is One Divine Essence.
 - a. This Divine Essence is All-knowing, All-Powerful, Omnipresent, Holy, Just, etc.
 - b. All three Persons of the Godhead possess these infinite qualities.

JAM 2:20 But are you willing to recognize [know], you foolish [vain] fellow, that faith without works [of faith] is useless [has no value, absolutely worthless]

- Salt that has lost its taste is useless. (Matt. 5:13).
 - Faith without works it useless.
1. “foolish” is from “kenos” meaning “vain, foolish, empty.”
 2. “arge” [ar gay’] is “barren, useless.”
 3. James reveals there is a “useless” faith and one is “foolish” to have a faith “without works.”

Abraham

JAM 2:21 Was not Abraham our father [forefather] justified [counted as righteous] by works [of faith], when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar [in the land of Moriah]?

- **Many think the sacrifice was on Mt. Moriah that was one of hills where Solomon built the temple. The Jews themselves believe that the altar of burnt offerings in the temple stood upon the very site of the altar on which Abraham intended to offer up his son.**
 - “dikaio’o” is to declare and treat as righteous, justify.
1. See Genesis 22:1-14
 2. The New Testament reveals that Abraham believed that God was able to raise his son from the dead.

HEB 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

HEB 11:18 it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called."

HEB 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.

Note:

1. “only begotten” denotes Isaac his special son of promise. Abraham had 8 sons - Ishmael, Isaac, and the six sons he had by Keturah. (Gen. 25:1,2).
2. God has only One Special Son- Jesus Christ.
 - a. The word literally means “unique, one of a kind.”
 - b. God has many sons. (Gal. 3:26,27).

JAM 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected [made complete and acceptable to God];

- “teleio’o” [tel ay o’ o] is “to make perfect or complete.”
 - “sunerge’o” [soon er geh’ o] is “to work with, together.”
1. James treats Genesis 15:6 as a prophecy fulfilled in Genesis 22.
 2. Paul does not deny it is a prophecy, but he treats it as an historical statement. (Rom. 4:3).
 - a. He is proving Abraham was justified before and apart from the Law of Moses - Law came 420 years after God’s promise to Abraham. (Gal. 3:17).
 - b. He is not affirming Abraham was saved on the basis of mere mental assent.
 3. James stresses that Abraham had an obedient faith.

- a. The book of Genesis reveals the trusting, obedient faith of Abraham.
- b. Paul contends that Abraham was saved by faith, but the word as Paul uses it includes obedience.

JAM 2:23 and the Scripture [Gen. 15:6] was fulfilled which says, "\And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned [accounted] to him as righteousness [justification],\" and he was called the friend of God.

- “logi’zomai” is “reckoned, credited, accounted.” ---- “plero’ o” [play ro’ o] is “fulfilled.”
1. The word “fulfilled” shows James viewed the scripture, Genesis 15:6, as prophecy.
 2. In Galatians 3:6 Paul is establishing man is saved apart from the Mosaic Law.

GAL 3:6 Even so Abraham \believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness\.⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, {saying}, "All the nations shall be blessed in you."

3. What a compliment to be “called the friend of God.”

- a. See 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8.

2 CH 20:7 "Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham Thy friend forever?

ISA 41:8 "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend,

- b. Jesus reveals how we become His friends. (Jn.15:14).

Note: Abraham is also called the father of those believing, the faithful. (Gal. 3:7, 29; Rom. 4:16).

JAM 2:24 You see that a man is justified [counted as righteous] by works [actions of faith], and not by faith alone.

1. James does not discredit faith.
2. He discredits a faith that does not act - “faith alone.”

JAM 2:25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot [prostitute] also justified [counted as righteous] by works [actions of faith], when she received the messengers [spies, scouts] and sent them out by another way?

- “messengers” is from “ag’gelos” [an’ ge los] - “angel, messenger, spy, scout.”
1. The account of Rahab receiving the spies is found in Joshua 2:1-24.
 - a. The Bible tells us that Rahab “a harlot” received the spies. (Josh. 2:1; Heb. 11:31).
 - b. The Bible makes it clear that she was a “harlot” (prostitute). (Josh. 2:1; Jas. 2:25; Heb. 11:31).
 - c. The Greek word is “porne” [por nay’] meaning “prostitute, harlot.” See also Matt. 12:31,32.

2. Rahab, a Gentile, was spared because of her faith. (Heb.11:31; Josh. 6:23).

1) Most likely she was an idolatrous woman before encountering the spies.

2) The spies must have told them of their great God, and led her to faith in God.

JOS 6:23 So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives, and placed them outside the camp of Israel.

3. Rahab was blessed with a two-fold salvation - the lost of her life in the destruction of Jericho and salvation from hell.

4. We must assume she repented since men cannot be saved [justified, counted right with God] without repentance.

5. She was saved because of her works of faith - “justified by works.”

6. She is listed in the genealogy of our Lord and married Salmon. (Matt. 1:5).

Matt. 1:5 and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse;

a. This is a blessing she had a part of for others.

b. Nahshon had a son named “Salmon” or “Salma.” “Salma” was another form of the name “Salmon.”

1CH 2:11 Nahshon became the father of Salma, Salma became the father of Boaz,

c. It appears that Rahab married this Salmon and not “Salmon” the son of Caleb. (1 Chron. 2:51).

Jas. 2:26 For just as the [human] body without {the} spirit is dead [lifeless], so also faith without works is dead.

Lit. “without spirit” - There is no article.

1. The word “pneu’ma” might refer to either “the breathe of life” or “the immortal spirit.”

a. The word can refer to the breathe that animates the human body.

b. The word can also refer to the immortal spirit. (Eccles. 12:7; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:9, 23; Acts 7:59; Matt. 27:50; Lk. 22:46).

c. Scholars are divided on the meaning of “spirit” in this context.

d. Later in this letter James used the word “soul” to refer to the immortal part of man. (Jas.5:20). See also Matt. 10:28; 1 Pet. 1:8.

e. Both the words “soul” and “spirit” are used, at times in the scriptures, to refer to the immortal part of man.

2. Once the human spirit [breathe of life or immortal spirit] departs death occurs.

Kinds of Works

1. "Works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21).	5. Works of merit (Rom. 11:6) .
2. Works of the Mosaic law (Gal. 5:4)	6. There are works that are done out of necessity or works with no faith.
3. There are works of boasting. (Matt. 6:1-18).	7. Works of faith - See Hebrews 11
4. Works of men	

Faith

<p>1. There is mere mental ascent like the faith of the demons (Jas. 2:19).</p> <p>a. Many in our world acknowledge there is a God and even acknowledge some facts about Him.</p> <p>b. The One who merely acknowledges God is not much different from the one who denies Him.</p> <p>c. John 12:42, 43 speaks of some rulers of the Jews who believed in Jesus, but refused to confess Him or live for Him. They believed in Christ but were lost. They may have expressed this faith privately to Christ and others, but not publicly.</p> <p>2. There is mere subjective faith based on feelings, dreams, etc, but this faith will not save. (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8, 9).</p> <p>3. There is obedient faith. . (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 5:6,7).</p> <p>a. See Matt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; 1 Jn 2:3,4; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Acts 10:34,35; Psa. 119:172</p> <p>b. Obedient faith (Heb. 11:4,7, 8, 17, 23)..</p> <p>c. We must all give account for the way we have lived. (Matt. 12:36,37; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).</p> <p>4. There is a lukewarm faith. (Rev. 3:15,16).</p> <p>5. There is a dead faith. (Jas. 2:17, 26). This is the same as a "useless" or "barren" faith. (Jas. 2:20).</p>
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Comments

1. The concept that we can earn salvation is absolutely false. (Rom. 6:23; 11:6; Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 2:11).
 - a. James had earlier shown that salvation by law keeping was impossible. (Jas. 2:10).
 - b. Paul was not discounting the importance of doing what God has commanded, but man cannot merit salvation.
 - c. We have been "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
2. The concept that we can make a statement of faith and then live a life void of obedience and works of faith and still be pleasing to God is absolutely false.
 - a. Salvation is not based on a statement or the way a person once lived.

- b. It is based on a life of trusting obedience.
3. Some reject baptism claiming it is an act of merit.
- a. It is not an act of merit.
 - b. It , like repentance, confession, is an act of faith. (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16).
 - c. The whole Christian life is motivated by a trusting, obedient faith.
4. Faith is a work (Jn. 6:23), but not a work of merit.

JOH 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

- a. Work is anything that requires effort.
 - b. Even faith requires effort.
5. Jesus taught saving faith must do the will of God. (Matt. 7:21; 12:46-50).
- a. It must submit to Jesus. (Heb.11:1, 5)..
 - b. It must submit to Jesus. (Jn. 14:6).
 - c. It must help others. (Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 6:10; Jas.1;27: 2:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:16).
 - d. It must bear fruit. (Lk. 13:5-9J; Jn.15:1-6).

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