

For centuries religious people have debated the relationship between faith, works & grace--& how these apply to salvation.

- 1) Is salvation solely a matter of God's grace, apart from any belief or works of man?
- 2) Is salvation a matter of God's grace & man's mental assent to the facts of the gospel, but short of any obedient works of man towards God's law?
- 3) Is salvation a matter of God's grace together with the obedient works of man towards God's law?
- 4) Is salvation a matter of the meritorious works of man?

Our text has been one battleground in the controversy. Martin Luther designated the entire epistle of James "an epistle of straw" primarily due to the teaching found in this chapter. He contended that James contradicted Paul on the subjects of Faith & Works.

1. Is there a contradiction between James 2:21 & Romans 4:2-3?

James & Paul were writing to different audiences & dealing with different matters.

Paul wrote to refute Judaizers who taught that salvation depended on doing the works of Moses' Law: they held to the doctrine of *justification through law keeping*.

James wrote to refute the false idea that inner conviction is all that is necessary to serve the Lord. **James** demonstrated the need for inner convictions to manifest themselves in outward deeds of obedience to Christ.

The contradiction is imaginary. **The New Testament** speaks of **2 kinds of faith**: *living & dead*; & **2 kinds of works**: *meritorious & obedient*.

Paul & James are in perfect harmony on the subject (e.g., **Gal 5:6**).

2. What light does Romans 3:28 & 4:4-5 bring into Paul's discussion?

Romans 3:28 – **Faith** apart from the works of the Law

Romans 4:4-5 – **Faith** that excludes the idea of salvation given as a reward for paying back a debt

Justification is made possible **ONLY** by means of God's grace.

3. What light does James 2:14-17, 19-20, 26 bring into James's discussion?

Faith must be validated—it is not enough to merely assert one's faith—there must be evidence of works to prove the assertion of one's faith (**Matt 7:21**).

A Non-working faith:

- 1) Only well-wishes the needy (**16**)
- 2) Causes demons to tremble (**19; Acts 24:25**)
- 3) Is a fruitless or barren faith (**17, 20**)

4. What kind of "works" is Paul discussing in Romans (cf. Rom 3:20, 27-28)?

Meritorious works of law, in this case, Moses' law.

It is the idea that justification from sin can be achieved apart from God's grace (His scheme of redemption consummated in Jesus Christ) & apart from faith in Him alone as the Christ.

5. What kind of "works" is James discussing (cf. Jas 2:15-16, 18, 20-25)?

Works that validate the profession of our faith; **Works** that serve as the evidence of our assertions.

6. How does Abraham illustrate the point?

Abraham & all those mentioned in Hebrews 11 were saved “by faith”.

In each case the individual was shown to have obeyed some command of God “by faith”.

Faith caused them not to shirk, evade or avoid the command given them by God; **faith** was the basis & the reason for their obedience to the command.

Therefore, faith must be the basis & the reason for our obedience to God in order for faith to save us (see [Rom 4](#)).

**But remember that faith comes by hearing the word of God
or what God has said regarding any subject
(Consider the illustration below):**

Someone may be baptized because he wants to obey God or because God commanded him to be baptized, but if that person did not understand what God commands regarding the proper mode of baptism, or the purpose for baptism, then that person cannot be baptized “by faith”.

7. How were the “works” of Rahab similar to the “works” of Abraham?

Her concern for the messengers & their message revealed her faith in Jehovah God (a faith based in facts, which she heard regarding God & His people).

8. How does James relate “faith” & “works”?

Faith without works of obedience to God is dead like a body without a spirit is dead ([17, 26](#)) & barren ([20](#)).

Faith shown or demonstrated **by works** ([18](#)), & works perfect our faith ([22](#)).

9. What is the connection between James 1:2-4 & 2:21-22?

Faith will be put to the test.

We will face, from time to time, an extremely difficult situation when our obedient faith in God will be tested.

10. When was the Scripture referred to in verse 23 (Gen 15:6) fulfilled?

When Abraham believed God's seed promise & the multitude of descendents.

11. According to James 2:21, when was Abraham "justified" (cf. Gen 22)?

When he offered Isaac upon the altar (this event occurred some 15-20 years later).

12. What conclusion must we reach about "faith" from the answers 10 & 11?

Abraham's faith was perfected or completed when he obeyed God.

We too are saved by faith; but only when that faith obeys God do we become justified.

According to New Testament teaching, one is justified when he has complied with the initial terms of the gospel ([Acts 18:8](#); [1 Cor 6:11](#)), because THAT is the point in time when the blood of Christ becomes effective for the purpose of justifying a sinner ([Rom 5:9](#); [Rom 6:3-4, 17](#)).

13. Does James exclude “faith” from “justification”?

No! **James 2:21** shows that “justification” is the underlying topic being addressed.

“Was not Abraham our father ***justified*** by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?”

a. Does He make “justification” solely a matter of “works”?

No!

Throughout the text James speaks both of faith & works, & their role together in the matter of justification (**2:14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26**)