

Faith and Works

Introduction:

A. Perhaps the most fundamental point of agreement in Protestantism is the tenet of salvation by faith alone.

*We believe the Scriptures teach that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is **justification**; that justification includes the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood... (The Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual).*

B. So strongly does the book of James appear to deny this doctrine, Martin Luther, who emphatically taught salvation by faith alone, was led to question the book's place in the New Testament. He called the book "a right strawy one" and declared, "I will not have it in my Bible in the number of the proper chief books."

C. What is the relationship between faith and works? - Romans 4:5; James 2:24

I. According to James - James 2:14-26

A. Faith alone is dead. - verses 14-17

1. Some object that Paul refers to the justification of the alien sinner and that James refers to the justification of the child of God.

a. Both appeal to the same event in Abraham's life to prove their point. - Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; James 2:23

b. It is true, both for Romans 4 and James 2, that Abram had been a believer many years when that event occurred. - Genesis 12:1-4; Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 12:6-8; 13:3-4; 14:17-20; 15:1

c. Even if this distinction were legitimate, it does not remove the difficulty of Protestants, for most of them also believe a child of God need not do anything to inherit eternal life.

"Is the eternal salvation of the child of God, saved by the blood, absolutely unconditional in that he is not required to do anything to go to heaven?" Answer: "Yes" (question asked by J.T. Smith and answered by Dr. Albert Garner, Baptist, President of College of the Bible of Lakeland, Florida, in public debate in Citizenship, Arkansas, 1974).

2. Some object that James speaks of justification before men.

a. Who saw Isaac offered? - Genesis 22:3-5; James 2:21-23

b. His works revealed his faith and fear to God. - Genesis 22:11-12

B. Works prove faith. - verses 18-20; Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:34

C. Justification is by faith through works. - verses 21-26

1. Abraham (father of the Jews, child of God) - verses 21-24; Genesis 15:6; 22:1-18

a. Works perfect faith. - verse 22

b. Faith alone will not justify. - verse 24

2. Rahab (sinner of the Gentiles, alien) - verses 25-26; Joshua 2:1-24; 6:25

II. According to Paul - Romans 4:2-5

- A. The Jewish disciples first thought the gospel was for Jews only. - Acts 11:19
- B. The conversion of Cornelius convinced them otherwise. - Acts 11:18
- C. Many still thought it was necessary to keep the law of Moses and to be circumcised. - Acts 15:1,5
- D. Had they been correct in binding the law, perfect obedience would have been required; thus salvation would have to be earned, a matter of boasting. - Galatians 3:10; Hebrews 10:4
- E. These judaizers laid great stress on their physical relationship to Abraham. - Luke 3:8; John 8:33
- F. Paul showed that salvation was by the faith of Christ rather than the law of Moses. - Romans 3:27-28
- G. Abraham, the Father of the Jews, was Paul's case in point of righteousness without the law of Moses or circumcision. - Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:2-5

III. Summary

- A. The works that Paul says do not justify are the works of the law of Moses. - Galatians 5:1-4
- B. The works that James says do justify are those of obedience to the gospel. - Luke 17:10
- C. Faith alone:
 - 1. does not profit. - James 2:14
 - 2. will not save. - Ibid
 - 3. is dead. - James 2:17,20,26
 - 4. cannot be shown. - James 2:18
 - 5. is possessed by demons. - James 2:19
 - 6. will not justify. - James 2:24
- D. Obedience to the gospel of Christ is essential to salvation. - Matthew 7:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8-9; James 2:24

Conclusion:

- A. Faith alone may be "very full of comfort" (**Methodist Discipline**), but it is also very full of damnation.
- B. To be justified, you must by faith obey the gospel of Christ.
- C. Has your faith been perfected by works?