

"Faith and Works" James 2:14-26

Is justification by faith alone (Paul's stance), or by faith and works (James' stance)? Is there a hopeless contradiction between Paul and James... or are they both somehow right? The Church has wrestled for centuries to reconcile the teaching of these two Apostles. By closely examining the work of each Apostle we will discover both security in the finished work of Christ and accountability before our righteous Judge.

Paul

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

James

James 2:24

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

3 Views of James 2

- **Roman Catholic**
 - Works required to **gain** eternal life
- **Arminian**
 - Works required to **keep** eternal life
- **Reformed/Calvinism**
 - Works required to **prove** eternal life

John Piper

From When I Don't Desire God

"justification is by grace alone (not mixed with our merit), through faith alone (not mixed with our works), on the basis of Christ alone (not mingling His righteousness with ours), to the glory of God alone (not ours)."

From Desiring God

"These are just some of the conditions that the New Testament says we must meet in order to inherit final salvation. We must believe on Jesus and receive him and turn from our sin and obey him...

"...and humble ourselves like little children and love him more than we love our family, our possessions or our own life. This is what it means to be converted to Christ. This alone is the way of everlasting life."

From When I Don't Desire God

"... in the courtroom of God, my guilt for sin is removed by Christ's blood... and my title to heaven is provided by Christ's obedience..."

Brothers, We Are Not Professionals

"The salvation of the elect depends on their not denying Christ and on their enduring in faith and obedience... For only by feeding on the Word can you grow, and only by growing can you persevere and attain final salvation."

3 Views of James 2

- **Roman Catholic**
 - Works required to **gain** eternal life
- **Arminian**
 - Works required to **keep** eternal life
- **Reformed/Calvinism**
 - Works required to **prove** eternal life

A Better View

- **Context, context, context!**
- **Audience?**
 - **1:2-3** "brethren" (15x); "testing of your faith"
 - **2:1** "your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ"
 - Conclusion: **they are believers**
- **Context: Purpose?**
 - They are struggling
 - with trials (ch1,5)
 - with temptations:
 - favoritism (ch2)
 - evil speech & jealousy (ch3)
 - conflict, selfishness, gossip, pride (ch4)
 - greed (ch5)
 - They are doing very poorly
 - 4:1-4,7-10 – unfaithful to God
 - 5:16 – some under discipline
 - 5:19-20 – in danger of death
- **"save"**
 - *sozo* – "to rescue, to deliver"
 - *But from what?*
 - hell
 - God's discipline
 - temptation
 - presence of sin
 - sickness
 - imprisonment
 - premature physical death

Ezekiel 18:26-27

“When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life (lit: ‘soul’).”

- **v14 – Faith without works can’t save**
 - *From what? **2:12-13***
 - *From loss at the judgment seat of Christ*

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- **v15-17 – Faith without works is useless to the body of Christ**
 - *v17 – “dead” = powerless, lifeless, useless (v20)*
- **v21-24 – Abraham illustrates the necessity of works**

Paul’s justification:

- Gen 15
- by faith alone
- in the sight of God
- provides eternal life

James’ justification:

- Gen 22
- by faith & works
- in the sight of man
- provides witness

- **v25 – Rahab illustrates the necessity of works**
- **v26 – Conclusion**
 - *faith = the human body*
 - *works = the human spirit*
 - *point: works give vitality to faith*

- **Incredibly hard!**
- **No quotes in Greek**
- **Hypothetical Objector:**
 - *My view: speaks to end of v19*
 - *Must contradict James: “works are not that important”*
 - *Makes a “foolish” argument*

- **Paul: Faith alone...**
 - *saves us from hell*
 - *justifies us in the sight of God*
- **James: Faith must be followed by works to...**

- *save us from loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ*
- *save us from a worthless life*
- *justify us in the sight of mankind*

- **Comfort: We can be absolutely sure of our eternal life**

1 John 5:13

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Application

- *Comfort: We can be absolutely sure of our eternal life*
- *Warning: We better get to work!*

James 2:18-20

But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow**, that faith without works is useless?

- **James' point in v17 & 20:**
 - *faith and works work together to save you from a worthless life*
 - *so you need both*
- **Objector must say the opposite:**
 - *faith and works are unrelated*
 - *so I'm fine with faith alone*

- **Objector in v18... Command**

"James, let's say for the sake of argument that you have faith alone, while I have taken your advice and followed my faith with works. Now, show me your faith without your works and I'll show you my faith by my works."

- **Objector in v19... Proof**

"James, you have correct, orthodox faith in God plus you do good works. Guess what? The demons have the same orthodox faith you do, and yet rather than do good deeds, they tremble in fear of God."

- **Objector's Point:**

- *You have true faith + works*

- *Demons have true faith w/o works*
- *Therefore...*
 - faith and works are unrelated
 - so I'm fine with faith alone