

Faith And Works

Js. 2:21-24; Rom. 4:1-3

Faith And Works

- James 2:21, 24 → Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
- Romans 4:2, 5 → For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God...5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Introduction

- The issue of harmonizing James and Paul has been an issue and controversy for centuries...
- How some have attempted to deal with:
 - Martin Luther → saw a conflict between James and Paul thus labeled James as “an epistle of straw” and said it contained nothing of the gospel.
 - Most who teach and believe that one is saved by “faith only” without any works of obedience (especially baptism):
 - Paul is talking about the initial justification/salvation of an alien sinner (Abraham’s initial acceptance by God)
 - James is talking about post-conversion behavior – deeds, works in the life of a child of God. Hence, Paul is teaching that one is saved by “faith only” and James is teaching that a saved person will engage in good works.

Introduction

- Lesson:
 - Is there a contradiction between James and Paul?
 - No. God's word is truth. (Jn. 17:17) Truth does not contradict itself. The answer must be found in an examination of the texts.
 - Look at Romans 4 and James 2 in context, see what each of the inspired authors is teaching and how those teachings harmonize.
 - The meaning of “works” depends on the context.
 - Avoid isolating a passage and giving it a prejudged interpretation.
 - How to answer the contention that Paul is teaching salvation by “faith only”, and that James is dealing only with the life of a Christian after salvation.

James 2:14-26

- Theme of James → The character of a mature Christian (1:2-4)
 - Produced by steadfastness in trials (1:2-4, 12)
 - Asks God for wisdom. (1:5-8)
 - Sees poverty and wealth in their true light. (1:9-11)
 - Understands the source and course of temptation. (1:13-15)
 - Realizes that all good things come from God. (1:16-17)
 - Not only hears, but is obedient to God's word. (1:18-27)

James 2:14-26

- A Christian, by the will of God, is begotten by the word of truth.
 - **James 1:18** → Of his own will begat he us (“gave us birth” –NET) with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
 - **1 Pet. 1:22-23** → 22 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:* 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

James 2:14-26

- James tells us that the only faith that pleases God, is an active, responsive, obedient faith.
 - Faith without works will not save. (2:14)
 - Faith without works is dead being alone. (2:17)
 - Faith without works is like the faith of demons. (2:19)
 - Faith without works is dead (barren, useless). (2:20)
 - Faith that justifies works. (2:21, 23)
 - Faith is perfected with works. (2:22)
 - “Ye seen then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (Js. 2:24)
 - Faith without works, like the body without the spirit is dead. (Js. 2:26)

James 2:14-26 → The Case of Abraham

– Abraham was justified by works.

- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (cf. Gen. 22:18)
- 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. (Gen. 15:6)***

– ***Note: the works of James are the obedience of faith – not a perfect life.***

Rom. 4:1-5

- Paul is not dealing with Abraham's initial justification! Long before Gen. 15:6, Abraham had been walking faithfully with God.
 - Gen. 12:1-3 (Acts 7:2-3) → Abraham obey God's command to leave his home.
 - In doing so, he illustrates what it means to please God by faith. (Heb. 11:6,8)
 - Gen. 12:6-7 → Abraham built an altar to God in Shechem.
 - Gen. 12:8 → Abraham built an altar to God between Bethel and Hai and called upon the name of the Lord.
 - Gen. 13:3-4 → Called on the name of the Lord.
 - Gen. 14:19, 22 → "blessed be Abraham of the Most High God..."
 - Gen. 15:1 → "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward..."
 - Gen. 15:6 → And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (cf. James 2:21-23; Gen. 22:18)

Rom. 4:1-7

- Paul did not teach salvation by faith only.
 - 1:5 → By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
 - 2:8 → 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
 - 6:17-18 → 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.
 - 10:16 → But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?
 - 16:26 → But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Rom. 4:1-5 – What are these “works”?

- The theme of Romans → The Gospel is God’s power to salvation. (1:16-17)
- The wrath of God against sin. (Rom. 1:18; 2:6)
- All have sinned. (Jews and Gentiles – 3:9, 23)
- None will be saved as a matter of debt, what is “owed” – on the basis of perfect works.
- Justification/salvation by the law would require perfect works – not a single violation. (2:25; Gal. 3:10-11)
- Justification is possible only by forgiveness. (3:22-23)
- God, by His grace, made forgiveness possible by the death of Christ. (3:24-25)
- Grace does not exclude obedience. (Heb. 2:9; 5:9)
- None will be able to boast before God. (Rom. 4:2)
- ***Abraham was not justified by sinless works (Rom. 4:2,4), but the obedience of faith (James 2:20-23).***

Paul's Conversion Illustrates Salvation By Faith And Works...

- I Tim. 1:14-16 → 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul's Conversion Illustrates Salvation By Faith And Works...

- Acts 9:6 → And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.
- Acts 22:16 → “...arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.