

The Problem: *Paul vs James*

Romans 3:27-4:5, “²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ **For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law...**” ¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 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? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”** ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ **And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.”**

VERSUS

James 2:14-26, ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ **Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?** ²¹ **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?** ²² **You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;** ²³ **and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God...** ²⁶ **For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”**

Principles about the Bible: *It's Authority & our Approach*

Solving the Conflict and Enriching Our Understanding:

- Understanding “Faith”
- Understanding “Works”
- Understanding “Justification”

“It’s faith ALONE that saves and faith that saves is never ALONE.”

Faith alone is the ROOT of justification (Paul) and works are the FRUIT of justification (James).”

Small Group Questions

Getting Started

1. The following principle of biblical interpretation was illustrated several ways on Sunday: *Never Read a Bible Verse*. What were some of the examples used? What are some examples you might add?

Digging Deeper

2. Read Romans 3:27-4:5 and compare with James 2:14-26. Why do some people claim that James and Paul contradict each other?
3. The solution offered on Sunday was that Paul and James mean different things by the words “faith,” “works,” and “justification.” What are some examples of Biblical words that can mean very different things? Talk about how the context tells us which meaning is being used?
4. Examining both passages, how are Paul and James likely using the words “faith,” “works” and “justification” differently? Discuss the different problems each author was addressing and how that helps us understand what they are saying and why there is no conflict.
5. What time in Abraham’s life does James have in mind? How does this help us understand how Paul and James relate?
6. On Sunday, Pastor Jake summarized how the truths of these two passages come together with the following phrases: *“It is faith alone that saves (Paul), but faith that saves is never alone (James). Or “faith alone is the root of justification (Paul) and works are the fruit of justification (James).” Explain in your own words what these phrases are pointing too? What are some other passages you might cite to support this?*

Making it Real

7. James is concerned with people who think they have saving faith just because they have faith. Look at 2 Corinthians 13:5. How might you counsel a new Christian, how to apply this verse?

Resources

Romans: *Righteousness from Heaven* | R. Kent Hughes. | www.blueletterbible.org | www.preceptaustin.org