



The Epistle of James

Faith vs. Works

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (2:14)

- Pauline Argument
- A Misunderstanding: Acts 21:21

“Works” in Paul

- A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal 2:16)
- For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Rom 3:28)
- God counts righteousness apart from works: (Rom 4:6)
- For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

An Example of “Works” in James

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 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? (2:15–16)

- For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (Rom 2:13)
- Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. (Tit 3:14)
- The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment ... So also good works are conspicuous (1 Ti 5:24-25)
- They should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. (Act 26:20)

Dead Faith

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (2:17)

- Cf. 2:26

You have faith and I have works

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. (2:18)

- Where is the closed quote?

Even the Demons Believe

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder! (2:19)

Abraham Our Father

Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works. (2:20–22)

- Akeidah: Genesis 22
- “Because you have done this thing ...” (Gen 22:16)

Abraham Believed

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. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (2:23–24)

- Romans 4:2ff
- Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? (Gal 3:5-6)
- Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend (אֲבִרָם)? (2Ch 20:7)
- But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend (אֲבִרָם). (Isa 41:8)
- Abraham, styled the friend, was found faithful, inasmuch as he rendered obedience to the words of God. (1Clement 10:1)

Rahab’s Faith

And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (2:25)

- Hospitality motif
- Proselytes
- By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. (Heb 11:31)
- On account of her faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved. (1Cl 12:1)

Body and Spirit

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (2:26)

- Spirit = Neshamah