

## Can Such Faith Save? James 2:14-26

*“It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.” -John Calvin*

**Does this text conflict with Paul and Romans and the doctrine of *sola fide*?**

### Background

- Written to church at Jerusalem
- Jews who had become Christians
- Key phrase “my brothers”
- James is writing to teach us what it means to be a believer and not how to become a believer.
- Main point – Correct spiritual immaturity

### We are saved by faith alone (*sola fide*)

- Works do not save or make us more saved.
- James is explaining what true faith does.
- True faith results in a changed life.
- Christ backed up his words with actions/results.
  - *Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." And the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men. (Matthew 9:1-8, NIV)*

### Abraham is an example

- James and Paul appeal to Abraham for different reasons.
  - *If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:2,3, NIV)*
  - *...being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. (Romans 4:21-24, NIV)*
  - *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6, NIV)*
  - *Genesis 22:1-19*
- Emphasis in James is on the fruit of Abraham’s faith.
- Our works “justify” to humans our claim to faith.
- Abraham’s work in Genesis 22 showed that his faith proclaimed in Genesis 15 was true.

## **Works are a confirmation of salvation, not a cause of salvation**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10, NIV)*

## **Bible never suggests a works righteousness system**

- Galatians 2:16; Romans 1:17; Romans 3:23,24; Romans 4; Romans 5:1; Luke 7:50; Acts 16:30,31; Ephesians 2:8,9
- *...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6b, NIV)*
- *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23, NIV)*

## **Six key words/phrases**

- Verse 14
  - “my brothers”
  - “claims”
  - “such faith”
- Verse 18 – “show me”
- Verse 22 – “you see”
- Verse 24 – “you see”

## **James 2 condemns antinomianism**

- Antinomianism = belief that we can have faith in Christ but continue in an immoral lifestyle and live an unchanged life
  - *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Romans 6:1,2, NIV)*
- Demons have proper knowledge of God
  - *When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. (Matthew 8:28-32, NIV)*
  - Mark 1:24; Mark 3:11,12; Mark 5:1-13; Luke 4:34,41; Luke 8:28-31
- Abraham and Rahab were willing to sacrifice everything for God.
- James, Paul, Peter, John, and Jude all wrote against antinomianism.
- 2 Corinthians 13:5; Titus 1:16; Matthew 7:20; 1 John 2:4-6; 1 John 3:8-10

## **Further study**

Romans 4; Genesis 15 & 22; Hebrews 11; 1 John; Galatians 3; Romans 6

**The evidence of salvation and true saving faith is a changed life.**