

A Faith That Saves

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 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? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 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. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 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; 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. 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? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

James 2:14-26

James 2:18

One of you might say that 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.

What does James mean by "justify"?

In James, "justify" means to prove the reality of someone's claim to believe in God (i.e., the reality of their faith).

Genesis 22:12

"Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, *for now I know that you fear God*, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

“Justify” in Paul

Genesis 15: “counted righteous because of faith”

Declared to be righteous

“Justify” in James

Genesis 22: proving the reality of faith, “now I know that you fear God”

Proven to be righteous (that is, to have living faith that leads to works)

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What does James mean by “works”?

1. Love for brothers and sisters (vv.15-16)
2. Obedience to God’s commands (vv.21-24)
3. Following God even when it puts you at risk (v.25)

“Unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith.”

- Hudson Taylor

“Works” in Romans 2

1. The fruit, not the foundation of salvation
2. Direction, not perfection

What does James mean for us?

Faith is choosing to be a friend of God (v.23) and to leave behind the world.