

Three different definitions of Christianity



It's about confessional **belief**.
Romans 4 *Faith*



It's about personal **piety**.
1 John 3



It's about social **justice**.
James 2 *Obedience*

An apparent conflict

Paul

(Faith > **justification** > works)

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

James

(Faith > works > **justification**)

James 2:24

"You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone."

Possible interpretations

1. Paul and James reflect an unresolvable tension in the early church. (Historical critics)
2. Good works justify and are enabled by faith. (Roman Catholic)
3. Good works and faith are distinct but inseparable. (Many Protestants - John Calvin)
4. Good works justify us before man and preserve (save) our usefulness in this world. This is not about our justification before God and eternal life.



Principle #1

Faith without action is dead with respect to **our ministry**.

"¹⁴ **What use is it**, my brethren, **if a man says** he has faith, but he has no **works**? Can that faith **save** him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, **what use is that**? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."

Principle #1

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"What use is it"

James is looking at faith in a temporal practical sense.

"if a man says he has faith"

James is looking at the claim to faith (talking the talk).

"but he has no works?"

Think of James' use of "works" as "deeds" which is the more common meaning.

"Can *that* faith save him?" James is clearly stating that we are saved by works.

The question is "saved from what?"

"¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, **what use is that**? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."

The Greek word translated "**save**" is σωζω "sodzo", meaning to "**protect**", "**preserve**", "**heal**", "**deliver**", "**become whole**", or, to "**keep safe**."

The Hebrew word translated "**save**" is ישע "yasha", meaning to "**deliver**", "**help**", "**preserve**", "**save**" (almost always in a temporal sense).

The word “**saved**” in James may be used in two ways.
In some contexts it may refer to “eternal life”,

James 1:21

“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted which is able to **save your souls**.”

in other contexts its use seems temporally focused.

James 5:15

“and the prayer offered in faith will **restore (save)** the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

We can be saved (with respect to heaven) and yet not saved (with respect to this world).

1 Corinthians 3

“¹⁴ If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man’s work is **burned up**, he shall **suffer loss**; but he himself **shall be saved**, yet so as through fire. ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will **destroy** him,”

Here we see a person who is “**saved**” spiritually but yet “**destroyed**” (not saved) in this life.

Principle #2

Faith without action is dead with respect to
our witness.

“¹⁸ But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; **show me** your faith without the works, and **I will show you** my faith by my works.” ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works **is useless?**”

Principle #2

Faith without action is dead with respect to
our witness.

“show me . . . and I will show you”

James is looking at faith as it is seen by man (through action) not by God (who looks at the heart).

“is useless?”

James is looking at faith in a practical sense or usefulness in this life.

Matthew 5:16

“Let your light shine **before men** in such a way that they may **see your good works**, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

It is possible to have real light but not to have it seen by men so as to glorify God.

Such light is useless.

Principle #3

Faith without action is dead with respect to
our identity.

“²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ **and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,”** and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ **You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.** ²⁵ And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For **just as the body without the spirit is dead**, so also faith without works is dead.”

Principle #3
Faith without action is dead with respect to
our identity.

“²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”

Could it be that James is looking at justification before man, while Paul refers to justification before God.

Romans 4:2-3

“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; **but not before God.** For what does the Scripture say? ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’”

“²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “~~And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.~~” and he was called the friend of God.”

Abraham is declared to be justified by faith in
Genesis 15
 • A private declaration
 • Paul's point

Abraham's faith is perfected and fulfilled in
Genesis 22
 • A public display
 • James' point

“²³ and the Scripture was **fulfilled**”

Abraham was reckoned righteous so that later he might act righteously.

Colossians 1:25

“Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might **fully carry out (fulfill)** the preaching of the word of God,

Paul was made a minister so that later he might preach the word of God.

Both were positionally set apart before they were experientially obedient.

“²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

Faith claims are like a dead, inanimate body being useless.

Action is like the energizing spirit that renders the body useful.

Ephesians 2:8-10

“For by grace you have been **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Galatians 5:6

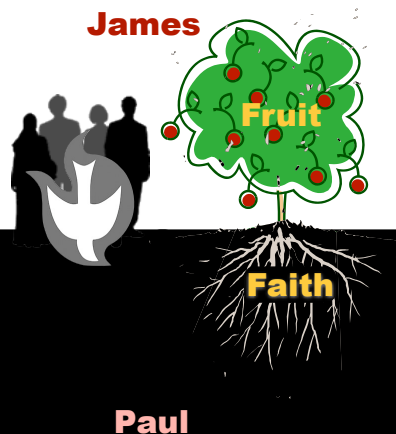
“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith working through love.**”

That which is of use in saving us in this life.

That which justifies before man.

That which saves us in the life to come.

That which justifies before God.



True Faith



“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

Don't confuse the ministry of the Son
with the ministry of the Spirit.

**Surrogate
(Substitute)**

Redemption,
Reconciliation,
Satisfaction

before God



**Paraclete
(Enabler)**

Assurance,
Usefulness,
Fulfillment

before man



Paul

**Positional holiness
makes us fit for heaven.**



James

**Practiced holiness
makes us fit for earth.**

Evangelical Christians disagree as to what
extent the 2nd point is essential to the 1st.



Discipleship salvation

A person has to display the obedience of a
disciple of Christ before their faith is genuine.

Level #1

Intellectual awareness
"knowing about the Gospel"

Free Grace people are sometimes
accused of believing this is all that
is necessary for salvation.

Level #2

Intellectual assent
"superficial faith confession"

Free Grace people
believe this is what is
necessary for salvation.

Level #3

Heartfelt Trust
"heartfelt confession of faith"

Some Discipleship Salvation
people believe this is
necessary for salvation.

Level #4

Commitment to holy living
(a pure heart)

Other Discipleship Salvation
people believe this is
necessary for salvation.

Level #5

Living a life of obedience
(a pure life)

**Saving faith is not a *meritorious work*
nor is it a *superficial confession*.**

**Saving *faith* is a living walk
that involves:**

***Hope* in Christ and
the *Love* of Christ**

Lessons

- ***True saving faith will always bear fruit at least on the inside, which is only visible to God.***
- ***True saving faith will normally bear fruit outwardly unless it is suppressed by willful worldliness.***
- ***Faith that justifies before God may not always bear outward fruit before man.***
- ***Faith that does not work is of no value in this life and with other people.***