

James 2:14-26

Genuine Faith

Topics: [Rahab](#), [Righteous... justified](#), [Abraham](#), [There is one God](#), [You have faith; I have deeds](#), [Can such faith save him?](#), [Genuine Faith](#)

Is all this doing the Word and keeping the royal law really necessary? After all, since we are justified by faith in Christ ([Romans 3:21-4:25](#); [Ephes. 2:8-9](#)), why bother with these works? Anyone who thinks this, James might have said, does not understand what our Lord Jesus and our brother Paul mean by faith.

Read [2:14-26](#) and review what James has already said about faith in [1:2-4](#).

1. On your first reading, what seems to be James's main point in [2:14-26](#)?

2. In the following chart, write down what Paul, John, Jesus, and James each says about faith and deeds.
 - a. Paul says that we are saved by putting faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior. According to Paul, what kind of faith "counts" as genuine, saving faith ([Galatians 5:6](#))?
 - b. According to the Apostle John, what is a crucial piece of evidence that we "belong to the truth" and are children of God ([1 John 3:10, 17-19](#))?
 - c. What does Jesus say about faith and deeds in [Matthew 7:15-23](#); [Matthew 25:31-46](#)?
 - d. How does James show agreement with Paul and John ([James 1:27](#); [James 2:14-17](#))?

Paul	John
Jesus	James

Can such faith save him? ([2:14](#)). The impression that James and Paul are in conflict comes partly from the KJV translation of this phrase: "can faith save him?" The point is "Can this kind of passive, professed, but undemonstrated faith save him?"

You have faith; I have deeds (2:18). Someone might object to James that "you" (some people) have the gift of faith, while "I" (other people) have the gift of good works. This would be a distortion of Paul's teaching about different parts of the body in [Romans 12:4-8](#) and [1 Cor. 12:4-11](#). James insists (and Paul would agree) that every real Christian has faith *and* works. ***There is one God*** (2:19). Or, "God is one" (RSV). This was the core of Jewish faith, recited daily in the form of the *Shema*, [Deut. 6:4-5](#). Jesus quoted part of this creed as the greatest commandment ([Matthew 22:37](#)). The belief in one God was the primary thing that set Jews and Christians apart from pagans.

3. [James 2:16](#) is an example of dead or worthless faith that doesn't save. James gives another example in [2:19](#).

a. What do the demons believe about God ([2:19](#))?

b. What is wrong with the demon's faith? How is it like human faith that produces no good deeds?

Abraham ([2:21](#)). God promised Abraham a son from whom he would receive countless descendants ([Genesis 12:1-3](#); [Genesis 15:1-5](#)). Even though Abraham was about eighty years old, he believed God, and God counted him righteous because of his faith ([Genesis 15:6](#)). Twenty years later, the promised son was finally born. But when Isaac was a teenager, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son ([Genesis 22:1-18](#)). Abraham had to risk all his dreams on the conviction that God would keep His promises—to the extent of resurrecting Isaac, if necessary.

Righteous... justified ([2:21](#), [24-25](#)). For Paul, to be justified is to be made righteous in God's sight. It is salvation, the beginning of Christian life from God's point of view. In James's terms to be justified is to be shown to have the kind of real faith that saves. A justified person has proven to people that he is righteous. Faith makes us righteous (justified in Paul's terms); works motivated by faith show that we are righteous (justified in James's usage).

Rahab ([2:25](#)). This Canaanite prostitute decided that the God of Israel was more worthy of her allegiance than the idols of Canaan. She showed her new loyalty by risking her life to protect two Israelites from the king of Jericho ([Joshua 2:1-24](#)).

4. James offers Abraham and Rahab as two examples of genuine faith. What did Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac prove ([Genesis 22:12](#); [James 2:22-23](#))?

5. How does Abraham reflect what James says about faith in [1:2-4](#)?

6. In summary, why is faith that is not demonstrated with deeds dead?

7. In your own words, summarize the relationship between faith and works.

8. What truth from [2:14-26](#) most stands out to you as something that should affect your life?

9. How do you fall short in this area, or how do you want it to affect your life?

10. What can you do to begin putting this truth into practice?

11. List any questions you have about [2:14-26](#).