

Genesis - The Gospel According to Abraham Part 4: James vs. Paul James 2:14-26

INTRODUCTION

James and Paul both use Abraham as an example concerning 'justification'. Paul uses Abraham as an example of Justification by Faith, while James uses Abraham as an example of Justification by Works. So which one is right? Does the Bible contradict itself? Let's explore these questions and find some answers

CONTRADICTING SCRIPTURES?

James 2:24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER:

1. Defining CONTEXT
2. Defining WORDS

DEFINING CONTEXT

1. What is the SUBJECT that James and Paul are addressing?

For Paul: How Salvation Comes to Jew & Gentile Alike

For James: The Outworking of the Christian Life

2. Who is the AUDIENCE that James and Paul are addressing?

For Paul: The Unsaved, Young Churches, and Judaisers

For James: Jewish Christians Who Have Been Settled In Their Faith For 20+ Years

3. What EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE are James and Paul writing from?

For Paul: A Theologian, Setting Doctrine Against False Teaching

For James: A Pastor, Dealing with the Everyday Life of a Congregation (perhaps a collection of sermons)

DEFINING WORDS:

1. JUSTIFIED

For Paul: How A Person Is Right Before God

For James: How A Person Is Right With God Before Men

2. FAITH

For Paul: Essential trust in Jesus Christ for Salvation

For James: Lip-Service to a Creed, Mere Mental Ascent to Orthodoxy (Religion Without a Real Relationship)

3. WORKS

For Paul: Always Legalistic 'Works of the Law'

For James: The Gracious Outworking of a Life of Faith (Works of Love)

CONCLUSION:

While it would appear that James and Paul contradicted each other, when we apply proper interpretive principles we see that truly these 'contradictions' are only surface level.

Both James and Paul are writing to a certain audience and trying to make a certain point, while using the same words we see that they are not using the same definitions. They are using the definitions that fit their own unique context.

Paul is dealing with the issue of salvation and how to be made right before God, while James is dealing with the issue of living out your faith by showing others around you that you have been made right with God.

What is clear is that the things James calls 'works' are precisely the kinds of ethical responses that Paul's gospel also expects of those who belong to Christ! *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* Eph. 2:10