

# FAITH, WORKS, AND SALVATION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

JAMES 2:14-26

- 1 **One of the most contested passages in the Bible is our text from this week: James 2:14-26.** This passage brings up the subject that is at the core of our eternal salvation—JUSTIFICATION. But what is justification? Below are the definitions from Merriam-Webster's dictionary. Using these definitions, what does James mean in 2:21, when he is speaking of Justification? Using these definitions, what does Paul mean in Romans 5:1, when he is speaking of Justification?
  - 1 *the act, process, or state of being justified by God*
  - 2a *the act or an instance of justifying something : vindication <arguments offered in justification of their choice>*
  - 2b *an acceptable reason for doing something : something that justifies an act or way of behaving <could provide no justification for his decision>*
  - 3 *the process or result of justifying lines of text <software that provides automatic justification of text>*
  
- 2 **What is so important about understanding “Justification by Faith” vs “Justification by Works” as the means of salvation?** What is at stake if we get this doctrine wrong? What verses Biblically support your answer?
  
- 3 **What do you think is the reason that MANY religious systems lean more heavily on being saved by a list of faith-works (i.e.—the sacraments, prayer calls, dress requirements, dietary laws, moral codes, marriage or celibacy, baptismal requirements, confirmation status, oaths, laws, monetary requirements, rituals, pilgrimages) rather than being saved solely by repentance and faith?**
  
- 4 **When James speaks of Abraham being justified by his work of offering Isaac, what is he talking about?** Make sure you read the story. Here are the texts you should review: Genesis 15 (God's covenant with Abraham) and Genesis 22 (God's testing of Abraham).
  
- 5 **Read the following passages.** Does Paul agree or disagree with James? How do Paul's writings compare and contrast to James' letter? Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 2:12-13
  
- 6 **It is easy to get into theological discussions about what James means or what Paul means.** But it would be a tragedy to just discuss theological tensions without looking in the mirror. If you have a close friend or a spouse or parent in the church, spend time answering these questions together. As a group, you may want to share any surprises you had as you answered these questions honestly.

**The questions you should be asking after reading James:**

♥ *Do my works justify (validate) my faith?*

♥ *Do my works stand up to the test of a life of true faith?*

♥ *Do other people see in my works a life of faith?*

