

## Paul, James and Abraham by Sandra Hooper

Some people seem to be confused by James and Paul because they both use Abraham as their illustration.

Note: Paul was talking about **WORKS OF THE LAW** while James was talking about **WORKS OF FAITH**.

The works Paul talks about in Romans 4:2 and Galatians 2:16 (and in other places) are not the same works James talks about (faith proven by works). Paul talks about "the works of the law," which he is referring to ceremonial works that can be done by anyone who is willing (circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, not eating pork, etc. etc.).

Someone mentioned that Abraham predates the Mosaic law. This is true. The point is, in Paul's time the Mosaic law existed and he was coming against those who say a person *must keep the law to be justified*. Paul talks about works in general, the moral law (thou shall not steal, lie, etc.), along with the works of the law in the matter of "circumcision" to prove his point about faith and justification.

Paul's teaching, "**by the works of the law no flesh will be justified**," was directly aimed at the individuals who were attempting to be justified by establishing their own righteousness through outward keeping of the letter of the law, and not by a **faith that works through love** (Rom. 9:32; 10:3; Gal. 5:6).

Paul's argument mounts in Romans 3 and 4. He continues to demonstrate that Israel is no better than the Gentile nations in heart, even though they have circumcision and the Mosaic Law, while the Gentiles

do not.

James, however, does not speak about the "works of the law." James talks about the hearts of men when they come to God in repentance and believe the Gospel Kingdom message, which moves a person to action. James uses Abraham as an example where Abraham **applied his faith** (faith in action) by choosing to obey God's command, as hard as it was, to offer up Isaac, his son.

So James tells us that a person can claim to have the most zealous faith, but if his faith is not accompanied by a lifestyle of obedience to God, it is a dead faith.

"Faith" today is seen as a mere mental assent to specific facts about God, which makes "Works of Faith" (actions) non essential. This is not Scriptural. Paul and James agree - Salvation has a purpose - *it is a living, obeying faith.*

### **True faith is verified in obedience.**

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)

Again, Paul and James do not contradict. Paul was arguing that **WORKS WITHOUT FAITH** would not justify, and James was arguing that **FAITH WITHOUT WORKS** would not justify. To exclude either is to fail of justification.

Paul and James are in agreement. Even Paul talks about the "**work of faith**" (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11; Gal. 5:6, etc.).