

## LIVING FAITH AND THE TRUE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION (James 2:1-26).

### Introduction:

1. James addresses two common errors: showing partiality and claiming faith without works.
2. The chapter is intensely practical, calling believers to examine the *fruit* of their faith.
3. James shows that faith must be visible and active, not merely professed.
4. A correct understanding of “justified” is essential to avoid doctrinal confusion.



### 1. The Danger Of Showing Partiality Among Believers:

- a. Favoritism Contradicts The Character Of True Faith (James 2:1–4):
  - 1) The faith of Christ does not allow for respect of persons (James 2:1).
  - 2) Preferring the rich while degrading the poor reveals evil thoughts (James 2:3–4).
  - 3) Judgment based on appearance is ungodly and unjust (John 7:24).
- b. God Chooses The Poor And Condemns Partiality (James 2:5–7):
  - 1) God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5).
  - 2) The rich often oppress and blaspheme the name of Christ (James 2:6–7).
  - 3) Favoritism aligns believers with worldly values, not divine values (Proverbs 14:31).
- c. The Law Of Liberty Requires Love And Mercy (James 2:8–13):
  - 1) The royal law commands love for neighbor without partiality (James 2:8).
  - 2) Showing partiality makes one a transgressor of the law (James 2:9–10).
  - 3) Mercy rejoices against judgment and reflects true faith (James 2:12–13).

### 2. The Exposure Of Dead, Useless Faith:

- a. Faith Without Action Cannot Save Or Serve (James 2:14–17):
  - 1) A claim of faith without works is empty and profitless (James 2:14).
  - 2) Offering words without practical help is vain (James 2:15–16).
  - 3) Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:17).
- b. Intellectual Belief Is Not Obedient Faith (James 2:18–20):
  - 1) Faith must be shown by works to be living and useful (James 2:18).
  - 2) Devils believe and tremble but do not obey (James 2:19).
  - 3) Faith without works is dead and cannot justify (James 2:20).
- c. Real Faith Is Always Active And Obedient (James 2:21–26):
  - 1) Abraham's offering of Isaac demonstrated the reality of his faith (James 2:21).
  - 2) His faith was made perfect by his actions, fulfilling the scripture (James 2:22–23).
  - 3) Rahab showed faith through action by protecting the messengers (James 2:25–26).

### 3. The True Meaning Of “Justified” In James:

#### a. Justification Means Proven Righteous, Not Made Righteous (James 2:21–24):

- 1) Abraham was already counted righteous by faith before offering Isaac (Genesis 15:6).
- 2) His later obedience publicly confirmed that righteousness (James 2:21–22).
- 3) James uses “justified” to mean demonstrated, not earned (James 2:24).

#### b. James And Paul Address Different Problems Without Conflict:

- 1) Paul teaches justification before God by faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28).
- 2) James refutes the error of claiming faith without obedient action (James 2:17–20).
- 3) True faith saves, but true faith is never alone (Galatians 5:6).

#### c. Misreading James Leads To Doctrinal Error:

- 1) Martin Luther misunderstood James to be teaching salvation by works and called it “an epistle of straw” (historical context).
- 2) Luther’s objection came from reading “justified by works” as contradicting Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith (Romans 3:28).
- 3) James is not opposing Paul but confronting false, inactive faith that cannot save (James 2:20–24).

### Conclusion:

1. Faith must not be partial, selfish, or inactive—it must be living and obedient.
2. James does not deny justification by faith; he denies that faith can be real if it stands alone.
3. Paul and James are not in conflict but speak to different audiences and problems.
4. Understanding the purpose of James 2 protects us from both doctrinal error and superficial faith.

### Application:

1. Examine your attitude toward others—do you show favoritism based on appearance or status?
2. Ask whether your faith is visible in how you serve, love, and obey.
3. Do not excuse inaction by claiming belief; true faith moves.
4. Beware of trusting in doctrine without discipleship—belief must be lived.
5. Use this passage to sharpen your understanding of what “justified” really means.

### Questions:

1. What does James say about faith without works (James 2:17, 26)?
2. How does James describe those who show partiality in the assembly?
3. What two Old Testament figures does James use to illustrate living faith?
4. How is James using the word “justified” (James 2:24)?
5. Why did Martin Luther struggle with the Book of James?

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**Questions & Answers:**

1. What does James say about faith without works (**James 2:17, 26**)?

Answer: He says it is dead—faith without works has no life or saving power (**James 2:17, 26**).

2. How does James describe those who show partiality in the assembly?

Answer: He says they are judges with evil thoughts and have become transgressors of the law (**James 2:4, 9**).

3. What two Old Testament figures does James use to illustrate living faith?

Answer: Abraham and Rahab (**James 2:21, 25**).

4. How is James using the word “justified” (**James 2:24**)?

Answer: He uses it to mean “shown to be righteous,” not “made righteous.”

5. Why did Martin Luther struggle with the Book of James?

Answer: He believed it contradicted Paul’s teaching on justification by faith and misunderstood James’s use of “justified.”