

## James

AUTHOR: James, who is called "the Just." He and Peter and John were the pillars of the church at Jerusalem. See Galatians 2:9. He was probably the pastor of the Jerusalem church, and in the early days of the church he was probably in many ways the leader of the Christians and the disciples.

THEME: "Justification by Works (Before Man)"

INTRODUCTION: If one would read James 2:14-26, he would be led to believe that a person is justified by works. On the other hand, if one would read Romans 3:20 and 4:1-8, he would arrive at the fact that a man is justified by faith. Hence, Paul in Romans seems to teach justification by faith, and James in the book of James seems to teach justification by works.

Which is right? Both are right. There are two before whom we must be justified. One is God and one is man. Romans teaches us how to be justified before God; this is by faith. James teaches us how to be justified before man; this is by works. Note James 2:18. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

Let us use an illustration. Suppose that next Sunday morning in our church a bartender were converted. He is sincere in his faith, he puts his faith in Christ, and he is justified in the sight of God by that faith. Let us suppose that the next Wednesday night we recommend to the church that he be ordained as a deacon. There would be much, if not unanimous, opposition. Why? Isn't he justified before God? Yes, he is. Somebody would say, "Preacher, let's wait a while and see how he turns out." What they are saying is, "Let's wait until he is justified before man."

Man cannot see the heart. We have to prove what is in the heart by our actions and by our works. Hence, God, Who sees the heart, justifies us because He sees our faith, but we do not become justified before man until we prove ourselves by our works, for man cannot see the heart.

This is why Abraham and Rahab are listed as being justified by works. Paul says that they were both justified by faith, and this is true. They were both saved by grace through faith, and God justified by faith, and this is true. They were both saved by grace through faith, and God justified them in His sight because of their faith. However, Abraham was going to a new country. People were going to watch him for a while to see what kind of fellow he was. Hence, the faith that he had in God must be justified before man by his works. His works proved his faith.

Rahab had been a wicked harlot. Now then, suddenly, she puts her faith in Jehovah. People will watch her. Will she change? Will she go back to the old life? Yes, she was justified the moment she put her faith in God, but man did not justify her until she proved by a changed life that she had put her faith in God.

Hence, the book of James is telling us how we can gain the confidence of man by a consistent Christian life and thereby become justified in his sight; whereas Romans tells us how we can become justified in the sight of God, for He sees the heart and He sees the faith. Now, in James 1 and 2 we have this doctrine of justification by works before man. In James 3 - 5, we are told how we should behave so as to become justified before man.

I. THE TONGUE. See James 3. We are to justify the faith that God sees (as told in Romans) by the works that man can see (as told in James). In other words, James 3 tells us that we must use our tongues for God. This would include abstaining from such things as cursing, lying, gossiping,

criticizing, using vain talk, telling dirty stories, etc. It would include the doing of such things as witnessing, praying, commending, speaking kindly, etc. It would include abstaining from such things as improper songs and improper use of worldly slang, lingo, etc.

II. OUR MANNER OF LIFE. Read James 4. Here we are reminded that if we are to prove our salvation to man or become justified before man, we are to behave ourselves as Christians ought to behave, which means it does matter that we be courteous, honest, fair and straightforward. It does matter that we wear the proper clothing and the proper hair styles. It does matter that our way of life not be patterned according to the world, but according to God and His plan and will for our lives. (Teacher, discuss with the class the different ways that a person can prove his Christianity by his manner of life at school, at work, at play, and in public. Then discuss ways that would be wrong and would injure our testimony, thereby not allowing us to become justified or proven in the sight of men concerning the faith we have in our hearts.)

III. CARE FOR EACH OTHER. Notice James 5. When the world sees how we care for each other, then the world believes that we are justified by faith. For example, in James 5:7, 8 we are commanded to be patient with each other, and in James 5:9 we are commanded not to grudge against one another. In James 5:14, we are commanded to pray for one another when sickness comes, and in James 5:16 we are commanded to confess our faults one to another. In James 5:19, 20, we are commanded to lift up the fallen brother who is weak. Our Lord said in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." When the people of the world see us Christians getting along with each other, loving each other and caring for each other, then we can become justified in their sight.

CONCLUSION: Three disciples had the name of James: James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John; James, the son of Alphaeus, surnamed "the Less"; and the third James, who was the writer of this epistle and the brother of our Lord. This James was devout and pious. He became the bishop or pastor of the church in Jerusalem and occupied a prominent place in the church. He was the president of the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15:13. Sometime after Paul's conversion, Paul came to James in Acts 21:18, and later, Paul speaks of him in glowing terms in Galatians 2:9. James was martyred by fanatical Jews. We are told that the high priests and rulers forced him to the roof of the temple. When they demanded that he blaspheme Christ, he declared boldly that Jesus was the Son of God. He was hurled from the temple and killed.