

JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS?

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall **my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.**

Justification is a legal term that is used in courts of law and does not necessarily mean that salvation accompanies it, for you can be justified in and by something and still be lost. In the course of one's cult contacts, there are those who demand works for salvation and the remission of sins and equate them with justification. Nevertheless, there are at least 10 legitimate justifications in the New Testament, only one of them is by works: (1.) We are justified **BY HIS GRACE** -- Rom 3:24, Tit 3:7. (2.) We are justified **BY FAITH** -- Rom 5:1, Gal 3:24, Rom 4:5, Gal 2:16 (3.) We are justified **BY CHRIST** -- Acts 13:39, Rom 8:30, Gal 2:17 (4.) We are justified **BY HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS** -- Rom 3:26 (5.) We are justified **BY HIS RESURRECTION** -- Rom 4:25 (6.) We are justified **BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD** -- 1 Cor 6:11 (7.) We are justified **BY JESUS' NAME** -- 1 Cor 6:11 (8.) We are justified **BY HIS BLOOD** -- Rom 5:9 (9.) We are justified **BY THE FREE GIFT UNTO THE JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE** -- Rom 5:18 (10.) We are justified **BY WORKS** as follows.

Justification by Works per James

To understand this passage, one must understand the context, as to who this passage is addressed to, and why it was addressed. It was addressed to "VAIN MEN," who either had no faith or had a pretended faith, both of which are reckoned as a "dead faith." It was spoken in reference to a situation where one claimed faith but had no compassion for a destitute brother or sister. The works were not baptism or any commanded works but rather intuitive works of compassion that should accompany real faith. James was pressing folks here to have a real, living, genuine faith and scolding the absence of that which accompanies faith, i.e. works. He was demanding that they demonstrate their so called faith by works. With James, it is a "SHOW ME" proposition.

Jas 2:14 - 26: [14.] What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? **can faith save him?** [15.] If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, [16.] And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? [17.] Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead**, being alone. [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 . . .** [20.] But wilt thou know, **O vain man, that faith without works is dead? . . .**

Rahab's Faith Justified by Works

Two questions must be answered about justification: 1. Justification to what end? 2. Justification before whom? James gives two O.T. illustrations of justification by works, Rahab and Abraham. Rahab was justified to prove her faith but not before God for salvation (Rom 4:2) but before the spies and before Israel to whom she subsequently became a proselyte. That she had faith was evident in that the spies felt comfortable in going to her.

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were **justified by works**, he hath whereof to glory; but **not before God**.

James 2:25, 26 . . . was not Rahab the harlot **justified by works**, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead also**.

Abraham Faith Justified BY WORKS per James

The Old Testament accounts do not mention anything about Abraham being justified by works, but James does. Nevertheless, James references two places where Abraham's faith is imputed and counted for righteousness but not with his works. Two questions must be answered about Abraham (as well as Rahab) in regard to being justified by works. The passages in Genesis 12 and 15 are proof that Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness long before Abraham ever offered Isaac in Genesis 22.

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were **justified by works**, he hath whereof to glory; but **not before God**.

James 2:21 - 24: [21.] Was not Abraham our father **justified by works, when he had offered Isaac** his son upon the altar? [22.] Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? [23.] And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness**: and he was called the Friend of God. [24.] Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Abraham' Faith Justified by Works in Genesis 12

The first mention of Abraham's obedience to the Lord is mentioned in Gen 12:1-4 without any elaboration of the faith behind that obedience. Still Hebrews 11:8 mentions Abrahams's faith and obedience.

Gen 12:1 - 4: [1.] Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2.] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing . . . [4.] **So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him . . .**

Heb 11:8, 9 By **faith** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed**; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. **By faith** he sojourned in the land of promise . . .

Abraham' Faith Justified by Works in Genesis 15

The first mention of Abraham's faith is mentioned in Gen 15:1-6, without any mention of works or obedience. It is here that Abraham's faith without works is counted for righteousness. The New Testament puts believers under Abraham's umbrella of faith and imputed righteousness without any mention of works for salvation.

Gen 15:1 – 6: [1.] After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward . . . [4.] And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. [5.] And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. [6.] And **he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

Rom 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that **faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**

Rom 4:12, 13 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but **who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham**, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but **through the righteousness of faith.**

Rom 4:16 Therefore **it is of faith, that it might be by grace;** to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also **which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all . . .**

Gal 3:6, 7 Even as **Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.** Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith,** the same are the children of Abraham.

Abraham's Sacrifice was a Test Not a Salvation Plan

God tested Abraham's already possessed faith rather than give him a plan of salvation. Yes, James says that he was justified by his offering (works) but not to get righteousness. Abraham already had righteousness imputed to him in Genesis 12 and 15 because Abraham BELIEVED. Abraham's imputed righteousness is also spoken of by James and Paul. In Genesis 22, nothing is said about Abraham being imputed righteousness for anything, including his offering of Isaac. Nothing is mentioned there about faith, works, or anything being counted for righteousness in Gen 22:1-19, but Hebrews 11:17 does say that he offered Isaac BY FAITH. Still, per James, Abraham was justified by works but NOT BEFORE GOD per Romans 4:2. Abraham was justified before his young men in that he returned to them with his son as he had promised and before Isaac in his promise that God would provide the lamb and before his believing spiritual descendants, due to the accounts of Paul and James.

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but **not before God.**

Heb 11:17 By **faith** Abraham, **when he was tried,** offered up Isaac . . .

Gen 22:1 – 19: [1.] And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt Abraham,** and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. [2.] And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him there for a burnt offering** upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. [3.] And Abraham rose up early in the morning . . . and **took two of his young men with him,** and Isaac his son, and **clave the wood** for the burnt offering, and . . . went unto the place of which God had told him . . . [5.] And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and **I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.** [6.] And Abraham **took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac** his son; and he **took the fire in his hand,** and a knife; and they went both of them together. [7.] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said . . . Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb for a burnt offering?** 8 And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering . . .** [9.] And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and **bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.** [10.] And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. [11.] And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham . . . [12.] And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now **I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.** [13.] And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and **Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering IN THE STEAD OF HIS SON . . .** [15.] And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, [16.] And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for **because thou hast done this thing,** and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: [17.] **That in blessing I will bless thee,** and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; [18.] And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. [19.] **So Abraham returned unto his young men,** and they rose up and went together to Beersheba;

Of course, like sanctification, with a believer, there are both a positional and a practical side of justification in which a believer gets positional justification upon salvation and then exercises a practical justification and sanctification in his daily life. The practical justification and sanctification is found in James and demonstrates to one's brethren, and to unbelievers that one really possesses a living faith, rather than a dead faith. When a believer is justified by faith, he has peace, and does not have the sword of Damocles hanging over him. He does not have to walk a tightrope the rest of his life wondering whether he will end up in hell or be excluded from heaven and the kingdom. Moreover, it is the **UNGODLY** that are justified from Abraham to us. And their faith is counted for righteousness **NOT THEIR WORKS.** They are justified, **JUST AS IF THEY NEVER HAD SINNED!**

-- by Herb Evans