

# THE WHOLE BIBLE: James and 1 Peter

## JAMES

- author is James, brother of Jesus, leader of church in Jerusalem
- letter is focused on Christian living – faith lived out in good works

### Most striking and controversial passage is James 2

- v. 24 – “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”
- is this a contradiction to Paul?

**Galatians 2:16** A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Romans 3:28** One is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

### James 2:14 - 26

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

<sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” – and he was called a friend of God.

<sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

### Dispute with Roman Catholicism

- justification happens at end of your life, on basis of good works
- but Protestant Reformation – “justified by faith alone”

### But v. 24 – “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”

- distinction between “dead faith” and “true faith”
- true faith always produces good works | live tree produces fruit
- good works are not basis of justification, but fruit of justification

### Example of Abraham

- v. 22 – “faith was active along with his works”
- true faith is never alone, but active with works
  
- v. 22 – “and faith was completed by his works”
- “completed” is Greek word τελειόω, which means “fulfilled”
- faith is a promise that is fulfilled by good works

## 1 PETER

- theme of letter: persevere in faith while suffering persecution
- during reign of Nero, Christians suffered intensely, even death

### 1 Peter 1:6-7

<sup>6</sup>In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup>so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

### How then should followers of Christ conduct themselves?

- and specifically, how should we regard a godless government?
- issue of church and state | key texts: Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2

### 1 Peter 2:11-17

<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

<sup>13</sup>Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup>or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. <sup>15</sup>For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

<sup>16</sup>Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. <sup>17</sup>Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

### Christians are “exiles” and “sojourners”

- this informs our redemptive historical setting

### Avoid two extremes

- withdraw and isolation
- dominate and take over

### v. 17 – “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

- “honor” is Greek τιμάω (timaō) – “to give due regard”

### Romans 13:5-7

<sup>5</sup>Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup>For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

### We are to “honor” civil authorities

- obey laws, pay taxes, be good citizens

### But we are to “fear God”

- “fear” is reverent awe and worship | this is a higher calling
- not to fear man, but only God
  
- “render to Caesar what is Caesar's, render to God what is God's”
- God deserves our first and highest devotion
  - basis of civil disobedience
- but secondarily, civil authorities are due honor and obedience

### Legitimacy of (even pagan) civil government

- v. 14 – “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do go

### Romans 13:4

Governing authorities are God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

### Role of government

- establish rule of law and maintain order and public welfare
- but government cannot ask for our highest allegiance
  
- Christianity was first to do this – separate religion and government
- gift to world – politics is not ultimate | politics is limited

### Submission to civil authorities is evangelism

- early Christians were maligned as “atheists,” subversive to state
- but Christians can show, by good citizenry, care about common go
  
- our public conduct affects our witness
- Christians need to be engaged in civil affairs (don't withdraw)
- Christians need to be gracious in public square (don't dominate)

## Notes

### Introduction to James

- author is James, brother of Jesus, leader of church in Jerusalem
- letter is focused on Christian living – faith lived out in good works

### Most striking and controversial passage is James 2

- v. 24 – “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”
- is this a contradiction to Paul?

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### Dispute with Roman Catholicism

- this is material break for why the Protestant Reformation happened

### What is Catholic view on justification?

- they believe in justification | they believe it is a verdict
- on what grounds do we receive verdict of righteousness?
  
- they believe necessity of faith | believe in necessity of grace
- when believe, receive grace – jump-starts process, of holy life
- receive sacraments, attend mass, do good works – end of life, verdict
  
- justification occurs, not beginning of Christian life, but at end
- after sanctification | for Catholics, justification is not legal fiction
- but verdict is based on actual evidence of righteousness
- very crudely – ‘justified by faith + works’

### Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1990)

Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man. Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin.

### Catholic Church – our verdict is ultimately based on good works

- this is huge | this is nothing less than destruction of gospel
- rallying cry of Reformation – “justified by faith alone”

## Read James 2:14-26

### James is talking about 2 kinds of faith

- v. 18 – “you have faith and I have works” | contrasting 2 kinds of faith
- in early church, people – “faith alone” | distortion of Paul
- “all you need is faith; now I can live any way I want”
- easy-believism – one time in life, turned in prayer card, but no evidence of a changed life

### James is confronting this error

- v. 17 – “so also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”
  
- dead faith versus true faith (which always accompanied by good works)
- true faith will always produce fruit
- Luther – “we are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone”
  
- but not saying – justified by good works
- think about tree | fruit evidence tree alive, but not source of tree’s fruit
- not justified by works, but works is evidence of justified
  
- but v. 24 – “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”
- speaking in short-hand | “justified [and evidenced] by works”

### Example of Abraham

- v. 21 – “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?”
- but James is not contradicting himself in v. 23 – “Abraham believed God, and counted to him as righteousness”
- so, justified by works means justified by a faith that has works
  
- v. 22 – “faith was active along with his works”
- true faith is never alone, but active with works
  
- v. 22 – “and faith was completed by his works”
- “completed” is Greek word τελειόω, which means “fulfilled”
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### Christians are “exiles” and “sojourners”

- redemptive historical setting – where are we in the story?
- Babylonian exile and Patriarchal period | not theocratic Israel
- we are minorities living in a pagan land that is not our home

### Avoid two extremes

- withdraw and isolation – monastic option
  - Jesus calls us to be ‘salt and light’ in the world

- dominate and take over
  - submit to governing authorities, even pagan ones
  - goal is not recreate ancient Israel, or establish a “Christian cou

### v. 17 – “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

- “honor” is τιμάω – “to give due regard” or “acknowledge value”

### Romans 13:5-7

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### We are to “honor” civil authorities

- obey laws, pay taxes, be good citizens

### But we are to “fear God”

- “fear” is reverent awe and worship | this is a higher calling
- not to fear man, but only God

### “Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, render to God what is God's”

- God deserves our first and highest devotion

### Basis of civil disobedience

- civil government has limited authority | we must first obey God
  - free practice of Christian faith
  - grave injustice | Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights
- but secondarily, civil authorities are due honor and obedience
  - we should fully comply with laws, in accordance w/ conscience

## **Legitimacy of (even pagan) civil government**

- v. 14 – “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good”

### **Romans 13:4**

He is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.

## **Pagan rulers are “God’s servant”**

- God rules in two spheres: civil society and church
- in church – Kingdom of God
- in civil society – Kingdom of Man

## **Role of government**

- establish rule of law and maintain order and public welfare
- but government cannot ask for our highest allegiance – worship

## **Christianity was first to do this – separate religion and government**

- Christianity’s gift to world – politics is not ultimate
- in secular world, political fights have no compromise, b/c ultimate
- for Christians, politics is very limited | seek common ground

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## **Submission to civil authorities is evangelism**

- early Christians were maligned as “atheists,” subversive to state
- Christians refused to participate in public religious feasts to gods
- Christians were persecuted as disloyal to state
  
- but Christians can show, by good citizenry, care about common good
- Christians cannot offer worship, but can serve in civil society
- and, in this way, change minds

## **Our public conduct affects our witness**

- Christians need to be engaged in civil affairs (don’t withdraw)
  - PTA, serve in military and government, volunteer
  
- Christians need to be gracious in public square (don’t dominate)
  - don’t seek to dominate and crush minority viewpoints
  - don’t confuse state with church
  - don’t seek to create a “Christian country”