## FAITH, WORKS, AND SALVATION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**JAMES 2:14-26** 

One of the most contested passages in the Bible is our text from this week: James 2:14-26. This passage brings up the subject that is at the core of our eternal salvation—JUSTIFICATION. But what is justification? Below are the definitions from Merriam-Webster's dictionary. Using these definitions, what does James mean in 2:21, when he is speaking of Justification? Using these definitions, what does Paul mean in Romans 5:1, when he is speaking of Justification?

- 1 the act, process, or state of being justified by God
- 2a the act or an instance of justifying something : vindication <arguments offered in justification of their choice>
- 2b an acceptable reason for doing something : something that justifies an act or way of behaving <could provide no justification for his decision>
- 3 the process or result of justifying lines of text <software that provides automatic justification of text>

What is so important about understanding "Justification by Faith" vs "Justification by Works" as the means of salvation? What is at stake if we get this doctrine wrong? What verses Biblically support your answer?

3 What do you think is the reason that MANY religious systems lean more heavily on being saved by a list of faith-works (i.e.—the sacraments, prayer calls, dress requirements, dietary laws, moral codes, marriage or celibacy, baptismal requirements, confirmation status, oaths, laws, monetary requirements, rituals, pilgrimages) rather than being saved solely by repentance and faith?

When James speaks of Abraham being justified by his work of offering Isaac, what is he talking about? Make sure you read the story. Here are the texts you should review: Genesis 15 (God's covenant with Abraham) and Genesis 22 (God's testing of Abraham).

5 Read the following passages. Does Paul agree or disagree with James? How do Paul's writings compare and contrast to James' letter? Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 2:12-13

**(6)** It is easy to get into theological discussions about what James means or what Paul means. But it would be a tragedy to just discuss theological tensions without looking in the mirror. If you have a close friend or a spouse or parent in the church, spend time answering these questions together. As a group, you may want to share any surprises you had as you answered these questions honestly.

The questions you should be asking after reading James:

Do my works justify (validate) my faith?

Do my works stand up to the test of a life of true faith?

Do other people see in my works a life of faith?

## The questions you should be asking after reading Paul:

Do my works justify (provide) my faith?

What or who is the object of my faith?

What is the motivation for my works?

What will save me eternally?

7

Do my good works bring praise to God or praise to man?

The definition of justification, according to Paul, brings up truths about righteousness that we cannot miss in this discussion. It is clear from studying the scriptures that PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS is a requirement of residents of heaven. Jesus said our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and pharisees in order to enter heaven (Matthew 5:17-20). Accordingly, is there anyone who will enter heaven because of his/her perfect righteousness? What did Paul say about this in (Philippians 3:9)?

8 Many people have studied and have come to the conclusion that they must become more and more righteous in order to cancel out sins. They have to become "worthy." So, if we struggle with a sin, we repent, and then we do something good in its place. What is Biblically wrong with this type of thinking? How often do true believers fall into this trap of thinking? What is the answer—understanding and embracing true justification! Consider what it means to embrace true justification as you go through the following True and False questions:

🗱   T or F   The Bible teaches that Christ takes the righteousness I have and then gives me what I lack.	PRAYER REQUESTS
🗱   T or F   The Bible teaches that Christ takes my sin and gives me His righteousness in sin's place.	
🧱   T or F   The Bible teaches that Christ will justify me after I have proven that I really love him by obeying his commands.	
🧱   T or F   The Bible teaches that I can never become righteous enough on my own and must be declared righteous by God.	
🤹   T or F   The Bible teaches that God must punish sinners for their sin and so He must banish the unrighteous from heaven.	
I or F   The Bible teaches that God loves the unrighteous so much that He punished His one and only Son in the sinner's place.	
I or F   The Bible teaches that being made completely righteous through faith in Christ is the way to live out a life of faith-motivated good works.	
🗱   T or F   The Bible teaches that being justified by faith produces works that justify your faith.	