

Chippewa Valley General Assembly



Daily Devotions

Pastor William J. Kermott

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Why the Anti-nomian movement in Evangelicalism wants to abolish James

[Basic Bible Doctrine](#)

[The Techniques of the Christian Life](#)

[Christian Education](#)

[Abortion](#)

Should the Book of James Be in the Bible?

The book of James in the New Testament is a controversial book, and there are those who believe that it should not have been included in the [Canon](#) of Scripture. One of the main controversies is justification by works, and the argument that James presents irreconcilable contradictions with Paul's writings on the subject of justification. We'll look at both sides of this debate, and attempt to form an objective conclusion.

Arguments That Reject Including James in the [Canon](#)

- James 2:14-24 seems to contradict Paul by supporting a doctrine of justification by works rather than by faith alone, saying that "faith without works is dead." In Galatians 2:15-21, Paul says, "We ... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ ... that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. For through the law I died to the law... if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" Just as Paul is consistent with his message of justification by faith throughout all of his books in the New Testament, so is James consistent with his message of justification by works throughout his whole book. Since James' support of justification by works is not just seen in occasional isolated phrases, these statements cannot be assumed to be any type of transcription errors.
- We have to ask ourselves what it is that sets Christianity apart from Judaism. The answer is found in Romans 6:14, "...you are not under law, but under grace." For centuries, the Jews had followed the law as a way of life, but Paul consistently reinforced the idea following grace as a way of life. Time and time again, Paul tells believers that Christ freed them from the law; that grace is their new way of life, and that they are justified by faith, not by works. To understand how persistent Paul (and the authors of other epistles) stood on these arguments, consider the following comparisons of word counts in the epistles. From this perspective, James is clearly not in step with the message of grace that is found in the other epistles.

	Grace	Believe / Faith	Jesus
James	2	19	2
The Other 20 Epistles	105	202	271
Total	107	221	273
Average	5	11	13

- To further build on the evidence of the word counts above, note that 17 of the 19 references to faith in the book of James present faith in a negative light. The references to faith in all other epistles is always positive.
- There are also 142 usages of the word "law" in the epistles. Almost all of these refer to law in a negative light. They refer to the law in a New Testament context, essentially presenting it Christianity as the opposite of Judaism, in its comparison of the liberating grace of Christianity to the binding law of Judaism. Only 18 of the references to law in the epistles refer to it in a positive light, and in an Old Testament context. Of these 18 references to the law, six are in the book of James, and twelve are in Hebrews. James is the only book that seems to belittle faith, the most important issue of all (the [gospel](#) message itself).
- James seems to dwell upon the idea of the Old Testament Levitical law, such as in James 2:8-11, even though it was given only to the nation of Israel. Christ is mentioned, but only rarely, and not as the key to [salvation](#), as in the other epistles. Like Paul, James explains the law, but Paul then presents the [gospel](#) of grace. One must either accept all of the law (Romans 6:14), or none of it.

The permissive grace movement which is simply branches from the noxious weed Martin Luther called Anti-nomianism (anti-law) despise the book of James because it is too “works” centered.

They complain that James does not stress salvation by faith in Christ and is not evangelical enough. They contend that James contradicts Paul's teaching on grace. He doesn't. He contradicts only their misbegotten interpretations of grace. Here are some of the verses that irritate those in the permissive grace movement.

The Scriptures that offend Antinomians (the anti law crowd)

- **James 2:17 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.**
- **19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.**

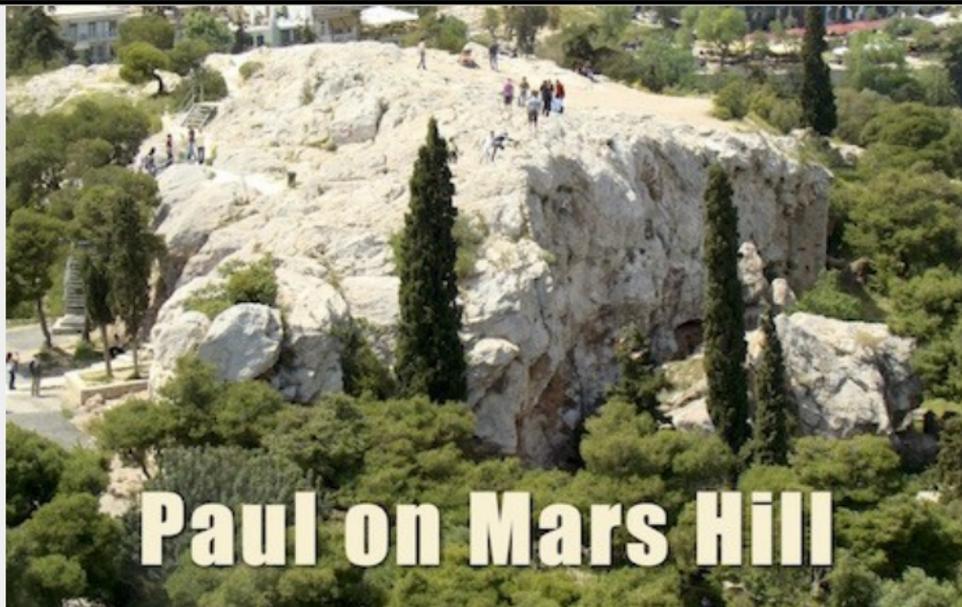
We have many proponents of permissive grace in our area who go so far as to claim that repentance is salvation by works. They even deny water baptism as commanded by our Lord in the great commission. That too is not of grace but is works they say.

[\(PERMISSIVE GRACE CONDEMNED BY IRWIN LUTZER CLICK HERE\)](#)

They do not like that James points out that devils have so strong a belief in God that they tremble at his name however they are still devils. It takes more than saying you believe- you have to back up that faith with works or your faith is not authentic. Faith without works James says is dead!

James does not contradict Paul in this. In his great summary of the Gospel and grace Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8 **“For by grace are ye saved through faith, it is a gift of God not of works lest any man should boast”**. Then lest people like the permissive grace movement should pervert the doctrine of Grace Paul goes on in the very next verse to explain that good works prove that faith saying, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”**

I cannot understand how the permissive grace movement can so misinterpret the writings of Paul. When Paul preached on Mars hill he was warning his hearers of the great sin of idolatry v.29 and called them to repent of that sin. He said, Acts 17:30 **And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:**



31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

Here Paul warns the unsaved by identifying their sin, calling them to turn from sin to righteousness lest they face the judgment seat of Christ. They could not profess Christ and continue in their idolatry it is one or the other. No permissive grace. Repentance meant turning from idols.

Further in Acts 26 when Paul is on trial before King Agrippa he preaches salvation by faith and repentance proven by works. Acts 26:20.... ***“that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”***



***REPENT OF YOUR SINS
AND TURN TO GOD,
FOR THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN IS NEAR.***

MATTHEW 3:2

[Click this link For more on what repentance means go to devotional on Repentance](#)

The permissive grace movement likes to claim that repentance simply means to turn from unbelief to belief. The Bible defines repentance as turning from transgressing the law.



Repentance is a gift
of God's grace.

Rabindranath Tagore

Ezekiel 18:30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. **Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions;** so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

And the New Testament tells us that sin is the transgression of the law... 1 John 3:4 **Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.**

Unlike the permissive grace clan, the Bible teaches what everyone really knows is true deep in their hearts that repentance means godly sorrow for one's sins and turning from committing those sins. This is a work of grace and the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to true faith.

The Apostle Paul also makes it very clear that if you are living in such sin you cannot consider your salvation secure in fact he lists a multitude of transgressions that if you have not turned from you will not go to heaven.

Galatians 5:19 **Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,**

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul is agreeing with James in the strongest of terms! Faith without works is dead! It is not repentance if you continue in any of these sins.

All of this is not to say that we are saved by keeping the commandments. Repentance is a work of the wonderful grace of God to bring us to salvation through faith.

When God calls the sinner through the preaching of the cross, the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner's soul bringing him to the realization that he needs forgiveness and grace.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF JAMES

The purpose of the book of James is to prepare the young church for persecution and trials. It is a letter sent to all of the churches and Christian synagogues at that time to instruct them in proper conduct and attitudes as a church but also as individual believers. It's purpose is not evangelical as it is being sent to instruct those who already profess faith and are in fellowship with a congregation.

The Book of James

Focus	"Be ye doers of the word, & not hearers only" (1:22)				
Divisions	Trials of Faith 1	Works of Faith 2	Words of Faith 3	Walk of Faith 4	Waiting Faith 5
Topics	Faith Tested Trials & Temptation	Faith Displayed Faith & Favoritism	Faith Proved Perfection in Speech	Faith Contrasted Peace in Submission	Faith Rewarded Perseverance in Suffering
Place	To the Twelve Tribes in the Dispersion				
Time	Before A.D. 62				
Author	James the Half-Brother of Jesus				