

PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED:
THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

*How Paul Led James
To Abandon James's Transitional Doctrine Of Justification By Works
And To Accept Paul's Revelation Of Justification By Faith
(Or Why It Is Error To Teach Christians Today That "Faith Without Works Is Dead")*

Quick Summary

James teaches in his Epistle of James that (1) Christians are “justified by works” (Jas. 2:21, 25) and not “justified . . . by faith only” (Jas. 2:24) (as James uses those terms), and (2) Jewish Christians must comply with the law of Moses (the law).

On the other hand, Paul teaches four things. First, Christians are *not* “justified by works” (Rom. 4:2) but *are* “justified by faith” (Rom. 3:28; 5:1) (as Paul uses those terms). Second, Christians are free to live a Scriptural lifestyle that excludes complying with the law. Third, Christians are free to live a lifestyle that includes a *nonobligatory* compliance with the law in accord with their preferences or the dictates of their consciences. Finally, when Christians interact with people who comply with the law as a way of life (e.g., devout Jews), Christians are free to engage in a nonobligatory compliance with the law to avoid offending such people.

The essay then demonstrates, based on Galatians 1 and 2, and other Scriptures, the following. Paul received a “revelation from Jesus Christ,” a “gospel” that included not only truths that the other apostles knew but other truths that the apostles did not know,

including Paul's teachings in the above paragraph. (This "revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12) that Paul received was just as much a revelation to him as the "revelation from Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1) and the Book of Revelations were to the apostle John.) Moreover, Paul shared this revelation, this "gospel," with the other apostles. Three—James, Peter, and John—agreed at the "right hands of fellowship" (Gal. 2:9) that Paul and Barnabas would take this "gospel," revealed to Paul, to the Gentiles, and James, Peter, and John would take this "gospel," revealed to Paul, to the circumcision (Jews who emphasized compliance with the law as a way of life).

In other words, James also agreed that his doctrines on justification and the role of the law in the life of the Jewish Christian as taught in James's epistle were transitional (like the law itself (Gal. 3:24-25)), and were no longer to be taught after the agreement of the right hands of fellowship. This is true even though James's doctrines on those issues were and are inspired Scripture (like the law) and were correct at the time that he taught them in his epistle.