

"Justification by Faith Alone II, Abraham, Part One" James 2:14-24

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by C.W. Powell

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 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? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 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. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (Jas 2:14-24 AV)

Introduction:

I. James is wisdom literature, inspired by God, to enable us to walk wisely in the midst of tribulations.

II. It is about testings and trials:

A. Testings are in this world to teach patience: vs. 2

B. Testings are now, the reward is later. 1:12

C. Even our station in life can be a test: for now, not for eternity. We are to be doers, not hearers only. The only way anyone can know if you hear, is if you act!!

D. Don't show respect of persons; do not think one part of the law is better than another; [ten commandments]; Not how little we are to do; we are to do all, and still say we are unprofitable servants.

E. Don't say, depart, be ye warmed and fed. What profit is it. It is like speaking

gibberish in church;; you don't need intelligible words to speak to God, because He knows your heart; but in church you have to speak for profit.

III. So now, faith in the world must work. Faith must stand in the world in terms of works in order to be demonstrated as real. The ministers of the church, parents of children, elders are perfectly within their rights to say that faith must be demonstrated by works to be counted as real. Works will not bring faith to life; just as moving the arms of a dead man will not bring him life; but we expect a body to move if it is alive; if it doesn't breathe or have warmth or move or respond we are perfectly justified in having some concern about it.

Abraham is brought forth as an example to illustrate James' theme: faith without works is dead.

I. What does Scripture say about Abraham at the important junctures of his life?

A. When He left Ur of the Chaldees: See Genesis 12; and Gen 15 after the slaughter of the kings.

1. The promise of the blessing upon his seed was the gospel, according to Gal 3:6ff

2. As early as Genesis 15, Abraham has his faith counted as righteousness: before the promise of the covenant was confirmed in Gen. 15; before the birth of Ishmael; before circumcision; before the birth of Isaac.

3. But after leaving Ur; after the promise of the seed and the land; after the blessing of Melchizedek. Abraham has left Ur with his father Terah and uncle Haran at the end of chapter. He was seventy-five when he heard the call of God and left his father's house and country, leaving Haran, to go to the land of Canaan. God pronounced the blessing upon him at this time, that he would make him a great nation and he would bless all the families of the earth. This, is the gospel, according to Gal. 3. He was blessed in receiving the promise, in being counted righteous.

B. When God gave the sign of circumcision: chapter 17. He already had faith It is important to see Romans 4 in this regard. Romans 4:1-25 "before God"

II. What is there about the faith of Abraham that is commendable?

A. It was based on the promise of God alone.

1. He didn't know where he was going.

2. He didn't have any children.

B. He was patient and endured, and did not see the promise.

1. He never owned any land in Palestine, except a grave.
2. Abraham did not know the sons of Jacob, for Jacob and Esau were only 15 when Abraham died. His family was very small then, consisting only of Isaac, Rachel, Jacob and Esau
3. Sarah never even knew Jacob and Esau, for she died several years before Isaac was married.
4. Isaac was very old when Jacob returned from Syria with his family, and died shortly thereafter.
5. Jacob died in Egypt and never owned anything in Canaan except Abraham's gravesite. His family was filled with grief and sorrow. But he was patient and endured also.

C. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all received the promise, believed it and were justified by faith: it was counted unto them for righteousness. They were blessed and believed and lived their lives in terms of their faith in the promises. So must we.

D. Abraham's faith concerned eternal things; things of the heart and mind; things that could be seen only with the senses of the soul.

1. God was his reward
2. The city he looked for was heaven
3. He inherited the Spirit of God: Gal. 3:8-18. Inheritance: "The promise of The Spirit through faith."

God bless you.

Amen and Amen.