

"Justification by Faith Alone III, Abraham, Part Two" James 2:14-24

June 26, 2009
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"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:

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

Intro 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. In the same way, love must be expressed in deeds and words, for only these can be understood by men, who cannot know your heart.

Intro III. So now, faith in the world is works.

A. Faith must stand upon 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.

B. 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 breath or have warmth or move or respond we are perfectly justified in having some concern about it.

C. Works do not make faith real: "Have not we cast out devils, etc. Depart from me." No amount of works will "prove" faith, and guarantee that it is real.

Intro IV. Last week we spoke of Abraham as he left Ur of the Chaldees: His faith was counted for righteousness: The Gospel of Christ was in the promise of the seed. His faith was based on the promise of God alone. He was patient and endured.

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"

There are several things that need to be said about Abraham at this juncture, to amplify the things that we said before. Things that demonstrate the faith of Abraham. Many other people have done the same things that Abraham did, but did not do them by faith and therefore were not justified. Two things I would speak of this morning.

I. Abraham gave public witness of his faith by building an altar as he went from place to place in the land of Canaan.

A. The fact that he did so:

Ge 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Ge 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Ge 13:4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Ge 13:18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

B. The meaning: Gen. 3:15. In a figure: the seed would come and put away sin. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (Joh 8:56 AV) Sacrament: a sign and seal of a promise: given to the world, now narrowed down in Abraham.

II. The Birth of Isaac and the Sacrament of Circumcision.

A. The impatience of Sarai and the birth of Ishmael. Abram was 86; Sarai was 76 She fled from Sarai with her baby, but God told her to go back and submit to Sarai and promised to preserve Ishmael and make a great nation of him. I will have more to say on Ishmael later.

B. The conception of Isaac: Abram was 99 and Sarai was 89

1. The names of Abram and Sarai were changed to Abraham and Sarah

(1) Father to Father of a Multitude

(2) Princess to Noblewoman and exalted women.

2. Circumcision was established.

C. The two-fold meaning of circumcision:

1. A sign of the faith of Abraham, which preceded his circumcision. Romans 4:9-12 he would be the father of all those who believe. Jesus said something very sobering in John 8:38-45

a) A seed was going to come in terms of Gen. 3:15, and He would be from Abraham, according to the promise. Ishmael was not born of the promise and was not the seed.

b) Circumcision emphasized emphatically that the seed was truly coming, but the seed would be the seed of the woman and not the man.

c) Even Isaac could not be the seed, properly speaking, but only in a figure, in a type, for he was born of the seed of the man, his father Abraham, though it was a miracle birth because of the age of Sarah and Abraham. Paul makes this clear in Romans 9:10 for Isaac could not produce a pure offspring.

2. A sign of the horrible and wretched condition of man who could

produce nothing clean, but only pollution and misery. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and circumcision emphatically figured man's awful pollution.

a) Circumcision bound the man who was circumcised to the complete and full obedience of the law of God and therefore placed him under a curse.

b) Don't be deceived: the law cannot be divided into the important and not important. Jesus said this, "not one jot nor..." Paul said it, "Cursed be everyone that continueth not in all things that are" James said it, "Keep the whole law and offend in one...Guilty of it all."

c) Gal. 5:1ff. Jesus is the only escape from the curse of the law. Either Jesus is your master or the law is your master. There is no escape from this: It is not both/and it is either/or.

D. Contrast:

1. The bondage of the law.

a) See. Matt. 5:27-30. Exposition of the law.

b) If you are going to be saved by cutting off the polluted, here is your fate.

2. The liberty in Christ.

a) Romans 12:1,2 Our bodies are to be presented to Christ, because He is our circumcision. He was cut off for us.

b) Explains Romans 6:6ff. He dies no more, and we die no more. You are partakers of the new life of Jesus Christ.

c) We therefore put off the old and put on the new, for we are members of Jesus Christ.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.