

"Justification by Faith Alone V, Abraham, Part Four" James 2:14-24

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

B. 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. Don't be misled by a phony idealism, where good thoughts and intentions pass for virtues. Don't say, depart, be ye warmed and fed. What profit is it?

Intro III. So now, faith in the world is works. True faith always is known of God, because He is the author of it; but works are necessary to demonstrate it on the earth, but to myself and to others.

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 a 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 does 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. All that is caught in the net of the Gospel are good fish; not all that grows in the church is good. At the end of the world the Lord will separate the good from the bad, the wheat from the tares.

Intro IV. Review

A. Two weeks ago 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. God was his reward; The city he looked for was heaven;

B. He inherited the Spirit of God through faith: Gal. 3:8-18. From this inheritance every other blessing came to him. God's great gift to His people is the Spirit of God; and He comes by faith alone.

C. We saw that the sign of circumcision was given to him because of the faith that he had before he was circumcised, so that he is the father of all those who believe, not just the Jews. Circumcision meant two things at least: that man was defiled even at the source and root of his being, but that Messiah would come to put away sin. This is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, who was made sin for, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

D. Last week I spoke of Abraham's wife, Sarah, and the great honor that was given to her to not only be the mother of the promised child, but to prophecy about the nature of the true children of God; that those born of the flesh cannot inherit with those born of the Spirit. Her name was changed from "princess" to "royalty." From a quality to the very thing itself.

Now we come to the heart of the matter. In the matter of the demonstration of Abraham's faith, he comes to the most critical earthly event, the offering up of Isaac. This is not more critical from an eternal perspective, for that was when Abraham believed in Ur of the Chaldees and it was counted to him for righteousness. It is true that the most important event of your life is when you are born again by the Spirit of God. But as far as men are concerned, they can have no evidence that you are a child of God except as how you behave in the critical junctures of your life. With Abraham, the critical events were not his failures: the birth of Ishmael, the journey to Egypt and such things. The event that James uses to show the perfection, or the final flowering of Abraham's faith, is the offering up of Isaac. James puts it: 'faith wrought with his works....' Not works wrought with faith, but faith wrought with works. Works without faith is useless. Faith without works may only sleep for a while, but will ultimately result in works if the faith is real faith. Faith works with works. Works can do nothing about faith. Works may be without faith and such are useless. True faith may for a time be without works, but when faith grows up the works will be manifest. Works are the ripening of faith. True faith will ripen into works; Works will never ripen into faith.

When Peter speaks to us about abundant Christianity, he starts with faith and adds to it. There is no other place to start. Dead faith will produce only dead works or no works. Living faith will quicken works to life; dead works will never quicken dead faith.

Abraham had many good works in his life, but this is his finest hour, and the finest hour of his faith. I want to do three things: 1. Recount the events; 2. Make universal application; 3. Make personal application.

I. To recount the events: Genesis 22

A. God tested Abraham. Vs. 1,2

B. Abraham's obedience. "Early in the morning...:"

C. Abraham, when they could see the place, left the donkey and the servants, put the wood on Isaac, took fire in a pot, a knife, and went on toward the place, Mt. Moriah. Isaac, "Where is the sacrifice?" See Heb. 11: 17 "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

D. God stopped Abraham, and substituted a ram. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." vs. 12 Called the place Jehovah-Jirah. The Lord will provide.

E. God blessed Abraham: vs. 16-18

II. Universal Application

A. Mt. Moriah is the place where Solomon built the temple. David conquered Jerusalem and built his palace on the slopes of Mt. Moriah, called Mt. Zion. The rest remained desolate until after David unwisely numbered the people and God sent an angel with a plague that slew seventy thousand people. David entreated the Lord, repented, and the angel stopped near the threshing floor of the Jebusite that still owned what is now the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. God told David to build an altar there and offer sacrifices to God. The Jebusite offered to give the land to David, but he refused, saying that he would not offer to God that which cost him nothing.

1. Later Solomon would build the temple there. This was the exact place where Abraham built an altar to sacrifice Isaac.

2. It represented heavenly things, according to Hebrews; God himself. The sacrifices there pointed to Christ, the only begotten Son of God who was to be offered up to God as an atonement for sins.

B. Isaac is a figure of the Lord Jesus, the one conceived by the Holy Spirit in the body of the Virgin Mary. He is God's only begotten Son. God has many created sons, just as Abraham had children born of the flesh, but only Isaac is the elect of God, as Christ is. Only those in Christ will be saved.

C. Isaac is the incarnation of every promise that God made Abraham. The whole meaning of his life was wrapped up in the son, Isaac. Every promise of God,

every long journey, every trial, the banishment of Ishmael; all of this had meaning only in Isaac. Isaac was the incarnation of every promise of God to Abraham, it seemed. But what was only a figure in Isaac, is real in Jesus Christ, who is the Word made Flesh, who dwelt among us.

D. Another very important difference: When God gave up His only begotten Son, and He was lifted upon on the cross to bear the sins of the world, there was no ram hidden in the thicket to take his place. All the other things pointed to this day, and there was no escape for the Lord Jesus, He must drink the cup to its bitter dregs, for His soul was made an offering for sin.

E. God did raise Christ from the dead, showing that he accept the sacrifice. He accepted Abraham's sacrifice, for He could see the faith in his heart, even though it was not possible that God would accept the offering up of a sinful human as a sacrifice.

F. As Abraham is blessed and happy in the expression of his love for God, so God is blessed in the offering up of the blood of Jesus Christ for sins. 1Pe 1:3 "Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...."

G. As God would fulfill his promise to Abraham and give him a numerous seed, so God would bring many sons to glory by the death of Jesus Christ, as Hebrews 2: 10 "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

III. Personal Application:

A. Just as Abraham must separate between God and his gifts, so must we. The test for Abraham was whether he worshipped God or Isaac. Unquestionably Isaac was a gift from God and represented all the promises of God. But God alone is to be worshipped.

B. It is right and proper for us to worship Christ, for He is God. He is God and also the gift of God. But the gifts of Christ are often taken away, or obscured, to test our faith just as God tested Abraham. God will not tolerate a rival, for He knows what havoc idols make in our lives. He will destroy our idols so that we worship Him alone.

C. If Abraham is to fulfill the image of God, the image of His heavenly Father, Abraham must give up his son, for God have up His son. Abraham did not earn his salvation by offering up His son, for that could not be earned, but is the gift of faith.

D. The faith that saves, however, is the work of the Holy Spirit, who begins His

good work in faith, but continues it in the sanctification of the heart. It is the Holy Spirit who works in us to conform us to the image of Christ, who loves the Lord His God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. So the Holy Spirit works to remove idols from our lives, that we might worship Him alone and trust in Him alone.

E. Romans 12:1,2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Ro 12:1-2 AV)

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

1Jo 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Lu 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.