

Scripture (NKJV)

¹⁹You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! ²⁰But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ²⁵Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Outline

- James turns to deal with faith that is illegitimate before God.
- The works that James writes of are different than the works Paul denounces in Rom 11:5-6.
- Likewise, the faiths Paul and James are dealing with are totally different in nature.
- Abraham responded in his faith, and God saw him Justified by his faith, made complete in his works.
- Jesus is the Deliverance, existing from the beginning in God's Salvation Plan.
- The faith and subsequent works Abraham exhibited are the very same we must exhibit.
- Once Saved by this faith, God deals with us no longer as criminals, but as legally Righteous.
- Faith is an intangible, yet essential, connection between us and our Salvation, and must be proofed in us.

Lesson

James turns to deal with faith that is illegitimate before God. **'You believe that there is one God. You do well.'** – Everyone is aware of God, (**Rom 1:20**) and we all have faith in something; we are of the Kingdom or the other. (**Matthew 13:38**) Even someone who professes no alliance in faith to anyone or anything has faith that there is nothing to have faith in. The dividing line will not be over whether we possess a faith, for we all do; the question will center on whom our faith lays upon. **'Even the demons believe - and tremble!'** They too, have a faith, a faith in that God is Who He is and that He will do what they know to be true - their ultimate eternal banishment and punishment. (**Matt 8:29**) They have good reason to tremble! For them, the problem again is not that they lack even a faith in God – it is that they lack a Saving faith in the Lord Jesus. The Bible makes no indication of any means of Redemption for the fallen of the Heavenly Host, and if not, because the Father has not Willed it. Salvation is offered only to mankind, not to them.

The works that James writes of are different than the works Paul denounces in Rom 11:5-6. Paul's works are those intended, though unsuccessfully, to satisfy God's Law and earn Justification. James' works, on the other hand, are borne out of faith here on the other side of Justification, through Jesus' Work on the Cross. In the same way, the faiths Paul and James are dealing with are totally different in nature. Paul's faith is that germ, that seed, that God puts in the heart of the sinner at the moment he is convicted by the Word, sees Jesus as the Savior, and calls out to Him for Mercy to be Saved. This is a Holy Gift from God, the first gracious act evident to the newly repentant sinner Saved by this very faith. James is dealing with all other faiths, which are dead and condemning before God.

'But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?' – Shall he prove to us that a true Saving faith must exhibit a response of good works to be proven to be of any use? Then consider the acts of faith in Abraham – **'Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?'** Four days earlier, God instructed Abraham to prepare to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. (**Gen 22:2**) Note that God gave Abraham plenty of time to stew about this, yet Abraham did not waver. It is one thing to act on impulse, even in obedience. But given any amount of time to consider, our tendency would probably be to rationalize God's Will out of His Command. Isaac was His promise fulfilled; he represented not only Abraham's assurance of a God of promises kept, but also the only son he would ever have. Through it all, Abraham looked to a God he knew is Pure, Holy, and Righteous, and Whose direction and intent were always the highest priority to uphold – even in the face of the most severe opportunity for doubt and distress. So, Abraham followed through - he set out to obey, and as he was about to slay his beloved son, bound on the alter, the Angel of the LORD stayed his hand. (**Gen 22:12**) **'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him**

for righteousness.' – Abraham responded in his faith, and God saw him Justified by his faith, made complete in his works.

How is it that someone of the time before Jesus' ministry could hope to be Saved? How, if one didn't have the person of Jesus to call on, Who hadn't yet been crucified? In this question lays another question of how Abraham was accounted as righteous before God, but the answer to both is the same. Abraham believed, had faith in God's Deliverance, though he had not yet realized or received the tangibles of what God has promised him. For both Abraham, and us of this generation under the New Covenant, Jesus is that Deliverance, existing from the beginning in God's Plan. (2 Tim 1:9-10) Abraham's faith was complete, made perfect or whole, when he responded to the faith he had in God. His response in faith, his works, qualified his faith before God – and so God credited his belief and works to his righteousness as being genuine. **'Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect (complete)? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."**

So what, as children of Abraham, might this have to do with us? Don't we have the Person of Jesus to look to, His name to call on? The faith and subsequent works Abraham exhibited are the very same we must exhibit, if we are to be found to be truly children of God. James has focused on this issue of faith and works for good reason. Our understanding of faith, it's nature and role in Redemption, and it's affirmation in us, is paramount. And because of this, James exhorts us to seek solid proof through works, so that we do not deceive ourselves.

At our Redemption - that point where we first believed in Jesus, turned away from our sin, and called on His Name for Mercy - we each were legally Justified, or no longer held accountable for the payment (eternal punishment) for our sins. Jesus' Work on the Cross satisfied God's Justice which demands that all sins are paid for. In the case of the believer, Jesus has already endured the eternal punishment on his or her account, long before that believer would ever have to face Judgment. And because of that, at least two issues are now true. First, Jesus has bought us our freedom by His personal payment for what we will owe – and because of this, we are now His possession. Second, as God's Justice looks forward to the Judgment, we are recognized as Justified, legally free of the debt of our sin. And because of our new standing, God deals with us no longer as criminals, but as legally Righteous.

So, where is the role of works in this? Jesus holds our Redemption and only escape from eternal punishment. And the only way we might receive this is by true faith in only Him. And thus, this is why James goes to such lengths to have us always testing and proofing the reality of our faith, an intangible yet essential connection between us and our Salvation. James shows us the barometer of good works, in response to a Saving faith, through a personal relationship with the Holy Son. **'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

Cited Scripture

Rom 1:20

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Matthew 13:38

The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

Matthew 8:29

And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Genesis 22:2

Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Genesis 22:12

And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

2 Tim 1:9-10

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, ¹⁰but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,