

I. Introduction.**II. Our father Abraham was saved by a working faith. v. 21-24 Gen. 15:6 22:1ff**

- A. Paul and James seem to be saying opposite things about Abraham. v. 21 Rom. 4:1-5**
1. In what sense was Abraham justified by works?
 2. The key to understanding this challenging passage is to understand that the Greek word (*dikaioo*), translated *justified*, has two possible meanings.
 3. *Justified* often means *declared righteous before God*. Rom. 3:20,24,28,30 4:2,5 5:1,9 Gal. 2:16 3:11 Titus 3:7
 4. *Justified* also can mean *vindicated or proven*. v. 21,24 Mt. 11:19 12:37 I Ti. 3:16
- B. Abraham is the paradigm of justification (being declared righteous by God) by faith alone. v. 23 Gen. 15:6 Rom. 4:1ff Gal. 3:6-9**
1. God had called Abraham to leave his homeland to live as a pilgrim in the land of promise. Gen. 12:1-4 Heb. 11:8-9
 2. Many years later the Lord appeared to Abraham promising him a son and heir in his old age. Gen. 15:1-5
 3. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Gen. 15:6 Rom. 4:17-22
 4. It is significant that Abraham was declared righteous:
 - a. Before he received the ceremonial sign of the covenant. Gen. 17:1ff Ro. 4:9ff
 - b. Before his greatest act of faith. Gen. 22:1ff
 5. Abraham's faith is the pattern for all whom God saves. Rom. 4:1-5,9-12
 - a. The ultimate object of his faith was in God's promised Messiah. Heb. 11:13 John 8:56 Gal. 3:16
 - b. God has always saved His people by means of faith alone, apart from our works or outward ceremonies. Rom. 4:1-5,9-12 Eph. 2:8-9
 6. Abraham is our spiritual father also! 2:21 Rom. 4:11-12,16 Gal. 3:6-7,29,26
 7. Abraham could not have been declared righteous based upon his works because he was a sinner. 2:10-11 Rom. 3:20 Gen. 16:1ff 20:1ff 12:11ff Josh 24:2
 8. Jesus obeyed the Father and lived as a sojourner in the world. John 1:10-11
- C. Abraham's faithful devotion to God was *justified* (proven real and vindicated) by his willingness to offer up his only son as a sacrifice. v. 21-22 Gen. 22:1f Heb. 11:17-19**
1. This great act of obedience could not have been the means by which Abraham was declared righteous by God because that declaration had already taken place many years earlier. Gen. 15:6 22:1ff
 2. The call to offer up Isaac was a very great test of faith. 1:2ff Gen. 22:1-10
 3. Abraham's obedience was an act which proved (demonstrated) his faith to be genuine. Gen. 22:11-12 Heb. 11:17ff
 4. What Abraham was willing to do, God actually did. Gen. 22:13-14,8 John 3:16 I John 4:10 Acts 2:23 Isa. 53:10 Heb. 11:17 9:28 10:11-12
 5. You will face tests in this life which will give you the opportunity to prove your faith. 1:2ff 4:4 Mark 8:34-37 Ro. 12:2 Pr. 3:5-6 II Tim. 3:12
- D. Abraham's works were the fruit of his faith. v. 22 Heb. 11:8-10,17-19**
1. Faith and good works are not opposed to one another.
 2. Faith promotes and produces works. v. 22a Eph. 2:8-10
 3. Abraham's example illustrates the point that faith precedes works. Phil. 1:6
 4. Abraham's faith was perfected (brought to its goal) by his works. v. 22

- E. Abraham's faith was fulfilled by his works. v.23 John 15:14
 - 1. Abraham's faith in Genesis 15:16 is like a prophecy of great things to come which was fulfilled many years later in Genesis 22.
 - 2. Abraham's faith was a full commitment to God. Mark 8:34
 - 3. When someone is converted among us we expect great things (fruit). Phil. 1:6

- F. True faith is always accompanied by works. v. 24
 - 1. Again, James is using the words *works* and *justified* different sense from the usual Pauline usage. Ro. 3:28 4:1ff
 - a. James is not saying that we are declared righteous by works. Eph. 2:8-9 Gal. 2:16 John 3:16
 - b. But that our works will vindicate our profession of faith. Eph. 2:10 Gal. 5:6
 - 2. Abraham's example proves that true faith and works always go together.
 - 3. Abraham can be called both father of the faithful and the father of the obedient.
 - 4. Those claiming to be children of Abraham should imitate both his faith and his works. John 8:39

III. Rahab the harlot was also saved by an authentic faith which produced works. v. 25

- A. Why does James use Rahab (of all people) as an example? Heb. 11:31

- B. No-one would claim that Rahab earned salvation by the virtuous life she lived. God is often pleased to choose the worst of sinners. Lu. 18:13 Mt. 21:31 I Ti. 1:13ff

- C. She turned from her pagan gods to trust in the LORD God of Israel. Josh. 2:9-13 Luke 7:37ff 23:42

- D. Her faith was *justified* (proven real and vindicated) by her willingness to risk her life to protect the Israelite spies. Josh. 2:15ff Heb. 11:31
 - 1. What would be concluded if Rahab had turned in the spies to save her own skin?
 - 2. Instead, her living faith offered help to God's people in need. v. 16
 - 3. Genuine faith works for all who possess it.
 - 4. Like Abraham, she is honored for her working faith. Josh. 6:25 Mt. 1:5 He. 11:31

- E. Through faith, God can transform your life like He did that of Rahab.

IV. Conclusion. v. 26

- A. A true living faith will always produce works. v. 26,17,20
- B. Is your faith working? Are you Jesus' friend? John 15:14-15 Phil. 1:6

Discussion questions

1. In what two ways can the Greek word translated *justified* be understood?
How is James using this word in 2:21,24?
2. How does Paul prove that Abraham is the paradigm of justification (being declared righteous) by faith apart from works or ceremonies?
3. What does James mean when he says that Abraham was justified by works?
4. Why did James choose Rahab as his second example?
5. How do we know that Rahab had faith?
6. How was Rahab's faith proven?
7. How can Paul's teaching about faith be harmonized with that of James?
8. How does someone become the friend of God?
Are you a friend of God?