

**September 1, 2024**

**God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing**

**The Book of James – Pt. 4 (James 2:20--26)**

***An Authentic Faith is an Active Loving Faith***

*Faith Sacrifices – Faith Risks*

Today we continue with God's Good News Story in the Book of James, Part 3. James is considered to be one of the earliest books of the New Testament written. We are introduced to him in the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Acts where he is heading a Church Council to give guidance to the gentile Churches. He along with the elder leader group pens a short but powerful letter to be read in these church. It is estimated that James wrote his longer letter (the New Testament Book of James) by the mid-40's AD.

**The Book of James** is about developing Authentic Faith that is characterized by Wisdom, Patience, Obedience, Self-Control, Love & Action.

**This type of faith will result in Walking with God in Right Relationship and Living with One Another in Right Relationship.**

**Warren Wiersbe states this:** (p. 355)

***“Faith is not believing in spite of evidence,  
Faith is obeying in spite of consequence”***

Also

***Faith Leads to Action***

**Another way to describe the book so far is:**

**Faith Perseveres & Faith Obeys**

**Faith Loves & Faith Works**

***Today We Discover Two More Faith Actions***

**Faith Sacrifices & Faith Risks**

## **FAITH SACRIFICES**

**James 2:18-24**...<sup>18</sup> *But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* <sup>19</sup> *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.* <sup>20</sup> *But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless?* <sup>21</sup> *Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* <sup>22</sup> *You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;* <sup>23</sup> *and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called a friend of God.* <sup>24</sup> *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

Verses 18 & 19 were part of the message 2 weeks ago, but I wanted to repeat them just to set the stage.

In this passage as well as the following verses (25-26) we are introduced to two Old Testament heroes that James uses to teach us some lessons on Active Faith.

In this 1<sup>st</sup> section of verses 18-24, we are re-introduced to the Old Testament Hero – Abraham. He is known for his willingness to be faithful to God in his works and actions. His willingness to SACRIFICE his son Isaac a prime example of Faith that is willing to sacrifice anything in obedience to God.

Let's look at this passage and see what we can learn about sacrificial active faith.

Platt (pp. 48-57) gives us these points to note:

### **Two Pictures of Faith**

- Useless/Dead Faith (Of the Unserved)
- Living/Active Faith (Of the Saved)

We must remember James appears to not be “contrasting mature faith with immature or lukewarm faith. He is contrasting genuine living, active faith with a merely ‘professed Faith’ that is not really a true faith. It is based simply on words or mental, intellectual assent. This latter type of “faith” is a form of self-deception.

With that in mind we must honestly evaluate our ‘faith’, is it a true heart, soul mind and action faith or is it just an intellectual and mental set of facts.

### **Two Pictures of Righteousness**

- Positional Righteousness – How We Stand Before God.
- Practical Righteousness – How We Live Before God.

According to my understanding of the scripture, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior... You are made right before God through grace. Christ then imputes, grants and clothes us in HIS righteousness. We are **positionally** ‘righteous’ before God in Christ.

**Practical Righteousness** refers to the way we live and act before God and others in our daily living.

We need to distinguish between these two when James speaks about ‘righteousness’. Just to remind you - Our Practical Righteousness should reflect our positional Righteousness. We should act like we are saved!

### **Two Pictures of Works**

- Works of the Flesh (Do not honor God)
- Works of Spirit (Brings Glory to God)

There are those who claim to be people of faith that have ‘works’, but these works are not of the spirit but of their own flesh and desire. Legalism is a form of this. Legalism can be described as believing that the act of doing something to try and earn the favor of God will bring salvation with God. Works are not the means of salvation but the fruit. Faith produces works which completes faith!

### **Two Pictures of Justification**

Initial Justification

Final Justification

*<sup>21</sup> Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?*

Justification is a big theological word that many may struggle to fully understand. “It is a forensic or judicial, legal term where God pardons all the sins of those who have placed their faith in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous on the eye of the Law of God”. (Biblegateway.com.dictionary) In a simple phrase justification means to be ‘declared right with God’, or another way to remember is this “Just as if it never happened”

Initial justification refers to our pardon at the point of our salvation the inception. Final justification refers to what happens on the day of judgment when all the actions of our life are reviewed, and pardon is acknowledged. James seems to refer in this passage to the Final Justification and encourages true people of faith to live a life of faithful obedient works.,

## **Two Truths to Remember**

Salvation is by Grace Through Faith  
Authentic Faith is Active, Obedient & Loving

These points are self-evident and summary in nature and need no further commentary, other than Abraham is an excellent example for us to follow in having an Active Loving Sacrificial Faith.

Let's now close out with the 2<sup>nd</sup> portrait of Active Loving Faith – Rahab.

### **Faith Risks**

**James 2:25-26**...<sup>25</sup> *In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works also when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?* <sup>26</sup> *For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

You may not be as aware of Rahab as you were of Abraham. Rahab is in many ways the exact opposite of Abraham. She was a woman, a Gentile woman, and a Gentile woman of questionable character. I think James may have used these two opposites to show the wideness and magnitude of God's grace.

### **Point to Note:**

No matter who you are, what you've done, God can restore and redeem you and use you for His Glory if you are willing to trust God and take Risks in Faith.

We have looked at how Faith Sacrifices now let's look to Rahab and see how FAITH RISKS

A little background on Rahab. In the Old Testament book of Joshua, we find the Israelites entering the Promised Land after 40 years in the Wilderness. As they crossed the Jordan River into the land, they began their military campaign to drive out the pagan, heathen inhabitants and claim the land promised by God. They came to the well-known and well-fortified town of Jericho. It was famous for its massive walls and the prideful arrogance of the inhabitants. Joshua sent two spies in to survey the town, they almost got captured but a woman – Innkeeper/Harlot by the name of Rahab had heard of the great works of God on behalf of the Israelites and appears to have developed a desire to follow and obey Yahweh. She offered to hide the spies with the promise of the salvation of her family and herself. This is a brave example of FAITH THAT RISKS. She made her decision to side with God and His people not yet knowing the outcome of the ensuing battle. She RISKED everything and placed her faith in God and that Obedient Action Based Faith procured for her salvation and justification before God.

Time does not allow us to go any longer but let's summarize. **Abraham & Rahab** are examples of people who had an active, vibrant obedient faith in God, and were made 'right' or 'justified' with God.

***Christ is the Basis of our Justification – Faith is the Means of Our Justification – Works Are the Evidence of Our Justification***

So, the question is...Are you a person of Authentic Active Obedient Loving Faith? Is your faith evident in your daily life and actions? Maybe today is the day to settle that question.!

**The following references were utilized in preparation of this message:**

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