

James 2:21-26

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Verse 21: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” See also Heb. 11:17-19 for more commentary on these events of Genesis chapter 22. Did Abraham EARN his salvation? No, of course not. But Abraham was still REQUIRED to OBEY God, and these events attest to his faithfulness!

Verse 22: “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” That is, faith and works go hand in hand! You can’t have true faith without works, and true works of obedience won’t be found in the absence of faith!

Verse 23: “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.” This is referencing Gen. 15:6. What kind of belief was imputed unto Abraham as righteousness? Certainly not a belief that without works was dead (James 2:20)! No, Abraham’s belief which was imputed as righteousness was an OBEDIENT belief!

Verse 24: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Faith only doesn’t save! (Neither do works only save). The Bible is clear that faith and works go hand in hand! You can have one without the other! Incidentally, this may be the most unpopular verse in the whole Bible for those who espouse the faith only position. How can they get around this? It’s “un-get-over-able,” as the old-time preachers like to say! But the denominationalists try to find a way around it. Surely the good and honest heart can see, however, that God demands more than just faith (belief) for one to be justified (saved)!

Verse 25: “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” See also Heb. 11:31 for more commentary on these events of Joshua chapters 2 and 6. Again, Rahab was not saved simply by mere belief in the God of Israel, but by her ACTIONS of hiding the spies of Israel, actions that she performed because of her faith.

Verse 26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” When a soul departs from the body, the body dies. If works were to depart from faith, it would cease to be true faith, and faith would instead be dead. This too, we might say, is “un-get-over-able.” In fact, the whole chapter of James chapter 2 is “un-get-over-able!” How anyone could read James chapter 2 and come away still believing in the faith only position is beyond me! The faith only doctrine simply isn’t so!