
DEAD OR ALIVE - BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF LIVING FAITH

JAMES 2:20-26



FRUITLESS FAITH IS A FOOLISH CONCEPT (2:20)

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

- James does not buffer his assessment of this belief, calling any who hold to it *foolish*.
- James will show that such an opinion is both empty-handed and empty-headed.
- Attempts to lower the expectations of what God's saving grace in Jesus accomplishes is far from wise.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM PRODUCES OBSERVABLE FRUIT (2:21-23)

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

- Abraham's fruitful faith should fill hearts with anticipation of God's power and productivity in and through His people!
- Abraham is the father of all those who place their saving hope and trust in Jesus Christ.
 - Romans 4:13–16
- Prior to his circumcision, Abraham trusted God and found himself declared righteous before God by faith.
 - Genesis 12:1–3
 - Genesis 15:5–6

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM PRODUCES OBSERVABLE FRUIT (2:21-23)

- God built Abraham's faith in God's faithfulness so that Abraham's faith produces observable obedience.
- This verse is where many see tension between James and Paul.
- In Romans 4, Paul is describing the initiation of justification while James is describing the manifestation of justification.
 - Romans 4:1–9
- What God initiates by grace through faith (Paul) God displays by grace through trusting and obeying (James).
- From the beginning man does not contribute any aspect of personal works or aid to his salvation.
 - Ephesians 2:8–9
- As faith develops and matures, God's grace empowers obedience and love as works that verify the reality of saving faith.
 - Ephesians 2:10

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM PRODUCES OBSERVABLE FRUIT (2:21-23)

22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

- Faith for Abraham was not just mental assent to truths and understandings about God.
- The works that faith put on display were accomplishing their God-given goal – bringing glory to God and delight and satisfaction to Abraham.

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

- The righteousness that is credited to Abraham is positional and practically powerful.
- The unfolding of the story of Abraham in Scripture gives us the opportunity to see the fruit of faith in his life.
- Isaiah 41:8
 - A friend of God is one who walks with God.
 - A friend is someone you connect with in life and action, not just thoughts and feelings.

THOSE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD BY FAITH WILL PRODUCE WORKS CONFIRMING THEIR RIGHTEOUS STANDING (2:24)

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- James and Paul do not contradict one another.
 - Romans 3:28
- Paul's assertion is that the declaration of righteousness is not the result of synergistic activity between people and God.
- James wants remove the idea that someone can come to Jesus by faith and it not make a difference in the way they think AND the way they live.
- Consistently inactive faith is not saving faith.
 - James 2:18

THE FAITH OF RAHAB PRODUCES OBSERVABLE FRUIT (2:25)

25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

- God set apart Abraham from paganism and idolatry to gift him righteousness and make him the father of many nations.
- God set apart Rahab from paganism and sexual immorality to gift her righteousness for the glory of God's name through the victory of His people.
- Faith is real for Rahab and she puts it on display by protecting the spies and their mission.
- Her faith was accompanied by observable works that show her faith is real and sincere.

WORKS ARE THE UNAVOIDABLE EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE (2:26)

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

- Any physical body separated from the spirit is dead.
- Faith without works is no different.
- A simple profession of faith is not saving faith.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do you see biblically that fruitless faith is a foolish idea?
- As you are empowered by the grace of God, what observable fruit of faith is He producing in and through your life?
- In what ways are you showing that the fruit of faith is not a burden but a blessing?

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