

Abraham and Rahab **James 2:21-26 (NKJV)**

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And 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. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

As I said last week no two people had less in common than Abraham and Rahab.

Both were well known people from Israel's history. Although Abraham was without a doubt much better known than Rahab.

Today among Christians both are well known while Abraham is known better.

Of course one was a man and the other a woman.

Abraham was rich with many servants and possessions, yet Rahab was without doubt much poorer.

God appeared to Abraham directly while to Rahab indirectly through stories and current events.

Abraham's revelation was a call to action to leave his homeland and go place that God would reveal to him. While Rahab received no such call but volunteered her help to those men who she believed to be servants of God.

Both of their obedience came with a cost or potential cost. Abraham placed himself in the hands of God by going into a country where he was a stranger and a wanderer. He put himself in a place where he could have been overwhelmed by the inhabitants at any time.

Rahab could have been found hiding the spies which would have led to her punishment or death of herself and her family.

Abraham lived in safety and peace in his fathers house but still had to make a choice to leave his family and follow the leading of the Lord. Rahab live in the last days of Jericho and she knew that her city was to be destroyed and she sided with the invaders and God.

There are many ways in which they are different and similar. How many can you find. Let us look at their stories and see that both had faith that produced works that gave evidence of that faith.

I. Abraham.

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was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

B. Abraham was Justified

1. Some might use the word saved but this has to do with his relationship with God.
2. Abraham like everyone else was born a sinner and needed to repent.
3. But the question is when will those around him know when he has repented.
4. Repentance is a change of mind and heart which only God can judge if that has happened.
5. The same way with faith. Only God can tell if a person has faith.
6. That is what James is all about.
 - a. You can't see faith except by its works.
 - b. God sees faith the moment it begins for God looks on the heart.

C. When he offered up Isaac.

1. It is interesting that James does not say that he was justified when he obeyed God by following God's command to leave his family.
2. Instead James picks the most dramatic action in Abraham's life.
3. But when did that happen?
 - a. It was about 40 years after Abraham obeyed and left the land of Ur, the land of his family.
 - b. Genesis 15:5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
 - c. It is not until about 40 years later that he offered up Isaac.
 - d. It is not until Genesis 22 that we find the offering up of Isaac.
4. To James this is the most significant thing that Abraham ever did to prove that he had total trust, complete faith in God.
5. Without a doubt this is the event of supreme obedience.
 - a. Genesis 22:11 ¶ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from

heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."
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."

- D. The truth of one's faith is seen best in his greatest trial.
1. It is easy to believe if it costs us nothing.
 2. If we only have to invest a little time on Sunday, put our tithe in the offering plate, that is not too much.
 3. But when the dark days come and the ocean waves beat against us, that is the telling of the steadfastness of our faith.
 4. Many do not pass the test.
 5. Not because their trials are greater than others, but because their faith is being tried to see if it is alive or dead and not active.
 6. Some are having their faith tried during the days of this pandemic.
 7. Many have lost their jobs, and are on the brink of financial ruin.
 8. And they want to blame God and they do.
 9. They had a dead faith, one that could not stand the test.
 10. I would say that some who struggle with disaster are not faithless but instead God is working of their faith to grow it.

II. Rahab

- A. Rahab came along much later in history.
1. The children of Israel have come up out of Egypt and after 40 years of wondering in the desert they have take all the land on the east of the Jordan and have now crossed the Jordan to begin the western crusade.
 2. Evidently she is either old enough to have heard of all of that or at least heard the people talk about these strange people delivered from slavery in Egypt only to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.
 3. Joshua 2:8-13 (NKJV) 8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there

remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

4. What if she had said all of that and then told the spies that she would have to turn them over to the authorities to protect herself and her family.
 - a. Her faith would be like that of many professing Christians today who say they believe but choose to not follow the teachings of the Lord.
 - b. Of to profess to know Jesus but deny Him in our actions.
 - c. A dead faith does not save. Instead it condemns the very person who claims it.

The two illustrations by James show the consistent effectiveness of the gospel at all times. Here both sexes are reached. Here two extremes of moral behavior are seen. Here the grace of God is doing its work in the hearts of Jew and Gentile alike. No matter what one's past has been, religiously, morally, socially, or otherwise, if any one will truly and sincerely believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved. If he is truly saved, good works, according to the Word of God, will follow.

Lehman Strauss, *Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 117.