

Title: The Believer's Vital Faith Part 2

Text: James 2:20-26

Main Idea: Examine yourself as God reveals the critical differences between dead faith and living faith.

Division Statements:

1. Living faith is marked by righteous works (vv. 21-24).

Note: The example given does not deny the doctrine of justification by faith, because the author is talking about the “vindication” of faith, not before God but before man (“show me” in verse 18). ἐδικαιώθη can be understood perfectly well as the demonstration that someone is δίκαιος , *vindicated, shown to be righteous* (See Luke 10.29 for another example). Thus, Abraham was “justified” before God by faith (v. 23; Gen. 15:6) and declared so by God many years before offering up Isaac (v. 21; Gen. 22), but this justification was not proven fully before men until his marvelous act of obedience that revealed a new heart with its vital and living faith. James and Paul, then, are perfectly consistent.

Abraham's faith was “made perfect” (τελειόω (teleioo) - to bring to an end, to complete, perfect) in the sense that just as a fruit tree has not arrived at its goal until it bears fruit, so faith has not reached its end until it demonstrates itself in a righteous life.

2. Living faith is marked by self-denying works (vv. 21, 25).

Note: Just as Abraham was ready to lose his son Isaac for the sake of God, Rahab risked her life and gave up everything because of her belief in God.

3. Living faith is marked by vital works (v. 26).

Note: When I use the word vital, I mean that which is lively, energetic and essential. The illustration of verse 26 brings home the point that faith which is real is an enlivening and energizing force. It is a force that stirs the soul, that deeply burdens the heart, that burns in the emotions, that reaps a harvest of deep inwrought changes in personality and practice, that builds courage and fortifies the soul against enemies and difficulties. It is a lively overcoming strength of heart.

Copyright © 2009 Chris Rice

Permissions:

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material for use as sermon or lesson notes. For such use, you may feel free to alter the wording as necessary to meet your teaching needs. You are also permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in other formats provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction and give appropriate attribution to the author. For web posting, a link to this document on www.fearingthelord.com is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved in writing by the author prior to use.

For all formats other than handouts to be used in the personal delivery of sermons or lessons, please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Chris Rice. © 2009 Chris Rice. Website: fearingthelord.com