

TODAY, ~ WE BRING OUR STUDY OF JAMES' MINI-ESSAY ON FAITH AND WORKS, ~ IN vss 14-26 to a close.

TO KEEP BIG PICTURE IN MIND, ~ LET'S ONCE AGAIN REVIEW ~ JAMES' PREMISE IN this mini-essay.

▶▶ A claim of saving faith, ~ i.e., ~ a claim to be a Christian ~ without the tangible evidence of its reality ~ cannot save. ⇔⇔ **Not genuine.**

▶▶ Genuine Christian faith ~ always ~ displays the tangible evidence of its reality.

▷▷ It may start out small, ~ when a person is first saved.

↳↳ But as a genuine Christian matures spiritually, ~ tangible evidence piles up.

▷▷ Will be times gen believer shrink back into sin.

↳↳ But looking at their lives overall, ~ tangible evidence will be unmistakable.

ALSO, ~ RECALL IN VSS 18-25, ~ AS NOTED, ~ JAMES USES THE STYLE ~ of a dialogue with an imaginary objector.

▶▶ In vss 18-19 ~ dealt with two misconceptions about faith ~ that are held ~ by this imaginary objector. ⇔⇔ **And some actual people.**

▷▷ Attacked the supposition ~ that there are two different ways of approaching God.

▷▷ and repudiated the notion ~ that faith consists solely ~ in believing certain doctrines to be true. 1/16 ↴↴

▶▶ Then to strengthen his case even further, ~ in vss 20-25, ~ he introduces ~ ¶¶

▷▷ two scriptural examples, ~ to show ~ that genuine faith ~ is always accompanied ~ ¶¶

↳↳ by the tangible evidence ~ of its reality.

AFTER HIS IMAGINARY DIALOGUE, ~, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ in vs 26 as noted, ~ James signals the end of this mini-essay ~ by offering an illustration from daily life.

NOW LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION ~ to finishing our study of James' mini-essay on faith and works.

▶▶ Vss 20-26.

IN VS 20 (NIV), ~ JAMES CONTINUES HIS DIALOGUE WITH AN IMAGINARY OBJECTOR ~ with a frontal attack on the objector.

YOU FOOLISH PERSON, ~ DO YOU WANT EVIDENCE ~ THAT FAITH WITHOUT DEEDS ~ is useless?

▶▶ In asking this question, ~ James sets himself up to demonstrate his arg. further ~ ¶¶

▷▷ by way of appeal to Scripture in vss 21-25.

▶▶ The rebuke of an imaginary opponent ~ ¶¶

▷▷ was a customary feature of ancient argument. 2/16 ¶¶

JAMES ASKS HIS IMAGINARY OPPONENT ~ IF HE WOULD LIKE TO BE SHOWN ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that faith without works is useless.

▶▶ The word translated ~ *useless* ~ means, ~ literally, ~ 'not-working', ~ or 'idle.'

▶▶ Jesus used it ~ to describe workers who had not been hired for the day

▷▷ Matt. 20:3, 6.

JAMES' CHOICE OF THIS WORD HERE MEANING ~ NOT-WORKING, ~ creates a pointed play on words.

▶▶ He's saying, ~ *faith that has no works ~ does not work!*"

▶▶ The verse restates the main point of the entire section.

▷▷ A claim to have saving faith ~ without the tangible evidence of its reality, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ does not 'save' (v. 14), ~ does no good (v. 16), ~ it is 'dead' (vv. 17, 26) ~ ¶¶

→→ and it is useless, ~ in that it is unproductive (vs 20).

JAMES' MANNER OF ADDRESSING HIS IMAGINED OPPONENT IS BLUNT, ~ TO SAY THE least.

▶▶ The Greek adjective translated ~ "*foolish*" ~ means ~ "*empty*."

▷▷ It refers to a deficiency ~ that is intellectual. 3/16 ¶¶

▷▷ But in the theological and moral context of the NT ~ ¶¶

↪↪ the term also has ~ a moral and spiritual aspect.

▶▶ So James ~ addresses his imagined opponent ~ as one who has ~ no comprehension ~ of spiritual truth.

▶▶ The opponent speaks ~ out of ignorance.

▷▷ And all ~ who follow or teach ~ this line of thinking ~ do so as well.

▶▶ I.e., ~ anyone ~ who argues that a claim of faith ~ absent the tangible evidence of its reality ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is saving faith, ~ has ~ no comprehension of sp. truth.

▶▶ The opponent does not see ~ "faith that has no works ~ does not work!"

▷▷ He fails to see ~ that it accomplishes nothing.

THEN JAMES TURNS TO HIS 2 SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES TO PROVE HIS ARGUMENT.

ABRAHAM & RAHAB.

▶▶ He begins with Abraham.

²¹ WAS NOT ABRAHAM OUR FATHER ~ JUSTIFIED BY WORKS ~ ¶¶

WHEN HE OFFERED UP HIS SON ISAAC ON THE ALTAR? ⇨⇨ Gen. 22:1-19. 4/16 ¶¶

▶▶ The verb translated ~ *justified* ~ can also be translated as ~ *vindicated* ~ or ~ *shown to be righteous*.

▶▶ It is used this way in other places in the NT.

▷▷ E.g., ~ *Matt. 11:19b*, ~ But wisdom *is proved right* by her deeds.

▶▶ *Shown to be righteous* ~ a different nuance of justified ~ from *declared righteous*, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ which is how Paul often ~ though not exclusively ~ used the word.

▶▶ Again, ~ do not automatically read James with Paul's definitions in mind.

▷▷ This is unfair to both authors.

▷▷ And not a good way to conduct Bible study.

▷▷ In studying James, ~ the question is ~ not ~ how does Paul ~ use these words?

↳↳ But, ~ how does James ~ use these words ~ in his epistle?

▶▶ James ~ is not saying ~ that when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice ~ ¶¶

▷▷ he "was declared to be righteous," ~ as if this were the moment ~ he exercised saving faith.

▶▶ Instead, ~ when Abraham offered Isaac, ~ this was the moment ~ that he showed himself ~ to be righteous.

Claim of faith ~ vindicated ~ by this act. 5/16 ¶¶

▶▶ In other words, ~ what happened in [Gen 22](#) ~ is the "work" ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that demonstrated ~ that Abraham's faith ~ was genuine.

▷▷ IOW, ~ Shown to be right with God ~ by his actions.

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF JAMES SHOWS ~ that he is using the meaning ~ ¶¶

▶▶ shown ~ to be righteous.

▶▶ Earlier, ~ in [vs 18](#), ~ James challenged his opponent ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to demonstrate his faith without works, ~ which is impossible.

▶▶ And James added that he, ~ James, ~ would demonstrate his faith by works.

▶▶ With that in mind, ~ he presents Abraham, ~ and also Rahab, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ as demonstrating their faith by their deeds.

THE WIDER CONTEXT OF GENESIS ~ BEARS THIS MEANING OUT AS WELL.

▶▶ The events of [Gen 22](#), ~ the offering of Isaac, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ came about 30 years after ~ Abraham's initial faith ~ for which God counted him righteous.

↳↳ IOW, ~ he was already right before God. 6/16 ¶¶

▷▷Recorded in [Gen. 15:6](#).

↳↳And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

▷▷TPID, ~ in his willingness to offer Isaac, ~ Abraham gave proof of, ~ or, ~ ¶¶

↳↳demonstrated ~ his prior spiritual state.

→→As does Rahab ~ demonstrate ~ her prior spiritual state ~ by here deeds.

▶▶Furthermore, ~ God's response ~ to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son ~ is significant.

▷▷[Gen. 22:12b](#), ~ Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

↳↳To fear God means to ~ reverence Him as sovereign, ~ trust Him implicitly, ~ ¶¶

→→and obey Him without question.

▷▷God's statement ~ is his pronouncement ~ upon the character of Abraham, ~ ¶¶

↳↳confirming his faith ~ as authentic.

BACK TO JAMES.

▶▶So James is not saying ~ that when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice ~ ¶¶

▷▷he "was declared to be righteous." [7/16](#) ¶¶

▶▶ As if this were the moment ~ he exercised saving faith.

▶▶ Instead, ~ when Abraham offered Isaac, ~ this was the moment ~ ¶¶

▷▷ he demonstrated ~ that he was righteous.

▶▶ IOW, ~ what happened in *Gen 22* ~ was the "work" ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that demonstrated ~ the genuineness ~ of his faith.

GETTING BACK TO JAMES' QUESTION IN VS 21, ~ was not Abraham our father ~ ¶¶

▶▶ shown ~ to be right with God ~ by his actions ~ when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

⇒⇒ Expected ans. = yes.

STILL ADDRESSING THE IMAGINARY OBJECTOR, ~ ¶¶

JAMES NEXT GOES ON TO SHOW THAT FAITH ~ is inseparably ~ linked with works.

▶▶ Vs. 22a, ~ You see that faith was active along with his works.

THE VB TRANSLATED ~ WAS ACTIVE ~ MEANS ~ to engage in cooperative endeavor.

▶▶ Translated as ~ *work together with*, ~ *assist*, ~ *help*.

▶▶ The vb forms a word play in the verse.

▷▷ You see ~ that his faith ~ was working together with his works. 8/16 ¶¶

JAMES ASSERTS ~ that the faith displayed by Abraham in offering Isaac ~ ¶¶

▶▶ was working with his works.

▶▶ It was not ~ a mental assent that was mere concept.

▶▶ The faith did not exist without results.

▶▶ The faith which secured Abraham's righteousness from God ~ in [Gen. 15:6](#) ~ ¶¶

▷▷ produced ~ the supreme evidence of its work ~ in [Gen. 22:1-19](#).

WHEN JAMES OBSERVED ~ THAT ABRAHAM'S FAITH ~ was working with his works, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ it was obvious ~ that he was not arguing ~ for works alone.

▶▶ In fact, ~ he was reflecting exactly the same understanding as Paul, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ who wrote about "faith working through love" ([Gal. 5:6](#)).

▶▶ But neither should it be supposed ~ that faith and works are equal partners ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in the quest for righteousness.

▶▶ If James were viewed as teaching such equality, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ he would be in contradiction with Paul, ~ who has taught clearly ~ that faith alone saves.

↪↪ Know not teaching that. ~ Refuted opponent. 9/16 ¶¶

▶▶ James' point ~ was that ~ saving faith ~ yields tangible evidence ~ of its reality.

▶▶ Otherwise, ~ it is not real.

IN VS 22b, ~ JAMES STATES THE EFFECT OF VS 22a.

OFFERING HIS SON WAS THE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF HIS FAITH.

▶▶ The effect was that ~ Abraham's faith was vindicated.

▷▷ And faith was completed by his works.

THE VERB ~ WAS COMPLETED ~ CAN MEAN ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "was brought to completion," ~ "was brought to maturity," ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "was brought to perfection," ~ "was brought to its intended goal [or, end]."

↪↪ You'll find it translated a couple diff. ways in English versions.

▶▶ Based on my study of this, ~ the meaning that best fits the context of [vss 14-26](#) is ~ ¶¶

▷▷ was brought to its intended goal/end.

▶▶ The goal/end, ~ in view of [v. 18](#), ~ likely being ~ vindication.

▷▷ Recall, ~ James said he would prove his faith ~ by his works. [10/16](#) ¶¶

▷▷IOW, ~ his claim of saving faith ~ would be vindicated ~ ¶¶

↳↳by the tangible evidence ~ of its reality.

▶▶IOW, ~ the goal of the action of offering Isaac ~ was to ~ ¶¶

▷▷vindicate, ~ or prove genuine, ~ Abraham's claim to faith.

↳↳His willingness to sacrifice his son ~ showed his faith to be ~ living, ~ true faith.

THUS BUTTRESSING JAMES' ARGUMENT.

▶▶Faith without works, ~ i.e., ~ without the tangible evidence of its reality, ~ ¶¶

▷▷does not 'save' (v. 14), ~ does no good (v. 16), ~ it is 'dead' (vv. 17, 26) ~ ¶¶

↳↳and it is useless, ~ in that it is unproductive (vs 20).

▶▶Again, ~ James thereby obliterates ~ the entirely mistaken and dangerous notion ~ ¶¶

▷▷that a faith without tangible evidence ~ has any value or power.

JAMES FOLLOWS UP IN VS 23 WITH, ~ ¶¶

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. 11/16 ¶¶

THIS PHRASE ~ IS USUALLY USED ~ IN CONNECTION ~ WITH THE FULFILLMENT OF prophecy.

▶▶ Here it signals the proper understanding ~ of the relationship between [Gen 15](#) and [Gen 22](#).

▶▶ The sense here may be: ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the Scrip. announcing Abraham's faith ~ in [Gen 15](#) ~ was shown to be true ~ in [Gen 22](#).

▶▶ TPID, ~ the faith of Abraham ~ declared in [Gen 15](#) ~ was proven genuine ~ in [Gen 22](#).

▶▶ Now, ~ we can pretty much guarantee ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that Abraham had other works ~ that had proven his faith in God genuine, ~ ¶¶

↳ ↳ especially ~ the longer he walked with the Lord.

▶▶ So we must not think ~ that [Gen 22](#) ~ records the only work ~ that proved it.

▷▷ It just happens to be the one ~ James chose ~ as an example for his argument.

JAMES ADDS A PARALLEL DESCRIPTION OF ABRAHAM'S STANDING WITH GOD.

▶▶ He was called a friend of God.

▶▶ This is another way of saying ~ that he was right with God.

▶▶ It was not that Abraham ~ earned the favor of God ~ by obeying him. 12/16 ¶¶

▶▶ Instead, ~ he acted ~ as a friend of God should act ~ 77

▷▷ and thus showed ~ that he was in reality ~ God's friend.

▶▶ Genuine friendship w/ God ~ will show tangibly ~ in a person's life.

▷▷ E.g., ~ in the way they ~ think, ~ speak, ~ and act.

↳↳ Also, ~ in the way they prioritize their lives.

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ genuine friendship with God ~ will show tangibly ~ 77

↳↳ in a life that is pleasing and glorifying to God.

IN VS 24, ~ JAMES POINTS OUT ~ THE PRINCIPLE ~ FROM THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM.

YOU SEE THAT A PERSON IS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS AND NOT BY FAITH ALONE.

▶▶ Now remember the meaning of ~ justified ~ in the context.

▷▷ It does not mean ~ declared righteous.

▷▷ Means ~ shown ~ to be righteous.

▶▶ Additionally, ~ phrase ~ faith alone ~ refers to a claim ~ 77

▷▷ of saving faith without the tangible evidence ~ of its reality. 13/16 11

▶▶ Not talking ~ about gen saving faith.

▷▷ Not saying ~ gen faith alone is not enough ~ and that works must be added.

↪↪ If he were, ~ he would be contradicting Paul.

WE ARE SHOWN TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD ~ by the tangible evidence of its reality.

▶▶ We cannot be shown to be right with God ~ by a mere ~ claim ~ of saving faith.

▶▶ In fact, ~ we are shown ~ not to be right with God ~ ↴↴

▷▷ when the tangible evidence of its reality ~ is continually ~ nonexistent.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO SEE THAT JAMES' PHRASE ~ FAITH ALONE ~ IS FAR FROM BEING
~ genuine Christian faith.

▶▶ This ~ faith alone ~ is mere talk ~ without action.

▷▷ Or head knowledge ~ without heart knowledge.

▶▶ This is not ~ genuine ~ Christian faith.

WE COULD EXPRESS VS 24 ~ THIS WAY.

▶▶ You see, ~ we are shown to be right with God ~ by what we do, ~ not ~ by a mere claim ~ of having saving faith.

JAMES PRESENTS RAHAB THE PROSTITUTE AS HIS 2nd EXAMPLE ~ THAT PROVES HIS
premise. 14/16 ↴↴

▶▶ Vs. 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?

▶▶ Once more, ~ justified = shown ~ to be righteous.

▶▶ Rahab declared her belief ~ that the Lord God of Israel ~ was the only God.

▷▷ For the Lord your God, ~ he is God ~ in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

▶▶ And her faith was vindicated, ~ or proven genuine, ~ by her actions ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when she provided ~ hospitality and a means of escape ~ to the Israelite messengers.

▶▶ This was the ~ work ~ that demonstrated ~ the genuineness ~ of her faith.

IN VS 26, ~ JAMES' CONCLUDES HIS MINI-ESSAY ON FAITH AND WORKS.

HE SIGNALS THE END OF THIS MINI-ESSAY ~ by offering an illustration from daily life.

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

HOW DO YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE ~ ¶¶

▶▶ between someone who is sleeping ~ and someone who is dead?

▷▷ One is breathing.

↪↪ The other is not. 15/16 ¶¶

▶▶Breathing ~ is an evidence of life.

▷▷So too, ~ good works ~ are the evidence ~ of genuine faith.

JAMES ACKNOWLEDGES ~ THERE IS A KIND OF "FAITH" ~ that does not produce deeds.

▷▷But ~ it is a "dead" faith, ~ not a ~ living, ~ true, ~ or saving ~ one.

AND THAT ~ BRINGS US TO THE END OF JAMES' DISCUSSION OF FAITH & WORKS.

AND IN CLOSING, ~ I THINK THE FOLLOWING NEEDS TO BE EMPHASIZED ~ constantly.

▶▶God's love and mercy ~ can never ~ be overemphasized.

SO I SAY AGAIN ~ ¶¶

▶▶In James' tough words, ~ we see the loving hand of our heavenly Father.

▷▷He does not want us to hold to erroneous theology. ⇔⇔ Spells out clearly

▶▶Furthermore, ~ in James' tough words, ~ we see God's hand of mercy ~ ¶¶

▷▷reaching out to those who think ~ a mere profession of faith ~ ¶¶

↳↳w/out tangible ev. of reality ~ can save them.

▶▶Praise Him ~ from whom all blessings flow. 16/16