

September 25, 2022

## *The Faith of Abraham*

In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed His power to save mankind from sin (Romans 1.16). It is not a salvation based upon the works of men (Ephesians 2.9), requiring that they “earn” their way with sinless obedience (Romans 3.20), for then none would ever be saved (Romans 3.23). Instead, it is a system by which men may receive forgiveness of their sins and then stand justified — *righteous* — before God by His grace and mercy (Romans 3.24; Ephesians 2.5). However, such generous provisions for salvation do not inherently exclude conditions required for one to receive these blessings. Indeed, in one passage of Scripture we find a discussion of both God’s grace and His condition for receiving it:

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, **through faith** in Jesus Christ, to all and on all those who **believe**. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified **freely by His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, **through faith**, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has **faith** in Jesus. (Romans 3.21-26; emp. added)*

Faith is, as it has always been (Hebrews 11), the fundamental condition upon which one may receive the favor of God (Ephesians 2.8). Indeed, even “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Romans 4.3; cf. Genesis 15.6). He is our example, “the father of all those who believe” (Romans 4.11). Like

Abraham, those who stand righteous before God today do so “having been justified by faith” (Romans 5.1); their “access...into this grace” has come “by faith” (Romans 5.2). In order for one to please God, there is simply no substitute for an informed, trusting faith.

Many err, however, when they fail to search out the true nature of saving faith. They conclude, without having thoroughly examined or understood the Scriptures, that the faith necessary to please God involves merely accepting, intellectually and/or emotionally, His existence and His saving power. In other words, they believe and proclaim salvation for anyone who believes in God and in the sacrificial death of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. But the Scriptures reveal much more concerning the subject of saving faith. James wrote, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?...Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2.14,17). Genuine saving faith must manifest itself in works which please God.

Not even Abraham was saved by faith alone: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 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. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2.21-24). By faith, Abraham “obeyed,” “dwelt,” “went out,” “waited,” and “offered” (Hebrews 11.8, 9, 10, 17). His righteousness depended upon his faith manifesting itself in works which pleased God. By his works, Abraham’s faith was “made perfect” and he was justified before God.

We must not think ourselves to be any exception to this divinely-given rule. In order for our faith to justify us before God, it too must manifest itself in humble submission to Him. “Faith without works is dead” (James 2.26), but a living faith motivates one to trust and obey God’s will as it is revealed in the Scriptures. Is your faith like the faith of Abraham — faith *with* works of obedience? In other words, is it truly a saving faith?