

Audio file

[Journeying Through James Study 22 Faith and Works 4726gsm_james_2_v20.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:00

Turning in the Scriptures this morning to the Epistle of James in chapter 2.

00:00:07

Epistle of James chapter 2 in verse 20.

00:00:11

Let us hear the word of God.

00:00:13

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

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Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

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Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

00:00:36

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed or accounted unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.

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Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,

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Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way?

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For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

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And the Lord will bless the reading of his holy word.

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Now friends, this morning we're continuing our series in James, the Journey Through James, and in our last study we looked at faith without works is dead, and that's found in James chapter 2 and verse 20, but it's also found further up in the same chapter.

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Faith without works is dead, and we saw that there are some people who have this idea

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that you're saved by your works, or saved by your works plus grace.

00:02:02

It was said to me recently that some organizations, some religious organizations say something like this, After all we can do, then grace.

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Is that correct?

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Is that correct?

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Is that the right way round?

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Well,

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Though works cannot guarantee salvation, if there is no works, if there is no evidence of salvation, then there's doubt over our salvation.

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Grace comes first, then works.

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And I just want for a few moments to think about the word faith.

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What is faith?

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We'll see in a moment that some people have different ideas of faith.

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But what is faith?

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Well, let me give you a definition I found that helped me.

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This grace of faith is given to the chosen of God, who are enabled to believe to the salvation of their souls.

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It includes the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is usually worked through the ministry of the Word, either by preaching or reading.

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the Bible.

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Now that might be a very succinct definition, but it's a very helpful one.

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Because in many ways it shows us what real faith is.

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It's a grace.

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It's a gift.

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Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8, by grace are ye saved through faith.

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It is a gift of God.

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not of works, lest any man should boast.

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That's what the Apostle Paul believed.

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It's also, by the way, what James believed.

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More of that in a moment.

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So just as an introduction, if you like, my first consideration this morning I trust will help is there are different types of faith.

00:04:08

We've had the real definition of genuine faith.

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So there are different types of faith.

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Well, let me share four of them.

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There are other aspects and there are other, as it were, types, but these are the most common.

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The first is cold faith.

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Cold faith.

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There's no warmth towards God or his word.

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There's no speaking of Christ or his cross.

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And James would name this dead faith.

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He'd name it dead faith.

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There's no life.

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I like to call it cold.

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Maybe it doesn't sound as harsh.

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And linked with that, the second type of faith is intellectual faith.

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And if you're any way familiar with some of these programs today, they would say that Christianity and religion is all in the mind.

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It's all in the mind.

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One of the most famous preachers of the 20th century would speak often of that the mind is important in salvation, but it can't, the Word of God and the truth of God can't all stay in the mind.

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Mind is important.

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We need to think through what we believe, but that's intellectual.

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I agree

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with the doctrines of the gospel.

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I assent to the teaching of the church.

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But what's missing?

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It's all here.

00:06:01

It's all in the mind.

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What's missing is we don't embrace it.

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We don't own it.

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It hasn't challenged us

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changed us and transformed us.

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It's intellectual.

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And sadly, there are people today, and I'm sure you know one or two or more, who have an intellectual grasp of the Christian truth, but they don't have, they haven't been grasped by the Christian truth.

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It's a very small nuance there.

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It's wanting to grasp great truth.

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Some of us have been given good minds and we can understand great concepts, great philosophical concepts.

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But it's all in the mind.

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The Christian gospel should grip us.

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It should grasp us.

00:07:01

It should change us.

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Do you notice how James put it in verse 19?

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We didn't read it, but let me remind you, thou believest that there is one God.

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we're on solid ground here, aren't we?

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And people would say, I believe in one God.

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And they might even say, I believe in the true Christian God.

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In other words, I know about him.

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I'm familiar with this teaching.

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But James doesn't leave us there.

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He almost says, very well.

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Thou doest well.

00:07:46

The devils, the demons, also believe and tremble.

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Isn't that remarkable?

00:07:58

Isn't that remarkable that even the demons believe just like you?

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That's quite something, isn't it?

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That's a completely different way of looking at faith.

00:08:12

Oh, very well.

00:08:13

You'd believe in one God.

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It's a good start.

00:08:16

But so do the demons.

00:08:19

The devil knows that there's one God.

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But it's of no good to him.

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So that's our intellectual faith.

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The third type of faith is much more common today.

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I call it sentimental faith.

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They've had some kind of emotional impact with something of the Christian gospel.

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And they might go to a large meeting and they might be moved in their emotions.

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And by the way, our emotions are involved.

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Let me put it like this.

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How many of us wept over our sin before we truly trusted in Christ?

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Not everyone weeps.

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great oceans of tears like some of the old writers did.

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If you read John Bunyan's life story, *Grace Abounding*, he speaks about weeping and weeping and weeping.

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But there must be an effect of the gospel and our sin and conviction, that old word conviction.

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We repent and we come to the cross and we trust in Christ.

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Sometimes we weep much over our sin

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after we're converted.

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How can that be?

00:09:44

Because of what God has done in our lives.

00:09:47

Because of the love that's overwhelmed us.

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Because we're now his.

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As we sing in one of our hymns, in a love that cannot cease.

00:10:00

I am his and he is mine.

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Do you remember the first time you sang that hymn?

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Perhaps you do.

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Perhaps it was even in the evening or not long after you were converted.

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It overwhelms us.

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But that's not the kind of false faith I'm talking about here.

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It's that idea that I've had some kind of emotional response.

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Sometimes people say, I'm tingling down my spine.

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Well, is that the gospel?

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I remember sitting in a conference a few years ago, and this preacher was speaking on this manner of faith, and he says, Some people say, well, I was overwhelmed by the sense of the warmth of God.

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And he says, Maybe they should have turned up the air conditioning.

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It wasn't that they were responding to the gospel, they were just overheated.

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You see, this is the worry.

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These kind of faiths replace, and I use that faith in inverted commas, replace true conversion.

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But there's another type of faith.

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And you might have had this yourself.

00:11:28

A borrowed faith.

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So we've seen a cold faith, an intellectual faith, a sentiment mental faith, a borrowed faith.

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Borrowed faith?

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Well, I couldn't think of any other term to collect all this together, so borrowed is the nearest I got to.

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And borrowed basically means, and you've probably heard this too, my parents were Christians, and so am I.

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was brought up in the church, you know.

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My parents brought me to church.

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I even went to Sunday school.

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And their parents, that person's parents could have been, were probably most likely Christians, certainly the grandparents.

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But does that make somebody A Christian because they were brought to church and brought to Sunday school?

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Don't get me wrong, they're good things.

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That's borrowed.

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Or my spouse is a believer.

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My wife or my husband are a believer, and I'm hoping to get in there into heaven on the coattails of my husband or wife.

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It's borrowed.

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Or there's another one which I heard very recently.

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My children pray for me.

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Well, if they're Christians, of course they do.

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Of course they do.

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But that's borrowed.

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See, the New Testament

00:13:01

doesn't know anything about this borrowed faith.

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It must be faith in Christ, personal salvation.

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And this can all be summed up in our little phrase, false faith.

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What are we doing when we have those kind of ideas of faith?

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Well, we believe in ourselves.

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We have faith in what?

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In whom?

00:13:29

On what basis?

00:13:31

Who gave it to us?

00:13:33

Oh, they're questions you don't ask people nowadays.

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So there's a different type of faith.

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Can this type of faith save anyone?

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No, James tells us.

00:13:48

Oh, vain man or vain person, that faith without works is dead.

00:13:57

It's dead.

00:14:00

And that's sobering.

00:14:03

And that's convicting.

00:14:07

But then he does something.

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He, as it were, then calls on two witnesses to show us what real faith looks like.

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It's like he's sitting in court

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And he's saying, Now who can I call to give evidence that true faith always produces works?

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And he chooses two examples, both from the Old Testament.

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Why the Old Testament?

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Because, of course, that was the Bible he would have known and read and studied.

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It's also the one who the Lord Jesus would have taught and instructed from.

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All the apostles would have been very familiar with the Old Testament.

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And of course, in case we've forgotten, he's part, James is part of the New Testament, as it where it's been written.

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So he takes two witnesses, one man and one woman.

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And he gives them equal

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exposure probably in a very male-centered world.

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Imagine this arriving in the churches.

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And here we have two examples.

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Now, before we look at both of them individually, I just wanted to remind us of what they have in common.

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Both were non-believers.

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Both.

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Both were from different times, over a thousand years apart, but both were idolaters.

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Abraham was in Haran, a place of great idolatry, and Rahab was in Jericho, a center of Canaanite religion.

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Both were saved by grace.

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God's grace.

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Both proved their salvation by their works.

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And perhaps something we need to remind ourselves of, both are listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter one.

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Both of them, both Abraham and Rahab.

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And of course, they're also mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11.

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And we think about this, and you see what James now does.

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He calls forth Abraham, and he says in verse 21, Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

00:17:07

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

00:17:14

and the scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only you see what he's doing here he's taking Abraham and if Abraham

00:17:44

were still alive, he would have asked him questions.

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But he doesn't need to ask him questions because he's got them written down in the word of God.

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He's got the life of Abraham and the faith of Abraham written down in the book of Genesis.

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And he picks out two main examples of Abraham's faith.

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One is probably more familiar to us than the other, but both are significant.

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Both are important.

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The first is found in Genesis chapter 22.

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The other is found in Genesis chapter 15.

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In Genesis 22, what do we have?

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Of course, James here is not following chronologically, but what's he noting?

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Well, Abraham, our father.

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Everyone would have been familiar with Abraham in the church, in Jewish communities.

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He's the father of the nations.

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He's also the friend of God.

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He's the father of the faith.

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Those of us who are Christians here this morning could say that Abraham was, in many ways, the first father of the faith.

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You find God meets with him in Haran, in Genesis chapter 11.

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He calls him out of his pagan idolatry, and he calls him to a land he did not know.

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He goes on a long journey, and he arrives in the place where God had appointed.

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Abraham would have been able to save for God a great God and great king, above all gods is he.

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Depths of the earth are in his hand, the strength of hills is his.

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from Psalm 95.

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He had worshiped pagan idols, but now he could say with the psalmist, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord.

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Let us worship him.

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And you find God bringing this to bear and evidencing the transformation in Abraham's life when the Lord comes to him in Genesis chapter 12.

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and says to him, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation.

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I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

00:20:54

And I will bless them that bless thee and curse them, him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

00:21:03

So there's Abraham.

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What do we learn about Abraham?

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Even from that little section, he was willing to follow the Lord.

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He was called of God out of his past.

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His past didn't hinder him.

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God was gracious to him and transformed him and called him and then covenanted with him.

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That's what this language is in Genesis chapter 12.

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God repeats the covenant later on in Genesis 15.

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But here's the thing.

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God shows Abraham, brings him out one night into the middle of the desert and says, all the descendants from you will be greater than the multitude of stars.

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Imagine that.

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He says in many ways to Abraham, now Abraham, you count all the stars there.

00:22:07

Just number them all.

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And of course, Abraham's response would have been, I cannot.

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I don't have the power.

00:22:16

I don't have the ability.

00:22:17

I couldn't compute it.

00:22:19

And that's the point.

00:22:22

Abraham, you're starting off very small.

00:22:26

But out of you will come a great company of my people, who will believe like you have, because of the grace of Almighty God.

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So that's Genesis 12, and I also brought in Genesis.

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But let's move to Genesis 22, probably better known.

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In verse 21, Genesis, sorry, James chapter 2, verse 22, Seest thou have faith, was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

00:23:06

Now, of course, this is perhaps one of the best known passages in the whole of Genesis regarding Abraham.

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In the meantime, God, after he had said to Abraham, you'll have so many descendants, Abraham's an old man.

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Naturally speaking, he's beyond

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producing a child and his wife is old as well.

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But nothing's impossible with God.

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God comes in the middle of the desert, the angel of the Lord, and gives him a promise.

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Abraham, out of you, you'll have a son.

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A miraculous son.

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And his name will be Isaac.

00:24:02

which means laughter, rejoicing.

00:24:07

And Sarah didn't quite believe it, and probably Abraham didn't quite grasp it, and Sarah laughed.

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But just as God had promised, in God's perfect time, a little baby boy was born to these aged parents.

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Now, of course, this little boy was the darling of Abraham's eyes.

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And he grew up.

00:24:38

He grew up under Abraham's teaching and instruction.

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He was probably taught about the visits that God had paid to his father.

00:24:49

And then one day, God says to Abraham, take your son.

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Genesis chapter 22 and verse 2.

00:25:02

Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

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Similar language.

00:25:17

Take thy son.

00:25:19

In Genesis 11 and 12, he was told, go yourself.

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Here he's told, take his son to a place that's not named, just a region.

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the land of Moriah, the land of Moriah, and offer him there.

00:25:45

Abraham shows his faith by his willingness and his obedience to do what God has commanded.

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Imagine the thoughts in Abraham's mind, and we can't go into the detail here, but imagine him just trudging

00:26:03

with his, lost in his thoughts with his son Isaac, who's a lot older now, not a little baby, perhaps even in his mid-teens.

00:26:15

Fine, strong young man, and two servants.

00:26:21

They arrive at the land of Moriah,

00:26:25

And on the third day, verse three, and Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled with his *** and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.

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Verse four, this is Genesis 22, four.

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Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

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The Lord obviously had shown him exactly where he should go in verse five.

00:26:54

He leaves the two servants and he says, I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you.

00:27:05

Abraham takes the wood.

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Isaac most likely carries the wood too.

00:27:11

Abraham, by the way, takes fire from the fire that had been set that morning.

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So they're not going to travel too far, but they're going to go far enough away.

00:27:22

And then Abraham takes the knife and they go together.

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Isaac asks a very pertinent question.

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Father, we have the wood, but where's the lamb?

00:27:39

And Abraham said in verse eight, My son God will himself provide a lamb.

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They probably traveled about 40 miles, a little bit more.

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They had now arrived at the destination that God had appointed.

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And here, literally in the Hebrew, it says, God will see for himself the lamb.

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The term is the same as Jehovah Jireh.

00:28:11

God will provide for himself.

00:28:15

Abraham believed God, now he proved it.

00:28:19

He believed that God would provide himself the lamb.

00:28:23

Some old worthies believe that Abraham here is showing faith that God could even raise his son Isaac from the dead.

00:28:31

But Abraham's looking further.

00:28:36

He knows that God will provide a lamb.

00:28:40

He believes that God will provide a final lamb, a lamb of God.

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Of course, just before Abraham, he takes the knife and God says, and the angel of the Lord in verse 11, the angel of the Lord called unto him out of, this is Genesis 22, 11, out of heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad.

00:29:15

The angel of the Lord spared Isaac.

00:29:18

Ah,

00:29:22

But we don't spend our time at Moriah.

00:29:25

We look beyond Moriah to Calvary, where God himself provided a lamb, but he did not spare his son.

00:29:41

He did not spare his son.

00:29:44

How shall he not freely with us give us all things?

00:29:51

So there's Abraham.

00:29:54

And the other event James mentions in verse 23 is actually a little earlier in Abraham's ministry, Abraham's life, Abraham's walk of faith, if I could put it like that.

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And it's very interesting what James records for us from Genesis.

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in verse 23 he says the scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God and was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God and this is in Genesis 15 when

00:30:41

Moses records for us and believed in the Lord and he counted it from righteousness and he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it.

00:30:53

And this was concerning the promise of Isaac.

00:30:57

Now in some ways, if we were to have the ability to write the word of God, we would have done it in a chronological order, wouldn't we?

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But you see what James is emphasizing here.

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James

00:31:10

is basically recording the emphatic phrase, He believed in the Lord, and it counted him for righteousness.

00:31:22

It was a credit to him, credited to him.

00:31:25

It was imputed to him.

00:31:29

It was put to his account.

00:31:32

He wasn't saved by his works.

00:31:36

He was saved by faith in God,

00:31:40

and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

00:31:43

Of course, as I said, he's looking forward to the coming of the Lamb of God.

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So this leaves Abraham as evidence.

00:31:57

What a picture of a man who is called of God to walk with the Lord, to do that which the Lord had called him to do, not doubting that God could do whatever God wanted to do,

00:32:11

and that it was accounted to him for righteousness.

00:32:15

So it is for every believer.

00:32:18

God accounts us righteous in his own sight.

00:32:24

The other witness we'll call forth.

00:32:26

Her name is Rahab.

00:32:28

She's a much more interesting character in some ways.

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She's from a pagan city.

00:32:35

She stays in the city.

00:32:36

Abraham had been called out.

00:32:39

of Ur of the Chaldees, this woman stays in Jericho, a notorious city, a wicked city.

00:32:48

God's people are told in the book of Joshua to invade that city, to destroy that city, and yet, before the army arrives, two spies are sent to do some reconnaissance, to check out the lie of the land.

00:33:09

arrive in the city, and Rahab hides the two spies.

00:33:15

You could go into the detail.

00:33:17

You can find out more about her.

00:33:20

She's mentioned in various places in Joshua, and you can turn there very quickly.

00:33:29

And in Joshua, chapter 6, we know all about the fall of Jericho.

00:33:38

But God had his own servant in Jericho, and he had prepared her to do that which she had been appointed.

00:33:55

In Joshua chapter 2, and we'll just pick out one or two things here.

00:34:03

In Joshua chapter 2, verse 2,

00:34:06

Joshua records, Behold, there came men in hitherto night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

00:34:13

Verse 3, The king of Jericho sent on to Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house, for they be come to search out all the country.

00:34:21

And the woman took the two men and hid them, and said, Thus there came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were, I know not where they were.

00:34:29

And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out.

00:34:34

Whither the men went not, pursue after them quickly, for you shall overtake them.

00:34:44

She was a prostitute, she was well known, she had a reputation, but she was also a secret believer.

00:34:56

I like to think of her

00:34:58

as one growing up in a false religion, hearing about the victories that the people of Israel have had, hearing about this great God who could do extraordinary things, who could separate the

Red Sea, who could give the people food for 40 years, who could provide for these people who have come from Egypt,

00:35:28

And the Lord gives her faith to believe.

00:35:32

She believed in God.

00:35:34

She was lost but had come to faith and trusted in the God of the Hebrews.

00:35:39

We don't have the various details that others have in the Bible, but her works prove her faith.

00:35:51

If she wasn't a believer in God, she would not have spared God's people.

00:35:56

She would have handed them over to be executed.

00:36:01

And she would have been rewarded very handsomely.

00:36:04

She would have been famous in Jericho, but no.

00:36:10

Perhaps she came to the Lord on her own and because of fear, but she found instead of running from God, she came to God and God delivered her.

00:36:25

Whatever purpose God had, He brought her to Himself that she would believe on the Lord.

00:36:36

As I said, she's also mentioned in the genealogy of Christ.

00:36:41

The young men go back to Joshua, tell them the information, and in Joshua 6:23, they go back into Jericho just before

00:36:55

The walls, just after the walls have been fallen outwards.

00:36:59

You read about this in Joshua 6.

00:37:01

And if you believe this is just a Sunday school story, there's a lot more to Joshua 6 than just a little Sunday school story.

00:37:09

It's far, far richer than that.

00:37:12

But let me point out three things.

00:37:14

She relied upon the true God.

00:37:16

She hid the spies.

00:37:18

She was spared by the Lord.

00:37:20

These two men went back into the city and spared her.

00:37:23

Why?

00:37:24

Because of a scarlet cord that they had given her and was flying from the window.

00:37:30

Now just think of the window.

00:37:31

Where's the window?

00:37:34

It's on the city walls.

00:37:36

A very important place in ancient times.

00:37:40

And the scarlet cord was a picture of another scarlet cord that you can trace right throughout Scripture.

00:37:48

Salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

00:37:51

We don't have time to look at much more than that, but there's two things this morning.

00:37:56

We've seen different types of faith.

00:37:58

We've seen examples or witnesses of true faith, Abraham and Rahab.

00:38:02

And lastly, the faith that saves.

00:38:05

Well, how does James summarize this?

00:38:09

And we'll just tie up a few things as we close this message.

00:38:14

But let me just point out a couple of things that James shows us here that may help

00:38:20

He says, Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way?

00:38:28

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

00:38:36

The body without the spirit is not alive.

00:38:40

It's dead.

00:38:42

And so it is those like Abraham and Rahab and many others in the Bible

00:38:48

They had living faith.

00:38:50

I trust we have it too.

00:38:53

I trust we have living faith in the living God.

00:38:58

Our good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruit and evidence of a true and lively living faith.

00:39:05

You find this in James chapter 2 and verse 22.

00:39:08

We can show our thankfulness.

00:39:11

It will strengthen our assurance, 1 Peter 2:9.

00:39:14

It will build up the brethren, 1 John 2, verse 3.

00:39:17

It will adorn the profession of the Gospel, Titus 2 and verse 5, and it will glorify God, 1 Peter 2 and verse 15.

00:39:26

That's what our works are about.

00:39:30

That's why works are important.

00:39:33

Well, let us conclude with prayer.

00:39:36

Father in heaven, thankful for this morning, thankful for thy precious word, bless us, keep us and sustain us.

00:39:44

Help each one of us here to know what real faith is, true faith is, living faith is, that we're truly saved and trusting in Christ alone as our Saviour and our lives show something of that fruit of the Gospel.

00:39:59

Our lives will be adorned with the works of serving the Lord and honouring the Lord, yielded to the Lord, even serving the Lord in various ways.

00:40:09

Oh, hear our prayers.

00:40:11

We ask all these mercies in Christ's name.

00:40:14

Amen.