

**D. A Vain Argument (James 2:18-20)**

1. A man's words (James 2:18)
 - a. The vain man's words
 - (1) The attitude of the man's words
 - a) The attitude of entitlement to opinions
 - b) The attitude of no fixed truth
 - (2) The suggestion of the man's words
 - a) One man's virtue is not necessarily to be another man's.
 - b) The virtues are mutually exclusive.
 - (3) The content of the man's words
 - a) Thou hast faith.
 - b) I have works.
 - b. James' words
 - (1) His challenge to the vain man—"shew me thy faith without thy works."
 - (2) His promise to the vain man—"I will shew thee my faith by my works."
2. A man's belief (James 2:19)
 - a. A reminder of the context
 - (1) Though a man say (James 2:14)
 - (2) One of you say (James 2:16)
 - (3) A man may say (James 2:18)
 - b. The statement of faith
 - (1) Its content—"Thou believest that there is one God."
 - (2) Its praise—"thou doest well."
 - c. The distinction of faith
 - (1) A man's faith supposedly can stand alone.
 - (2) The devils' faith yielded action—trembling. Note: Interestingly, we suggest people can believe the truth from a right heart and yet live like the Devil. Perhaps this is an insult to the Devil as his beliefs produce action. Truth is, the devils have some sound beliefs and those beliefs affect their actions.
 - a) They are monotheistic—believe in one God (James 2:19).
 - b) They knew the identity of Christ (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:41).
 - c) They believe in their coming destruction (Luke 4:33-35).
3. A man's knowledge (James 2:20)
 - a. The question of learning—"wilt thou know"
 - b. The question of character—"O vain man"
 - c. The statement of truth—"faith without works is dead."
 - (1) It is unprofitable (James 2:14, 16).
 - (2) It is alone—without fruit (James 2:17).
 - (3) It is as a body without a spirit (James 2:26).
 - (4) Note: Consider the truth set forth by the apostle Paul of a "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; see also Titus 3:8).



E. The Scriptural Illustrations (James 2:21-26)

1. The example of Abraham (James 2:21-24)

a. Laying the groundwork

(1) Two key Old Testament passages

a) Abraham's seed (Genesis 15:1-6)

- i) The word given in a vision (Genesis 15:1)
- ii) The question of seed (Genesis 15:2-3)
- iii) The promise of seed (Genesis 15:4-5)
- iv) The exercise of faith (Genesis 15:6a)
- v) Righteousness imputed (Genesis 15:6b; James 2:23)
- vi) Note: This was followed by an unconditional covenant (Genesis 15:7-21).

b) Abraham's sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19)

- i) The word given (Genesis 22:1-2)
- ii) The company and journey (Genesis 22:3-4); Note: The first event was between God and Abraham, but this time it involves Sarai, Isaac, and servants.
- iii) The public exercise of faith (Genesis 22:5-10; Hebrews 11:17-19)
- iv) The response of the Lord (Genesis 22:11-18); Note: No mention of Abraham receiving imputed righteousness
- v) The return of Abraham (Genesis 22:19)

(2) Two key New Testament passages

a) Abraham's seed (Romans 4:1-5, 9-22)

- i) Justified, but not by works (Romans 4:1-5)
- ii) For both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 4:9-12)
- iii) Not of the law, but through faith (Romans 4:13-21)
- iv) The imputation of righteousness (Romans 4:22)

b) Abraham's sacrifice (James 2:21-24; see also Hebrews 11:17-19)

(3) Two arguments

- a) Justification before God is by faith alone—Paul in Romans.
- b) Justification before men demands action—James in James.

(4) Two distinct words

a) Justified; Note: This word is commonly misunderstood.

Prior to our Bible's printing, the word took on the meaning of "declare to be innocent or blameless." This is validated in scripture (Job 32:2; Proverbs 17:15; Luke 7:29).

i) Faith justifies in the sight of God.

(a) By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified IN HIS SIGHT (Romans 3:20).

(b) No man is justified by the law IN THE SIGHT OF GOD (Galatians 3:11).

ii) Works justify in the sight of men.

b) Righteousness



- b. The explanation of Abraham's justification (James 2:21-24)
 - (1) The nature of Abraham's justification (James 2:21)
 - a) The element of his justification—works
 - b) The event of his justification—offering Isaac
 - (2) The perfection of Abraham's faith (James 2:22)
 - a) Faith wrought with Abraham's works.
 - b) Works made Abraham's faith perfect. Note: Remember that the word *perfect* means complete, mature, or not lacking.
 - (3) The fulfillment of scripture (James 2:23)
 - a) The scripture was fulfilled (see Genesis 15:6).
 - b) Abraham became known as the Friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8).
 - (4) The key to his justification (James 2:24)
 - a) Not only by a declaration of an unseen faith
 - b) But by an outward demonstration of action
- 2. The example of Rahab (James 2:25-26)
 - a. The designation of continuation (James 2:25)
 - (1) Likewise
 - (2) Also
 - b. The demonstrator of faith (James 2:25)
 - (1) Rahab
 - (2) The harlot (see Hebrews 11:31)
 - c. The demonstration of faith (James 2:25)
 - (1) Her demonstration (Joshua 2:1-7)
 - (2) Her proclamation (Joshua 2:8-13)
 - a) I know the LORD hath given you the land (Joshua 2:9).
 - b) Your terror is fallen upon us (Joshua 2:9).
 - c) We have heard the works of God (Joshua 2:10).
 - d) Our hearts did melt (Joshua 2:11).
 - e) I pray you, show kindness to us (Joshua 2:12-13).
 - (3) Her demonstration (Joshua 2:14-21; Joshua 6:17)
 - d. Her justifications (James 2:25)
 - (1) Before God—by faith
 - (2) Before Israel—by works; Note: It was no coincidence that the spies landed at the house of Rahab. Going to the house of an harlot is contrary to everything Israel would have known, but "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Psalm 37:23).
- 3. The concluding truth (James 2:26)
 - a. One final illustration
 - (1) Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son verified before men what God already knew about his faith concerning a seed.
 - (2) Rahab's willingness to hide the spies confirmed before others what had already transpired in her heart toward the Lord.
 - (3) A body without the spirit is dead.
 - b. The truth set forth—"faith without works is dead."