

James 2:24-26

Faith and works Rahab Illustration

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James 2:24-26 (NASB)

24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James 2:24-26 (WuestNT)

24 You see that by works a man is justified and not by faith alone. 25 Now, similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also vindicated in that she entertained as guests the messengers and thrust them forth by means of a different way? 26 For even as the body apart from breath is dead, so also the aforementioned faith apart from works is dead.

Here we go again

Recap (before Rahab)

- Two types of justification (def: *to be declared righteous*)
 - 2:33 – Justification before God by faith; Abraham in Genesis 15
 - 2:21 – Justification before men by works; Abraham in Genesis 22
- Two types of faith
 - 2:14 – Lip faith/dead faith
 - 2:22 – Fruitful faith/working faith
- James is concerned primarily with the second type of justification
 - He assumes the first type
 - He encourages believers to live out their faith
 - He warns against faith that is stagnant, i.e. useless/dead
- James is speaking to believers whose eternal position is not in doubt

Perfect faith

24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- “You see” refers to the previous verses
- Key phrase: *faith was perfected* (2:22)
 - Make perfect, finish, fulfil, be perfect, consecrate
 - To bring to the end (goal) proposed
 - Romans 8:28-29
- This refers to justification before men
 - Matthew 5:16
 - Men cannot see our faith, unless it we live it out
 - Precisely this is James’ admonition – working faith, and not dead faith

Rahab the Arab

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

- Her story
 - Joshua 2:9-13 *...for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath....*
 - Matthew 1:5 *Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab...*
- New Testament perspective
 - Hebrews 11:31 *By faith Rahab...*
- This is related to the issue of partiality
 - Even a foreigner and former harlot can experience God's Grace
- But why Rahab?

From Abraham to Rahab

The contrast is neat: Abraham, a major Bible figure; Rahab, a minor participant. Abraham the father of the faithful; Rahab a foreigner. Abraham the respected; Rahab the disreputable. Abraham a man; Rahab a woman. As so often, the contrast is intended to alert us to the fact that a fully comprehensive statement is being made—as it were, covering the situation all the way from Abraham to Rahab and back again. The primary works of faith, then, are the works of Abraham and Rahab and they apply to all without exception. – Motyer (quoted in Constable)

The life of the body

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

- The words
 - Body (*sōma*) – the physical body
 - used in 2:16,26; 3:2,3,6
 - Spirit (*pneuma*) – the vital principal by which the body is animated
 - Used again in 4:5
 - Dead (*nekros*) – destitute of life, without life, inanimate
 - Same usage as 2:17
- Genesis 2:7 – the breath of life
- The body without the spirit is a useless shell

Ineffectual faith

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

- The value of the “faith” is not in question here
 - It is assumed that we have been justified before God by faith
- James’ concern is what we are doing with this faith
 - James’ intention is to encourage us to live out our faith
 - Paul would put this in terms of our new-in-kind life
 - Paul would expound (in great detail) on the mechanics of this new life
- What does it matter if the world see our faith?
 - Better question: who does it matter to?
- Same theme, different context as 1:22-27
- Key illustration – 2:15-17