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MISHPAT V'CHESED MINISTRIES

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## “The James 2:24 Factor”

By Greg Wilson

I've been ruminating on this subject for a while, and it came together in my mind. So let's jump in.

So mainstream protestant Christianity has capitalized on the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith – no works required – it's a free gift.

Verses for this doctrine are undeniable – including Eph. 2:8-9, which says

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Indeed, if we go back to our spiritual father, so-to-speak, Abraham, the scripture just says – “He BELIEVED God, and it was counted as righteousness to him!”

So we must never say one has to just stack up a pile of good works to be saved.

BUT.

If we follow the rest of the story of Abraham, something else happened. He was tested. With a very hard test. Sacrificing his own son.

Now just a side note – in other places in scripture, we see that God detested the false worship involving burning children in the fire – it never entered His heart. Yet somehow he asked Abraham to sacrifice his son – almost like He wants to share Himself with mankind and have a connection with them – like he wanted Abraham to understand how it would feel to give up one's only son... Something God would eventually actually do in giving Jesus to be the payment for the world's sins – the way men and women can be made completely righteous again!

Anyway, Abraham proved he was willing to obey God at the cost of offering his own son, though God intervened and called the whole thing off, thankfully, saying:

*“Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”*

-Genesis 22:12

Abraham FEARED GOD. He obeyed Him, regardless of the cost, though Isaac was spared.

Then God speaks again:

*“And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for BECAUSE thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:*

*That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;*

*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; **because thou hast obeyed my voice.**”*

-Genesis 22:15-18

What is interesting about this is that God already gave Abraham part of this promise EARLIER, BEFORE he proved his obedience:

*“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

–Genesis 15:5-6

There it is – just for believing that God would do what He said, he is counted as righteous. But again, fast forward to Genesis 22 again. It shows how Abraham’s faith bore fruit, was proved real, and thus the checkpoint was passed, and God indeed repeats that He will bless Abraham, this time not just because He said He would, but BECAUSE Abraham obeyed. Recall:

*“for BECAUSE thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:*

*That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven...”*

-Genesis 22:16-17

And so it is, God’s promise is confirmed when our faith proves true – bearing fruit.

Ya’akov (James, supposed half-brother of Yeshua (Jesus)) comments on this dynamic

in his new testament letter:

*“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*

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

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

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

*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.”*

-James 2:19-24

And there we have it. The James 2:24 factor – Faith must have works for it to be saving faith. This is a hard pill to swallow, you may think.

Again, it's not that we stack up a pile of good works that earn our way into the kingdom.

It is BELIEVING in Yah (God's short name) and His word, and continuing on in a relationship with Him, where we follow Him in obedience, cleaving unto Him in faithfulness.

So what is the test that will confirm your faith? I don't know. It is probably different for each one of us. For the rich young ruler, the test was selling his many possessions and giving to the poor. What will it be for you? I do not know.

So seek Him in diligent prayer, believe His promises, and be strengthened in your faith, being filled with His spirit and bearing good fruit that can find you a place in the Kingdom.

May you pass any test that comes your way, passing that “checkpoint”, and continue on, abiding in Messiah, walking with the Father, and yes, even being called His friend, like Abraham was.

-Greg Wilson