

Call to Obedience #224
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

Abraham, at Mt. Moriah, is God's ultimate definition of faith.

Abraham: the Friend of God

By Reimar Schultze

“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” (Ja. 2:23).

In this text, there is something that cannot be found in any other passage in the Bible, and that is the expression: “Friend of God”--friend with a capital F.

Abraham was the ultimate friend of God. There was no one who was elevated to any higher degree in friendship to God than Abraham.

And this, of course, teaches us that God does have special relationships and special loves. The Scriptures say that God loved Jacob but hated Esau (Ro. 9:13), that God rejected Saul but he preferred David, that God in Christ chose the twelve over the 70, and Peter, James and John over the twelve. God spoke to the prophets in visions and dreams, but to Moses, he spoke face to face as a man would speak to a man.

Let us not expect God to have the same relationship with each person. He never has, and he never will. Man judges by the outward appearance, but God judges by the secrets in men's hearts.

Oh, aren't you glad that God, the almighty God, the all-knowing God, the ever-present God, looked not to the angels to find his friends but to humankind pulled out of the mud of sin; and that he found one from whom he kept no secrets and whom he could call his friend above all friends!

And since we are made in the likeness and image of God, does that not tell us that we, too, are entitled to special friendships that help pull us through the fiercest of storms and the hardest of battles?

Now then, what caused God to choose Abraham as his friend with a capital “F” over all the other possibilities such as Enoch, Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, and Daniel? My friend, the answer to this is found in James 2. In this chapter, James, the clarifier of otherwise obscure theological truth, gets into the ultimate definition of faith.

To many a reader, it is not all that clear from the writings of Paul what both saving and keeping faith consists of. In fact, many people, especially the by-passers of the epistle of James, have decided that if you believe you are saved, you are saved, and if you believe that you go to heaven because you believe, you will go to heaven. Such circular logic is masterfully broken down by James.

James therefore states, zeroing in on Abraham, the Father of Faith:

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou does 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” (Ja. 2:17-23).

I gave you this passage in its entirety because I want you to see its brilliant flow from faith misconceived to faith defined through Abraham’s deed.

First, notice that works in this whole passage is synonymous with obedience. So when James says, “faith without works is dead,” he means that faith without obedience is dead. Obedience makes faith work.

Second, notice that James compares faith without obedience to the devil’s faith: “the devils also believe....” Of course they do. At one time, they all were angels. Yes, do they ever believe. But although they believe all God is and has said, they will not obey him. They have “faith without works.”

Third, observe how James chides all believers who believe like the devils, without obeying. He chides them as being vain or foolish.

And to build his case for saving and keeping faith, James takes us to Abraham by saying in the next verse, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” That’s faith!

When that was done, as the next verse tells us, THEN the SCRIPTURES WERE FULFILLED that Abraham believed God, and at that point in time, Abraham became the FRIEND OF GOD. At Mt. Moriah, in Abraham, biblical faith was defined for all Christendom once for all!

Now, let us review this great event for a moment: God told Abraham to take his only son, for whom he had waited 20 years, and sacrifice him on the altar. Again, it was at this point when faith and obedience came together to please God enough to make that faith/obedience combination the basis for the salvation of all mankind.

Please observe Abraham’s obedience relating to this event: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son...” (Ge. 22:3).

Abraham obeyed immediately in getting on his journey to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice his son. He obeyed in building the altar. He obeyed in placing the wood on the altar. He obeyed in laying his son on the wood, and he obeyed in initiating a strike with a knife to kill his son.

This is perfect obedience. It is not like King Saul’s partial obedience when he spared King Agag and some sheep and was rejected because of it. This obedience of Abraham was perfect obedience.

This was also perfect faith. Abraham believed that once he killed his son, God would raise Isaac from the dead because God had promised that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham believed that what God said, God would do, and he believed that nothing could stop him from it (see Ro. 4:16-22). Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

So then, we are now ready to ask the big questions: when did Abraham become the Friend of God, and when was the Scripture fulfilled that Abraham believed? It was at the moment that Abraham’s knife began its fatal plunge toward the heart of Isaac. **It was at precisely that moment that God’s righteousness was imputed unto Abraham.**

Since that day, whenever pure faith and perfect obedience come together in any heart like in Abraham’s, God’s righteousness will be imputed unto such a heart. All those who have this happen to them are the true sons of Abraham, as Jesus said of Zacchaeus (Lu. 19:9), and all those lacking this faith of Abraham will not receive the righteousness of God as in the case of

King Saul and the rich young ruler. We must trust God with all our heart and obey him to receive his righteousness.

No better, personal illustration of faith and works (obedience) coming together can be found anywhere in the whole Bible, and it is because of what Abraham did at Mt. Moriah that he also became the Friend of God. So it is in Abraham, who received God's eternal covenant, that covenant faith was defined once for all as the standard for our salvation.

It is for this reason that when the rich man of Luke 16 looked up out of hell, he saw Abraham. This is because the sight of Abraham was God's reminder to him why he was now in eternal flames. Simply stated, the rich man burned because he did not have the faith of Abraham.

It is for this reason as well that Matthew 8:11 reads: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

It is also because of this that Jesus says in Luke 13, referring to Judgment Day when many shall to say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (vv. 26-28).

There are those who say that once we get to heaven's gates, we shall see Peter standing there to check if we have the right theological answer worthy of heaven. Nonsense! There is no biblical proof of that. But there is biblical proof that all who go to hell will see Abraham afar off because Abraham's example of faith at Mt. Moriah will be the final standard for every religious professor's eternal destiny.

Oh, would you today, on this side of eternity, check out your faith to see if it is the faith of Abraham, by which the righteousness of God can only be imputed unto you?

In closing, a recent survey of church members by Charles Allen has brought out these interesting statistics:

10%	cannot be found	75%	never assume any responsibility in their church
20%	never attend a service	85%	never invite anyone else to church
35%	admit they never read the Bible	95%	have never won a person to Christ
40%	never contribute to the church	100%	expect to go to heaven
60%	never study any religious material		

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

Yes, Abraham was the Friend of God. Now you know why, and rejoice in this, that you, too, can be a friend of God. For Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Jn. 15:14).