

“Dead Faith vs. Living Faith, Part 2”

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Scriptural Foundation: James 2:18-26, ESV

Faith Without Works Is Dead (Continued)

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Blondin, the great tightrope walker, stretched a 1,300 foot-long cable across the Niagara Falls in June, 1859. After his first successful trip across the Niagara on the rope on June 30th, he spent the next two summers performing above the Niagara for crowds. He crossed the Falls on a bicycle, on stilts, and pushed a wheelbarrow full of potatoes on the three inch cable across the watery span. On that particular occasion, when he completed that trek with the wheelbarrow full of potatoes, the crowd was cheering. His assistant put one leg into the wheelbarrow and Blondin cried out to the crowd which was praising him with great adulation, "How many of you believe that I can carry a person across the Niagara in this wheelbarrow?" The whole shouted, "We do! We do!" Blondin pointed at one of the exuberant men near him and he said, "You're my man. Jump in the wheelbarrow!" The man decided that he didn't have as much faith in Blondin's ability as he had previously attested. Blondin's challenge proved that the man's faith was dead. He was willing to give a verbal confession of faith in Blondin's abilities, and he was willing to let one of Blondin's assistants to get in the wheelbarrow and cross the Niagara, but he was not willing to act upon his own confession. He refused to get in the wheelbarrow that day.

You may remember Warren Wiersbe's definition of true faith from the previous message, "Faith is not some kind of nebulous feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God's Word is true, and faith is the conviction that acting upon that Word will bring us God's blessing." Biblical faith acts on what the Bible says to be true about God, what the Bible says to be true about life, what the Bible says to be true about relationships, what the Bible says to be true about sin, about Heaven, and about eternity. Biblical faith always results in a changed life. That is the nature of true, living faith. James' message to us in Chapter 2, and throughout this letter, is that faith without action is useless. Faith that possesses no changed life has no saving benefit. It is dead.

Three times James will warn us in this section that faith without works is dead and is useless. We read it in Verse 17, "...faith...is dead..." We read it in Verse 20, "...faith...is useless..." We read it in Verse 26, "...faith...without works is dead." James has a pastor's heart for the church and he is warning those people who are in the church that there is a kind of faith in God that does not save us from eternal judgment for our sins; there is a kind of faith in Jesus that does not bring us into right relationship with God; and there is a kind of faith in the Gospel that leaves a person on the path to Hell. What an awful consequence there is to dead faith! This is a frightening prospect, especially when we learn that many in the church possess this kind of faith; the kind of faith that is dead and the kind of faith that is useless.

James, along with all the New Testament writers, is deeply concerned about people in the church who are self-deceived regarding the nature of their own faith and regarding the condition of their own soul. Many think that they are living a life right with God, that they possess a living faith, when in fact, the Bible would say, they do not. It is vital that we learn the Scriptures so that we are able to discern the difference between living faith and dead faith so that we might be delivered from sin and sin's condemnation.

Do you know how to tell the difference between living faith and dead faith? Every Christian should be able to answer that question affirmatively.

In the prior study, we learned that James described dead faith as faith that of empty profession. We read in Verse 14,

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

A person says they have faith and they give verbal testimony and verbal credence to the Gospel of Jesus, and yet it is not a faith that possesses any kind of change in life or a change in behavior. False faith talks a really good game, but it fails to change the life of the person who owns it. Without life change, every one of us lacks the evidence we need to confirm that we possess true, living faith, so we ask ourselves, “Has Jesus fundamentally changed me? Has He changed the way I think? Has He changed the way I behave? Has He changed the way I relate to other people? Has He changed the way I use my time and my resources? Has He changed the way I live?

This week one of our senior saints told me his story of God’s transforming grace in his life. I will call him Ben. Ben shared that he grew up in a home that was very distant from Jesus Christ. Both his dad and his grandpa had given themselves to alcohol to a very deep extent. In fact, both men would eventually die from accidents that were caused while they were intoxicated because they were intoxicated. This dear man told me that when he was in his early teens, he was a wild guy living a wild life. By way of example, he said that he knew more dirty jokes than most Christians know verses of Scripture. His language, he testified, was filled with curse words. One day a young pastor came to town to start a new church in the old one-room school house. This pastor walked through the neighborhoods inviting the young teens to come to the new church plant. Ben decided to attend the church and he heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that he could be delivered from his sin. Ben believed Jesus Christ on one Sunday in 1951. He was convicted of his sin and he was convinced of the sufficiency of Jesus to rescue him from his sin.

He testified that from that day forward, his life completely changed. His old habits began to die and new habits began to form. By way of example, he recalled one occasion shortly after trusting in Christ. He was watching over some of the cattle on the farm and the work dogs were not doing their job, so he said that he shouted out at them and a string of curse words flowed out of his mouth as he shouted at the dogs. It was a string that he had known well and that he had said often, but this time, he said, as he was yelling and cursing at the dogs, he said, “I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was not a physical tap, but it was just as real.” The Holy Spirit inside that 14 year-old boy told him that that a Christian uses God-honoring language, and he realized that he could not use the words that he used to use, not if he were a Christian. His mother and father did not tell him that he needed to change his language. His buddies did not tell him that he needed to change his language. Not even his pastor told him that he needed to change his language. It was the Spirit of God inside of him, that created a new life in him, that told him, “You need to change.” The new life within him changed everything, not just his language, so, for sixty years, this man has dedicated himself to living for the Lord Jesus and serving Him. His whole life was changed by the grace of God that transformed him when he believed in Jesus.

Let me ask you, has your faith in Jesus changed your life?

In Matthew 7, Jesus talks about those who have a dead faith, when He says,

²² “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

When Jesus uses the word “many” He is talking about people who are in the church and those who are “religious”. These are not atheists. These are not skeptics. These are people who are inside the flock! Jesus, Himself, teaches us that it is not what our faith says that makes a difference, but it is what our faith does that validates our claim to God’s salvation.

James continues his description of the difference between dead faith and living faith in Verses 20-26. James presents two illustrations of living faith to help us distinguish between dead faith and living faith. First, James presents Abraham as the example of living faith, as we see in Verse 20,

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

It is important for us to understand that James is talking to a very specific audience. He is talking to people in the church who give a verbal profession to having faith in God and faith in Jesus. They give a mental assent to certain doctrinal truths about Jesus, about the cross, and about God. Some people in the church are making the claim: “Look, salvation from God is by grace through faith. That means that you can believe in Jesus one moment and then go out and live as you please. God will forgive you. There does not have to be any life change that flows from your faith; that would be salvation by works. All you have to do is ‘believe’. So, if you want to be free from the condemnation of sin and free from the threat of Hell, just ask God to forgive your sin in Jesus name and that is all there is to faith. If you continue, after asking God for salvation, to live like a child of this world and continue to wallow in your sins, no worries, you are covered by God’s grace.” That is the audience that James is addressing.

Like most lies regarding the Gospel this one is particularly deceptive because it combines such beautiful truth with such an ugly lie. That we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone is such a beautiful truth of the Gospel message. That this salvation given to us by God is so impotent as to leave us unchanged, without radical, life transformation is such an ugly lie to be wholly unworthy of God and a lie that is contradicted over and over again by the Scriptures.

The Apostle Paul would declare in 2 Corinthians 5,

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

James calls to the witness stand, against this audience who has believed this lie and who has distorted the Gospel, and who has formed an easy “believism”, the Old Testament saint, Abraham. For the 1st Century Jew, Abraham is the quintessential example of a person of faith. He is the father of the Jewish people in the physical sense, but also in the spiritual sense. God, from Abraham, created a people not only physically, but also spiritually. There was a Spiritual Covenant that God made with this man that would be passed on to those who were spiritually aligned with him.

Paul teaches in Galatians 3,

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

You and I are sons of Abraham if we have faith in Jesus. James is going to talk about “Abraham, our father”. Abraham is not just the father of those physically connected to him, but also those who are spiritually connected to him. Both Paul and James agree that Abraham’s example helps us understand how faith works in the life of the believer. We read, in Verse 21,

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

It is important to understand that the word “justified” has two general meanings. The first is “to acquit or to declare as righteous”. A jury may “justify” or acquit an accused criminal as they declare him “not guilty”. From the moment that the jury acquits him, justifies him and declares him not guilty, that person is considered by the law as not guilty of that crime and as righteous.

The second definition is to “vindicate” or to “prove”. An owner of a car dealership receives criticism for hiring a novice salesman, a person who has never sold cars before. She is happy when she discovers that this new hire justifies, validates, and proves her decision to hire him when he becomes the top salesman.

James uses the term “justify” in the sense of “vindicate and validate and prove”, while Paul uses the term in the sense of “acquit or declare as righteous.” We know that from the context of the letters written by Paul and James.

Let us look at some of the contexts. This study will require you to move back and forth through some of the Scriptures, so let us turn to Romans 4, where Paul clearly teaches what seems, at first, to be the opposite of what James is saying regarding Abraham in particular.

¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Paul is going to quote Genesis 15:6. It is the same verse that James is going to quote in this section of James 2. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, that Abraham believed God and that it was counted to him as righteousness, to argue against some who were preaching a Gospel of faith plus works. Paul's audience is different from James' audience. Paul is contending against a different error. Paul is attacking the false notion that works were necessary for salvation; that somehow we, as men and women, participate in accomplishing our acceptance before God – that God does part of the work and then we do our part of the work, and together we can make our way toward Heaven.

James is attacking a verbal faith that did not translate into action. Paul is attacking a works oriented view of salvation. Both men agree that good works are the proof of our salvation but not the ground of our salvation. Paul contended that we are declared righteous in God's sight on the basis of faith alone in Jesus, and Paul was exactly right! James contended that real faith in Jesus will produce a changed life, and James is exactly right! Both men are using the same term in different senses to attack two different errors.

Here, in Romans 4, Paul fights against those who say that God accepts us on the basis of our faith plus our good works. Paul's audience is the person who thinks, "If I live a good life, I try to love my fellow man, and I go to church and do some religious things, then God will accept me into His Heaven." Paul says, "No, our good works have nothing to do with God's acceptance of us. Our salvation, our acceptance by God, is based on God's grace alone, through faith alone. It is apart from works, otherwise we could boast about it. Consider Abraham. If Abraham's works had anything to do with his justification, his acceptance by God, a declaration by God upon Abraham's life that he was not guilty and that he was righteous then Abraham could boast." But then Paul adds these words at the end of Verse 2, "...but not before God." Paul is saying that it is ridiculous to think that anyone would have a reason to boast before the Holy God when we understand how sinful we are.

We continue reading in Romans 4,

⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

Salvation by faith plus works makes God our debtor. In other words, we work and we gain merit and God must act to pay us what we have earned, so that God has become our debtor. The Apostle Paul says that is ridiculous because God is no man's debtor. We are beggars before Him, so to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift. The Apostle Paul is going to say that the gift of God is eternal life and that the wages of sin is death.¹

We read in Verse 5,

⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...

The Apostle Paul uses Abraham, in the verse that was said of Abraham, "Abraham believed God and it was counted, it was considered and reckoned to him, as righteousness", and he brings it forward to the audience of his day, and he says that our faith, like Abraham's, is counted as righteousness.

The word "counted" is an accounting term. It means to put on one's account. Abraham's spiritual bank account was in arrears. He was spiritually in debt to God as a result of his sins and he was bankrupt before God, but he trusted in God's promise and on the basis of Abraham's faith, God made a deposit of righteousness into Abraham's account. God put his own righteousness into the account of Abraham so that he could draw upon the righteousness of God. Paul says that that is the Gospel and that is how the Gospel works. This is what happens to every one who truly believes in Jesus. We are bankrupt spiritually and we have nothing with which we can barter or pay our way to God into His Heaven, but God is willing, when we believe in Jesus, to allow His treasure of righteousness that comes through Christ to be put into our account so that now we are counted righteous by God. Jesus died on the cross to pay our sins and to give us His righteousness so that we can become the friends of God! That is the Gospel.

Let's read the last few verses of Romans 4,

¹ Romans 6:23

²² That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³ But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord...

The Apostle Paul, again, is arguing against this group of people who say that faith plus works is how we get into a right relationship with God.

Now, let's move back to James 2, because he is addressing a different audience and a different kind of threat. James and Paul are on the exact same page in their teaching about faith. They do not contradict one another. They are addressing two different problems, but they believe the same thing about faith in Jesus.

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

James first takes us to a scene in Abraham's later years. Abraham is about 115 years old when this incident occurs. It is a scene from Genesis 22. God had made a covenant with Abraham over 30 years earlier, in Genesis 12 and in Genesis 15. When Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born to Abraham. Isaac is promised by God to be “the son of the promise”; the son who would bring about this great nation with these many, many descendants. When we come to Genesis 22, we believe that Isaac is a young man because he is able to carry the wood up the mountain for his father. He is probably between ten to fifteen years of age.

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

What a stunning command! It is as though God is making it so difficult by the way He even gives this command, “Take your son”, that is hard. “Your only son”, that is even harder. “Your son, Isaac”. This is welling up emotion in Abraham's heart as he is thinking about this; “The son whom you love. Take him up to the mountain of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering.” What a huge test of Abraham's faith this is. Remember that God had promised that through Isaac many descendants would come; a whole Nation of descendants, as many as there are stars in the sky.

Isaac was a young man at this point. He had no children. He wasn't unmarried at this point, so how was Isaac going to be the father of a nation when Isaac is going to die at fifteen years of age? How is that going to happen? Abraham is going to reason, “God, if you ask me to offer my son as a burnt offering, I know that you are a covenant-keeping God and I believe that you will raise him from the dead so that he can fulfill your promise.”

How did Abraham respond to this test? We find that in Verse 3,

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning...

That is always striking to me. If there ever was a day that I would sleep in it would be the day that God told me to get up and offer my son, my only son, the son whom I love. His faith acted and that is James' point. His faith obeyed! They cut the wood for the burnt offering and they went to the place God told them. We read in Verse 5,

⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and we will come again to you.”

Abraham believed God. Hebrews 11 helps us to understand this statement.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

The writer of Hebrews is making it very clear that Abraham absolutely believed that God would raise up his son from the dead, so he was going to obey. He was not going to let any obstacle stand in the way of his faith acting. He believed in God's ability and in God's faithfulness to make good on His promise so Isaac and Abraham went up the

mountain and Isaac asked, "Where is the sacrifice?" Abraham responds that God will provide. Abraham binds Isaac on the alter and he raises the knife to Heaven,

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

Abraham feared God. He passed the test. He justified his faith. He had vindicated his faith and he had proven his faith. James teaches that Abraham's faith was proven and demonstrated by his actions, as we read in Verse 22,

²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works...

We have to ask the question: is this time, in Genesis 22, the time that Abraham was accepted by God and the time that God declared him righteous? The answer to that question is, "No." Remember that Abraham is 115 years old at this time, so when James uses this example, he is not saying that that was the time that Abraham was justified, brought into God's family, and secured in his relationship with God. That happened some thirty to forty years earlier. James does not want us to misunderstand and think that he is teaching a "works" gospel. That is the reason he goes back to Genesis 15 in Verse 23, when he says,

²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"--and he was called a friend of God.

When did that happen? That statement took place when Abraham was 85 years old, not when he was 115 years old. James is saying that statement God made some thirty or forty years earlier in Abraham's life was justified, vindicated, and proven when Abraham was 115, when God tested his faith. James is acknowledging that faith is God's only requirement to be accepted, and that is why he brings up Genesis 15. Faith is the sole condition upon which God declares the sinner as righteous, but James is saying for us to look at Abraham's life then and now, and see how that faith was vindicated, how he was justified, and how it was proven that he really had the life of God. James is telling us to look at Abraham's life and look at what happened. Living faith always proves itself by showing itself in some external change of life. Notice, again, Romans 4,

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Paul was saying that Abraham was justified before God when he first believed in God and believed in His promises. Not by works are we justified before God. James is saying that Abraham was justified, he was proven, he was vindicated before men, for himself and for us, over 30 years later when he demonstrated the depth of his faith commitment by his willingness to offer up Isaac and by his willingness to raise a sharp knife over Isaac's body. Abraham's radical obedience vindicated, or proved, the validity of Abraham's faith, a faith that was established thirty to forty years earlier.

James says, in Verse 24,

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

James is answering the question, "How could we prove or demonstrate or validate that God has declared us righteous and that God has accepted us before men? For ourselves, how can we know it?" James answers, "Not by faith alone. No one vindicates or proves their faith is living, useful, and beneficial unto salvation by their profession. Faith is invisible to man. We cannot see if we have a living faith or not. The only way that we can see it is by the change that such faith makes. Man is not vindicated or justified or proven alone; faith that is all by itself without a change of life. A person is proven to be in the family of God, accepted in the beloved and a part of God's redeemed, by the way God works in them, demonstrated through their obedience and demonstrated through their life." That is James' argument.

Now we come to the second illustration, Rahab, when James asks, "Do you want another example of how living faith makes a practical difference in a life?"

²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

How do we know that Rahab's faith was real? How was Rahab's faith vindicated as living? It was by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way.

I don't know how familiar you are with Rahab's story, but we find it in Joshua 2 in order to consider it in some of the details of that story. James uses two completely different people as examples of living faith. Two people could not be more different than Rahab and Abraham. Rahab was a Canaanite; Abraham was a Jew and the Father of the Jewish Nation. Rahab was an extremely sinful woman, she was a prostitute; Abraham was a law-abiding man, he was a patriarch. Rahab was a commoner; Abraham was the father of a great nation and esteemed by the community. Yet, James says, both had living faith in God and they demonstrated that living faith by the way they lived. James puts Abraham and Rahab together to show that faith in the God of the Bible will transform the life of any person regardless of their past, regardless of their nationality, regardless of their position in society, and regardless of the number and severity of their sins. All are invited to receive God's transforming grace and God's transforming mercy, and when real faith takes hold in a life, that life, regardless of how moral or immoral it was prior to faith, changes and that life follows God in radical obedience to Him.

Rahab's fascinating story is written in Joshua 2. Joshua, the leader of Israel, sent two spies into the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. They lodged at Rahab's inn of ill repute. This was a good choice because foreigners are not going to be noticed in a house of prostitution, so two strange guys going to a prostitute's home and a prostitute's place of business will not necessarily raise the eyebrows of others in the community. The Canaanite king heard a rumor that two people from this wondering multitude called "the Israelites" have been sent to spy out the land. He wants to find these two men to kill them and keep them from doing their work. He sends a number of guards and they come to Rahab's house.

³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from." ⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.

Why would Rahab risk her life for these two strangers? If the guards searched her home and found these two spies, Rahab would die; she would be executed. Why did she risk her life? Why would Rahab betray her own countrymen? The Bible tells us that it was because of faith in the God of Scripture; faith in YEHWEH, the God of the Israelites. We continue with the story,

⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you... ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath."

How did she know this? It was by faith. Rahab's testimony "sounds" like real faith, but how do we know whether her faith was real or dead? The answer is that she hid the men, she asked for their protection, and she threw the red cord out of the window when they came in conquest against her land.

Let us think about these two examples of living faith for a moment and let us ask the question, "What kind of works prove a living faith?" Is it going to church? Is it trying to be fairly moral? What kind of works prove a living faith? As we look at Rahab's and Abraham's life, we recognize these two precious people put their lives on the line. They put everything they had, everything that they owned, and everything that was precious to them on the line, and if God were not real and if God did not fulfill His promises then their lives would be absolutely, utterly lost in darkness. Abraham's son would be dead. He would have left his home for nothing. Rahab would have been an outcast and a traitor and she would have undoubtedly been executed along with her house.

This is the kind of radical faith that Jesus describes in Luke 14:

²⁶ *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”*²⁷ *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple...*³³ *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”*

Living faith is faith that says that God is more valuable to anything that we hold dear. That is convicting and that is astounding and that is worth thinking about.

Faith is not living because we Bible studies or because we serve in the church in some way. Faith is defined and demonstrated in the context of the big positions of our lives: what are we going to live for, who are we going to live for, and how are we going to live?

Listen to what John MacArthur writes on this point: “The issue is not do you go to church, do you read your Bible, or do you have a little spiritual activity? The issue is, when it comes down to the crux of why you live and what is valuable, your faith in God is more valuable to you than everything you hold most dear and you'll put your own life on the line and you'll put all your dreams and hopes on the line because you have such implicit and total trust in Him. That's the issue.”

By way of application, I want to make two thoughts as we close. None of us gets to decide how we are going to die or when we are going to die. That is God's role and God's prerogative. What is important is that when we die we will stand before Him and God would say to us, “You are my friend.” Remember that Abraham was called a friend of God.

First, every person, in order to be a friend of God, must be justified by faith. The new life of God comes to us through faith in Jesus, not through works. Have you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus?

The second application is that every person who is a friend of God must be justified by their works. In other words, there needs to be evidence of a living faith or we have to wonder if we have a living faith, a faith that saves us. Living faith vindicates itself before men through a changed life and through visible fruit. Be wary of the kind of faith in God that does not bring you salvation and that does not bring you new life. God urges us in 2 Corinthians 13,

⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

Warren Wiersbe provides a brief list of questions for us to ask ourselves. Let us consider and examine ourselves to see whether or not we are in the faith.

1. Was there a time when I honestly realized I was a sinner and admitted this to myself and to God?
2. Was there a time when my heart stirred me to flee from the wrath of God and when I became concerned about my sins?
3. Do I truly understand the Gospel; that Christ died for MY sins and then rose again? Do I confess that I cannot save myself?
4. Did I sincerely repent of my sins, making the decision to turn from them? Do I now hate sin and fear God or do I secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
6. Has there been a change in my life? Do I seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that I have been with Jesus?

Let's ask these questions of ourselves, examine ourselves, and test ourselves so that we would gain assurance of the joy of our salvation in Jesus.