

valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." And the strength of Abraham's faith enabled him cheerfully to part with his son, his only son, Isaac, and lay him on the altar to be offered as a sacrifice in obedience to the divine command. Thus his faith wrought with his works, or manifested itself by his works, and by works was his faith perfected or completed, and yielded fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. This Apostle has been accused of teaching "another Gospel" than that of Jesus Christ and the Apostle of the Gentiles. But of this we have no proof; we have, on the contrary, found hitherto that he holds exactly the same views of divine truth, in reference to the worthlessness of a merely nominal profession, and the efficacy of true faith in purifying heart and life; and he here declares that the justification of Abraham by works, for which he contends, is so far from being inconsistent with the doctrine of grace, that it actually confirms it. This is an additional proof, if further evidence were wanted, that James treats not of justification, properly so called, but of the proof or evidence of it. He affirms that the justification of Abraham by works is a confirmation of the divine testimony that he was justified by faith. Now, how can the one be a confirmation of the other, if the term "justified" has exactly the same meaning in both cases? The thing is impossible; for faith and works are here directly opposite to each other. If we are justified by the one, we cannot, from the very nature of things, be justified by the other. The two are just as opposite to one another as light and darkness, truth and error. Hence the Apostle declares "if it is of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it is of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work." Thus it appears that justification by faith, or by grace, is absolutely incompatible with justification by works, using the term in its proper or peculiar sense, and cannot be confirmed or established by it. But if we understand James to employ the term in its ordinary acceptation, the sense it usually bears in common language—as denoting not justification, strictly so called, but the manifestation or proof and evidence of it—the justification, not of our persons, but of our character—then his doctrine is both perfectly consistent with the scheme of grace, and tends to confirm it. By this act of obedience, the faith and piety of Abraham were gloriously displayed, and God honored him more highly than ever by renewing his covenant with him, and admitting him to most intimate fellowship, so that he was called the Friend of God.

Verses 24 to end. "Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." After what has been said, these verses require no explanation. The Apostle's design, we have seen, was to vindicate holiness or good works from the aspersions of careless and immoral professors, who would exclude them entirely from the scheme of Christianity, because they do not constitute the ground of our acceptance with God. Now, to show that they occupy a place, and a prominent place, in the system of revealed truth, he selects the example of Abraham, who had been renowned in all ages for his faith, and shows that he was no less distinguished for his piety and cheerful obedience to the divine will, in the most trying circumstances; in other words, that his faith was fruitful in holy obedience—not a mere speculative opinion, or barren profession, but a living principle of action, working by love, purifying the heart, animating and regulating the conduct. And from this instance he draws the conclusion that a man's character is to be estimated by his conduct and not by his professors—the latter being so often hollow and insincere. Further, to show the necessity of good works in every station of life, he adduces the example of one who had no pretensions to that eminent faith by which the "father of the faithful" was distinguished, but who, according to the measure of the grace given her, walked in his steps. Rahab, the harlot, showed the sincerity of her faith