

James 2:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Was not Abraham justified (edikaiōthē, ἐδικαιώθη) by works when he offered Isaac? James references Genesis 22 to show faith's obedience. Abraham's earlier justification (Genesis 15) was by faith; here, works demonstrate that faith. The verb can mean declared righteous or vindicated.

Reformed interpreters note that James speaks of demonstrative justification before men, evidencing genuine faith Paul describes. Faith leads to costly obedience even when promises seem threatened.

Historical Context

Judaizers boasted in Abrahamic lineage. James reminds them that Abraham's faith manifested in obedience. Paul's use of Abraham in Romans 4 emphasizes initial justification; James highlights subsequent obedience. Together they present a full picture.",

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Abraham's obedience challenge your own sacrifices?
2. In what areas is God calling you to demonstrate faith through costly action?
3. How can you keep God's promises in view while obeying difficult commands?

Interlinear Text

Αβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαίωθη

Abraham G3588 **father** G3962 **our** G2257 **not** G3756 **by** G1537 **works** G2041 **Was** G1344

ἀνενέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ

when he had offered G399 **Isaac** G2464 **son** G3588 **G846** **upon** G1909 **G3588**

θυσιαστήριον

the altar

G2379

Additional Cross-References

John 8:39 (References Abraham): They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

Matthew 12:37 (Righteousness): For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.