

Alone, But Not Alone

Jeff Bucknam | James 2:14-26

ICE BREAKER: What's something that people always say they are going to do but never actually follow through on?

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT IN CONTEXT:

How does the immediate context—especially James 2:1–13 on showing partiality—prepare the readers of James for this passage? As you read James 2:14–26 together, track the things 'said' and compare those to the things 'shown' / 'seen.' Why is a 'seen' faith so important to James?

Why does James draw from two stories in Abraham's life, from Genesis 22 and Genesis 15:6?

CONNECTING TO JESUS AND HIS GOSPEL:

Some claim James and Paul are at odds about the Gospel, particularly about justification. Yet, both quote Genesis 15:6 to support their teaching (James 2:23 and Galatians 3:4 and Romans 4:3).

To help us see that James and Paul are not at odds, it has been noted (see article below) that an equation can help: Faith = Justification + Works

What is the danger of putting works on the left side of the equation? (A keen concern for Paul since works can't earn God's justification.) What is the danger of eliminating works from the right side of the equation? (A keen concern for James since a work-less faith is a 'dead' faith). Which error are you more keen to notice in others? And yourself? Why?

LIVING OUT THE TRUTH:

Think back to this past week and your actions. What would you say they revealed about your faith? If you had been watched and others saw your 'work,' what would they say about your faith in Jesus?

Do you feel like sometimes you are just 'believing' but not doing? If so, how can you reconsider what you are really believing about Jesus? Read Romans 3:21–26.

Pray for one another, that you would know the faith and show the faith, to rejoice and walk in the fact that 'We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone.'

PARENTING MOMENT & FAMILY FOCUS:

Building from insights discussed above, read Eph 2:1–10 and James 2:14–26. How can we help each other grow in the truth that 'We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone'?

FURTHER STUDY:

Two articles at Crossway.org give more background on justification: '10 Key Bible Verses on Justification' and 'Does James Contradict Paul?'



True Religion

THE BOOK OF JAMES

This page gets us into the text for the next sermon. The more familiarity we have with God's Word, the better we can see God and all that He has for us.

In the days leading up to next week, set aside a few minutes to read the text and reflect on these questions. A prayer to start: 'Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your law' - Psalm 119:18

- 1. After emphasizing works in chapter 2, James teaches about 'words' starting in chapter 3. Why are words so powerful?**
- 2. List the vivid analogies James uses. How do they contribute to James' point?**
- 3. The root word in Greek that James uses in v. 2 (translated as 'perfect') is also used previously in James in 1:4 ('perfect'); 1:17 ('perfect'); 2:8 ('fulfill'); 2:22 ('completed'). Reread those verses for the depth of the term. How can James' word about our words help us be 'perfect' (James 1:2)?**
- 4. One way to avoid the negative effects of 'the tongue' would be to never (or very rarely) speak at all. But if that happened, what would we miss out on (see James 9-10)?**
- 5. What in this text confuses you?**
- 6. What in this text compels you?**
- 7. Spend some time in prayer to God, thanking Him for His Word, for the strength to use your words well, not to 'curse' but to 'bless.'**