

**July 9, 2017**

**(Unwavering: Living Out a Single Minded Faith Series)**

***The Faith That Justifies: James 2:14-26***

**I. The Gospel: We are justified by faith.**

Our most precious doctrine at Perry Creek Church is the Gospel: that we are saved by faith, totally forgiven and justified before God in this life and eternally. **James 2:14-26**, probably the most controversial passage in the Bible, at first seems to contradict this belief (**James 2:14-16**), but in fact, James is clarifying more of what it means to be made right with God by faith.

Fundamentally, our faith is a gift of God, apart from any works of law (**Jn.3:16, Acts 16:31, Rom.3:28**). As broken sinners we fall short of the glory of God (**Rom.3:23**). We cannot fix ourselves, and we must, with God's help, reach out in faith to God who will exchange our flawed lives for the life of Jesus, full of innocence and glory. We are forgiven, accepted in God's presence, and loved as God's own children.

**II. James' clarification....that we are justified by a faith that works.**

Once we are saved, James clarifies to us that the transforming power of the Gospel changes us, within and without, to obey God and do good works in the overflow of His love. Real faith will inevitably grow into works. James uses five different arguments (logical & Biblical) to prove that faith that doesn't work is dead (**James 2:26**). In **James 2**, the author argues by analogy (**vv.14-17**), by objection (**v.18**), by demons (**v.19**), by actions of Abraham (**vv.20-24**), and the actions a prostitute named Rahab (**v.25**).

**III. Our response: Look for a faith that works.**

For assurance of your faith, look for a faith that is a relationship with God, ebbing and flowing daily in our feelings of closeness with our Heavenly Father. Yet God is also constant, working in and through us, and gives us confidence when we see that we have a faith that works, changing our lives and those around us for good here on earth and eternally. As maturing believers, we need reminding that faith means growth in understanding and trust of God. We believe first and then live out that trust. Our behavior will always betray our belief.

**Prayer:** Open our hearts and lower our defenses to the Gospel, the Good News. May we continually trust You, Triune God, so that we will have a faith that works, changing our lives as we bear fruit for the Kingdom.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the only basis of being saved? Why?
2. If we are saved by a faith that works, according to James, what exactly are examples of the deeds and works that we should see in our lives?
3. For a faith that works, how much do we have to believe, and how much do we have to do? Are we set up for failure?
4. Have you felt the transforming power of God in your own life as a result of your faith? What in your own life proves that your faith is alive?
5. How have you seen "faith that works" at Perry Creek or in the lives of other Christians? (See Matt.25:31-40)
6. As a follower of Jesus by faith, what kinds of works do you see or hope to see in your own small group?