

Faith Works

Week #4: Faith That Works

James 2:14-26

Martin Luther on James

“St. James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to the others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.” (Preface 1522)

- James 2:14-16 - *14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?*

When it comes to faith **works** speak **louder** than **words**.

- James 2:17-20,26
 - *17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*
 - *18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.*
 - *19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*
 - *20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?*
 - *26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

No works = a **dead, phony, useless, demon-like** faith

Martin Luther on James

“This is what St. James means when he says in his Epistle, 2:26: ‘Faith without works is dead.’ That is, as the works do not follow, it is a sure sign that there is no faith there; but only an empty thought and dream, which they falsely call faith.” (Sermons of Martin Luther 2:2:308)

No works = a **terrifying** fate

- John 15:1,2 & 5-6 - *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful...5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.*
- James 2:21-24 - *21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[e] and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.*

Faith at work = a **living, genuine, saving** faith.

Martin Luther on James

“O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly.”

- Ephesians 2:8-10 - *8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Faith that Works - Straight A’s

1. **Assess**
2. **Adopt**
3. **Align**

Points to Ponder

- 1) In what ways is Abraham a great example of faith in action? (Consider what he was called to do on several occasions and what he was asked to believe even though it was humanly impossible) How does the example of his faith in action help us consider what it looks like to trust God and his promises in the face of uncertainty?
- 2) The devil’s greatest tool is doubt, and he will use these words to cause the Christian undo worry that their faith in action isn’t saving faith. Is that true for you? Why is that the case? It’s at times like this we need to also remember Abraham as an example, how so? (Check out Genesis 12 and 15 for a reminder)
- 3) Agree or Disagree: The key to faith in action is a transformational devotional life. How can you use the Straight A’s to help put your faith in action each and every day? What time of day will you do it and what is your plan for carrying it out?

Homework: James 3:1-12