

**T**oday we continue our journey through the letter of James including the very well-known passage that faith without works is dead. (2:17) James is a pastoral letter to the Jews of the *diaspora* (the dispersed members of the twelve tribes of Israel), wherein he views the Mosaic Law (Pentateuch or Torah) and its practice as now fulfilled by Christ's **New Covenant**, to be **believed and lived out in practice**, as the source of man's Salvation. Faith (belief) must lead to conduct (works) that makes clear the New Life in Christ, which is practical discipleship; it is not words only, but actions too. "Actions speak louder than words" as the old saying goes.



The best known doctrines of many Protestants: Faith alone and/or Scripture alone cannot be supported by the Catholic Church. For one thing it would make every person his/her own theologian. Martin Luther, for instance, did not like the epistle of James (even wanting it removed from the Bible) as it did not fit with his personal agenda – leading on to the Reformation. Luther believed that **faith alone** is necessary for salvation even to the extent of adding the word “alone” to his German translation of Romans 3:28 so to discredit James. (<https://bit.ly/3n9hriK>) Catholic theology, on the other hand, holds that faith is a gift urging us towards God, leading us to **justifying grace** following one's baptism. Faith does not act alone. The life of believers manifests obedience (1:5), love (Gal 5:6), and good works (Eph 2:10). With faith in Christ, believers will also lay down their lives in striving to love as Christ loved. (CCC 818, 1721, 2542)

Long before Luther's time, the early Church Fathers recognized the role of both faith and works in the process of salvation. For example, Clement of Alexandria ~ “When we hear, ‘Your faith has saved you,’ we do not understand the Lord to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever manner, even if works have not followed...” And St. Jerome ~ “But since in the Law no one is justified before God, it is evident that the just man lives by faith.’ It should be noted that he does not say that a man, a person, lives by faith, lest it be thought that he is condemning good works...” (<https://bit.ly/3to1TKm>) From Augustine, “Let us now consider the question of faith. In the first place, we feel that we should advise the faithful that they would endanger the salvation of their souls if they acted on the false assurance that faith alone is sufficient for salvation or that they need not perform good works in order to be saved.” (<https://bit.ly/3tq7n9G>)

James (and the early Church) was authoritatively right in saying our faith is plainly “demonstrated by our works” (Jas 2:18) as we live our lives in accordance with Christ's teachings and striving to be like him. Moreover, this authority works infallibly through time in the active ministry of the whole Church, viz., the body of Christ who is the head and we the members; seen specifically through Christ's authoritative minister of infallibility, the Rock on which the Church is built i.e., Peter and his successors of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. (CCC 245, 750)

In connecting today's three readings (and the Psalm), we note especially that James doesn't mean just **any** works; he means faithful works of charitable, trustful discipleship – “Any man who would come after me let him deny himself...who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. (Mk 8:35-35) Lord Yahweh comes to my help, this is why insult has not touched me, why I have set my face like flint and know that I shall not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 50:7) **All** today's readings remind us that Yahweh is our help so we trust in him, cling to him, have faith in him to do what he asks of us. Let our prayer be “I shall pass my life in the presence of Yahweh, in the land of the living.” (Ps 116:9)