

# Faith and Works

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In this meeting we look at “Faith and Works”. To start our reflections we look at James the Apostle, celebrated in the Church calendar on the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month, and then move on to the Epistle of James.

## JAMES THE APOSTLE

Of the three apostles who comprised the inner circle of Jesus' disciples (Peter, James and John), we know the least about the apostle James. He was the eldest brother of the apostle John and that their father's name was Zebedee. James, his brother John, Peter and Andrew were all partners in a fishing business prior to being called by Christ Jesus to follow Him.

James and his brother John, together with Peter, were privileged to behold the Transfiguration ([Matt 17:1](#) , [Mark 9:2](#) , [Luke 9:28](#)), to witness the healing of Peter's mother-in-law ([Mark 1:29](#)) and the raising of the daughter of Jairus ([Mark 5:37](#) , [Luke 8:51](#)), and to be called aside to watch and pray with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before His death ([Matt 26:37](#) , [Mark 14:33](#)).

Jesus nicknamed James with his brother John "sons of thunder" ([Mark 3:17](#)), perhaps meaning that they were headstrong, hot-tempered, and impulsive. On one occasion ([Luke 9:54](#)), Jesus and the disciples were refused the hospitality of a Samaritan village, and James and John proposed to call down fire from heaven on the offenders. On another occasion ([Matt 20:20-23](#) , [Mark 10:35-41](#)), they asked Jesus for a special place of honour in the Kingdom, and were told that the place of honour is the place of suffering.

Circa AD 42, shortly before Passover ([Acts 12](#)), James was beheaded by order of King Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. He was the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom, and the only one of the Twelve Apostles whose death is recorded in the New Testament.

## EPISTLE OF JAMES

There are three mentions of note in the New Testament of those bearing the name James. It was recognised for the most part that James the son of Zebedee was martyred too early for him to be the author. There is no evidence in the early church that James, the son of Alphaeus was author. When it became generally understood that James the brother of the Lord was the probable author, and was called an apostle by Paul [Gal 1:19](#), the Epistle satisfied the test of apostolicity and was accepted into the canon.

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## DISCUSSION THOUGHTS:

### 1. Faith and Works

- James says: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith (*pistin*), and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. [Jam 2:18](#) Ye see then how that by works (*ergOn*) a man is justified, and not by faith only. [Jam 2:24](#)
- Paul says: For by grace are ye saved through faith (*pisteOs*); and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works (*ergOn*), lest any man should boast. [Eph 2:8-9](#) ... for by the works (*ergOn*) of the law shall no flesh be justified. [Gal 2:16](#)

### 2. Faith

- The just (righteous) shall live by faith (*pisteOs*). [Hab 2:4](#), [Rom 1:17](#)
- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth (*pisteuOn*) in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. [John 3:16](#)
- ... faith (*pistis*) is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. [Heb 11:1](#) ;
- Faith in God may be described as: personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as delivered for our offences and raised for our justification which impels us to loving obedience and trust in the promises of God, our Father.
- Examples: Faith in action [Heb 11](#) , The sinner [Luke 7:36-50](#)

### 3. Works

- “Jesus ... said unto them, This is the work (*ergon*) of God, that ye believe (*pisteusEte*) on him whom he hath sent.” [John 6:28-29](#)
- ... faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone [Jam 2:15-17](#)
- The rich ruler [Luke 18:18-25](#). The malefactor [Luke 23:40-43](#)
- Right Motive: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” [Matt 5:16](#). ... Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me. [Matt 25:40](#)
- Examples: Feeding the hungry [Acts 6:1-3](#) , Clothing the poor [Acts 9:36-42](#) , Prison ministries [Heb 13:3](#) , Hospitality [1 Tim 3:2](#) , [Titus 1:8](#), Sharing [Heb 13:16](#) , The Good Samaritan [Luke 10:30-35](#)

### 4. Can we reconcile the view of James and Paul?

- Our Lord said: Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. [John 14:11](#)