

Session 5 Take-Home: Faith Working Through Love

What We Found

We hunted for "faith alone" and found it exactly once in all of Scripture: "You see that a man is justified by works and **not by faith alone**" (Jas 2:24). James's question is about salvation itself, "Can his faith save him?" (2:14), and his verdict lands twice: "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (2:17); "faith apart from works is dead" (2:26). His exhibits: Abraham on the mountain, where faith "was completed by works," and Rahab of Jericho, justified by the risky deed of receiving the spies.

Paul agrees: his fight in those letters was over "works **of the law**", circumcision and the Mosaic system demanded of converts, not the obedience of love; and no works of any kind, charity included, merit the grace of initial justification. The same Paul wrote: "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but **faith working through love**" (Gal 5:6); God "will render to every man according to his works," giving eternal life to those who by patience in well-doing seek glory (Rom 2:6-7); and faith that moves mountains without love "is nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). Jesus's own judgment scene (Mt 25:31-40) examines works of love: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

The Catholic teaching is not "earn it." Initial justification remains a pure gift, and the works of love are grace bearing fruit, "prepared beforehand" by God himself (Eph 2:10). The claim is about what living faith **is**: charity is its animating soul, not its receipt. Dead faith and living faith differ as a corpse differs from a body.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Augustine of Hippo

On Faith and Works (5th century)

Augustine wrote an entire treatise against teachers who claimed faith by itself, without a changed life, suffices for salvation. The faith which saves, he teaches in substance, is the faith that works through love; a faith that refuses to work is not what the Gospel means by the word.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Gregory the Great

Homilies on the Gospels, 30 (6th century)

The proof of love is shown in deeds: love of God is never idle, for it works great things if it truly exists, and if it declines to work, it is not love. The take-home test is not "do you feel saved?" but "is your love doing anything?"

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. John of the Cross

Sayings of Light and Love (16th century)

"At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love." The Catechism quotes this line in its teaching on the judgment (CCC 1022). Not sincerity alone, not profession without practice, not feelings: the judgment exposes whether faith became love, because love is what faith was for.

Live It This Week

Do the named work. The concrete work of love you named in the session. Love that stays theoretical is a corpse.

Pray Galatians 5:6. Each morning, ask: "Lord, give my faith its hands today."

Read Matthew 25:31-46 once more, slowly, alone, and let the King's exam questions read you.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love."

Galatians 5:6 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: read John 15:1-11, Jesus's picture of the connected life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1814-1816, 1826