



April 10, 17, 24 2018

JAMES: EPISTLE OF STRAW OR THE STRAW THAT STIRS THE DRINK?

"In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. 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 to the New Testament, 1522 Martin Luther (later removed by Luther from subsequent editions)

QUESTION FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION Tuesday April 10

- 1) The book of James focuses less on the questions of salvation and grace and more on what the author expects in terms of the behavior of the Christian community. According to Martin Luther, it focuses more on our response to Christ than God's response to us and doesn't lift up Christ and Gospel clearly enough.
- 2) How is being a Christian supposed to change the way we live?
- 3) If salvation is totally dependent on God's free gift of grace, what is our motivation for living in obedience to God's Will?
- 4) Do you find it easier to talk about or demonstrate through your actions your faith? Is the same true for you about love?
- 5) If you are willing to share, offer one way that you would choose to begin acting out your faith in some relationship or situation? If it is likely to be very challenging, what are some ideas for helping you stay the course?
- 6) Do you prefer sermons that focus clearly on what God has done and is doing (like grace) or do you appreciate more sermons that give you specific ideas about what to do?
- 7) James says, "Faith without works is dead." James 2:17 What do you think he means?