Repentance, Faith, and Works September 26, 2021

*James 2:14-26 Series: The Unstuck Life: Believe. Connect. Share.*

Faith in God is not just believing he exists but doing what he says because you believe he will keep his promises. – B. Clayton Bell

Intro: Bernardo Provenzano arrested with 5 Bibles

1. Dead faith = your faith is all talk and no action
2. The issue is whether you have saving faith not whether faith is enough

v. 14 *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?*

v. 14 *Can that faith save him?*

v. 17 *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

1. A case study in empty words and dead faith

v. 15 *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food …*

v. 16 *… one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?*

* How is it possible that a person could pray to God for help before murdering someone?
* Is James teaching that a person is saved by faith alone or faith and good works? How do you know?
* What “works” do you think God would consider evidence of genuine saving faith?
* Could someone fake genuine faith by doing some good works for the sake of appearance? What would that look like?
1. Demon faith = you know what’s right but don’t care to do it
2. True faith doesn’t exist without works

v. 18 … *someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.”*

v. 18 *Show me your faith apart from your works …*

v. 18 *I will show you my faith by my works.*

1. A case study in good theology and terrible living

v. 19 *You believe that God is one; you do well.*

v. 19 *Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

* What are some of the things that demons probably believe about God and the Bible?
* Why do demons “shudder”?
* What would it look like for a person to be knowledgeable about the Bible but to have faith like a demon?
* Does God treat people who “believe in God” any differently than atheists?
1. Saving faith = your faith is clear from your actions
2. Abraham: a case study in saving faith evidenced by obedience

v. 21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?*

Genesis 22:12 *He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”*

v. 22 *faith was active along with his works*

v. 22 *faith was completed by his works*

v. 23 *the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”*

1. Rahab: a case study in saving faith evidenced by love

v. 25 *was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works*

v. 25 *she received the messengers and sent them out by another way*

Joshua 2:9 *I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.*

1. Do you need to exchange a dead faith for a living one?

v. 24 *a person is justified by works and not by faith alone*

v. 26 *as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead*

Matthew 7:16 *You will recognize them by their fruits.*

* What do you learn about the nature of saving faith from Abraham’s life? Was his life always consistent with his faith?
* What was it about Rahab that led to her being saved and the other residents of Jericho being judged?
* Does this passage and the past week’s lessons in The Unstuck Life give you more or less assurance that you have saving faith?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Matthew 4:1-11.

Notes