

Day 6

Faith is a Verb

Read James 2

Lord, you have my complete trust today. I find everything that I need in you and so much more that I desire. I am full, but not satisfied. I want more of you. May you become greater and greater in my life, as I become less and less.

Align my heart, soul, mind, and actions to this end. May the faith I have in you be alive in love so that when others see me, they see you. And may I love not only with words, but with actions and in truth. Amen.

Day 7

More Happiness than a Warm Puppy

Read James 2:1-11

In the *Peanuts Treasury*, Lucy tells Charlie Brown, "You learn more when you lose." To which Charlie Brown replies, "Well then I must be the smartest person in the world!" Life, as seen through the 17,897 timeless Peanuts comic strips created by cartoonist Charles Schulz, has certainly never been fair for good ol' Charlie Brown. Lucy's cruel commitment to pulling the football away from our trusting, enthusiastic punter, the kite-eating tree, the winning run that is never scored in baseball, and unrequited love are all proof of that. Schulz was fond of saying that failure was much funnier than success.

Although that may be true in the comics, aren't you thankful that God operates differently? James cautions us against giving unfair treatment to others as not to tarnish the effectiveness of the light of Christ in and through our lives. And what's more, Christ's goodness, mercy, life, love, and salvation is promised to anyone who loves God. Life is still not fair, but we can know something greater than the happiness that Charlie Brown found in a warm puppy. The life-giving promises found in the word bring a hope that is firm and secure for this life and the next.

Dear Lord, I praise you for the hope that is mine today because of Jesus Christ. Fill me with your life-giving Spirit. Bind your word to my heart and mind so that my life will be seen by the world as a reflection of the Gospel of Christ. Amen.

Day 8

Beauty for Ashes

"Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment." James 2:12-13

1. Have you recently shown judgment without mercy? Spend a few moments in prayerful consideration and confession.

2. Have you recently been unmercifully judged?

3. There is good news for the oppressed! Isaiah 61 exemplifies God's gift of mercy over judgment: "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.

He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair.

In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

Heavenly Father, I praise you that when man intended to harm me through harsh judgment, you “intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done.” Turn this ash into something beautiful, this pain into blessing, and this despair into a call to worship in spirit and in truth. For your glory and in Jesus’ holy name, Amen.

Day 9

Outrageous Nonsense

Read James 2:14-19

The basic premise of NBC’s comedy “Seinfeld,” the widely popular sitcom from the nineties, features Jerry Seinfeld and his friends going through everyday life. It is truly a ridiculous show “about nothing” that we can all relate to at some point or another.

George Costanza is the impulsive, dishonest, insecure, neurotic best friend of Jerry. In season 5, George poses as a marine biologist while on a date with a former college crush. During a walk on the beach, the pair encounter a beached whale. George marches into the sea alone to save the mammal and get the girl. After saving the day, however, he reveals the truth about his occupation and she rejects him immediately.

The tomfoolery of this silly sitcom is not unlike the truth found in James 2. Although George’s ability to enthusiastically live out a lie accidentally brings life to the beached whale in our story, this does not change the fact that he is actually out of a job and never worked with marine animals. At the end of the day he is not and will never be a marine biologist.

Likewise when we say we have faith in God and do not show it by our actions, what good is it? “Isn’t it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?” (James 2:17 MSG) Can such a faith save anyone? It might unwittingly save one life, but will otherwise be dead and useless.

Lord, make me more aware of your presence in my life today and allow it to change my perspective. I will be your hands and feet today, living my faith out loud! I choose to look to the interests of others before my own. Not to me O Lord, not to me, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

For deeper study:

Philippians 2:1-13, 1 Timothy 4:12-16, Matthew 5:13-16, 1 John 3:18

Day 10

Perfecting Your Faith

Read James 2:20-26

What are you known for? Is “a person of faith” on that list? James 2 binds faith and deeds together in no uncertain terms. Faith and actions work together. Actions make our faith completely alive.

Charles Wesley’s hymn, “A Charge to Keep I Have,” is a beautiful reminder of this urgent responsibility:

A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify, A never-dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age, My calling to fulfill: Oh, may it all my pow’rs engage To do my Master’s will!

Arm me with jealous care, As in Thy sight to live; And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray, And on Thyself rely, Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.