

Working Faith Essential
#434 Week of 09-02-19

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Christians have always had a high work ethic. The annual celebration of Labor Day in America, the first Monday of September each year, reflects this ethic. Hard work can raise our standard of living and provide the necessities of life.

Work also has eternal significance. James 2:21 asks, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?” The expected answer is Yes. Does this mean God grants access to heaven on the basis of our works, our so-called good deeds? No! Titus 3:5 answers. “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” We do not merit heaven. Salvation is by grace on the basis of God’s mercy.

What about our works? We may translate James 2:21 like this. “Was not Abraham our father vindicated by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?” Jesus uses the same word when He says, “Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (Matthew 11:19).

If we say we are Christians and we trust Christ, how we live should vindicate our faith. Christianity involves “faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). “Faith without works is useless” (James 2:20). Consider this carefully. Works are never meritorious but good works are necessary

Mindsets and Attitudes
#521, Week of 9-9-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

What gets into serial killers and rapists? Are they uncontrollable, unmanageable, and incorrigible? “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so” (Romans 8:6-7).

The word “mind” does not refer to our thinking apparatus. It relates to our bent of mind. It concerns our inclinations. It refers to our mindset. The mindset of the flesh, the attitude leaning away from God, takes us further from God and thus closer to eternal death. Such a disposition is antagonistic toward God. It is actually at enmity with God. Such a bent of mind does not submit to the Ten commandments. It is unable to do so. It cannot because it will not.

We all have such a bent of mind, although it may not be as aggravated as that of the serial killer. We need a mindset inclined to follow the Holy Spirit speaking in the Bible. God

can exercise power over us. The Holy Spirit can change our attitudes and make us willing to follow God. “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power” (Psalm 110:3). Oh God, please make me willing.

Love without Hypocrisy
#522, Week of 9-16-2019

Dr. Dennis Prutow

There are no divorces among the class of 1950 at a certain Christian college. Amazing. This must be an example of Romans 12:9. “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9).

We love without hypocrisy by abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good. The Ten Commandments define evil. Lying, adultery, murder, rape, etc. are evil. The Ten Commandments also define the good. “The commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). Telling the truth, fidelity in marriage, and preserving life are good. If you add up the Ten Commandments, the sum is love. “For this, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Romans 13:9).

In addition, we love without hypocrisy when heart and head are hooked together. Convictions expressed with the mouth are backed up with heartfelt action. When we encounter lying or adultery or murder, we bristle in horror. We cling to truth and life and faithfulness in marriage like a new bride and new groom cling to each other.

Think of it. A whole college class without a single divorce after fifty years. What a testimony to love without hypocrisy.

Right Side Up Love
#523, Week of 9-23-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

The convicted couple threw themselves on the mercy of the court. “We understand our crimes. We promise the court we will reform. No more car-jacking and no more convenience store robberies.” The judge takes pity. “Thirty days and five hundred dollars.” It’s short time and a small fine.

The Bible makes an interesting statement with regard to courts and judges. “You shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:21). Ouch. When evidence is clear, pity should be in short supply.

The scene shifts. Billy Joe smacks Michael across the cheek. The anger swells. “Not to me you don’t.” Michael’s left cross blackens Billy Joe’s eye.

Jesus makes the counter argument. “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew 5:38-39). It’s easy to misuse directions for the courtroom and apply them to personal relationships.

We turn the Bible upside down. We are wishy-washy in the courtroom and harsh in individual relationships. It’s the way of the world. The gospel of Christ upends the world (Acts 17:6). We learn lessons of love with friends and enemies (Matthew 5:44).

The Service of Angels
#524, Week of 9-30-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Angels are messengers with a clear job description. They are “ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

The devil tried to tempt Jesus with the ministry of angels. He took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, told Him to jump, and quoted from Psalm 91. “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone’” (Matthew 4:6).

Actually, the devil misquoted Psalm 91:11-12. The promise is one of daily care in the midst of everyday life. “He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone.” Angels have the job of keeping those who will inherit salvation from stumbling.

Jesus is the great and precious stone presented to us in Scripture (1 Peter 2:7). To those who disbelieve, Christ is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1 Peter 2:8, Isaiah 8:14). Angels have the extraordinary work of assisting those who will inherit salvation. They keep them from stumbling over The Rock, Jesus Christ. What a ministry!
