

Sunday Morning Message

January 16, 2022

Putting Your Faith to Work – Study of The General Epistle of James

What Is Your Life? - Considering the End Game

Text – James 4:11 - 17

Congregational Reading – James 4:11 - 17

Introduction

We have been taking our time going through this General Epistle of James, which was the earliest New Testament Book, originally written to a predominantly Jewish Church; but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, it was also intended for a much broader audience – Jew and Gentile alike - and designed to be applicable for many generations to come, including the time that we are in right now.

James is a very practical Book, which shows very plainly and bluntly how God's people should behave themselves. Back in chapter one, we examined two kinds of temptation and the wisdom that's available to us in order to overcome them. We also studied about the Word of God, and the fact that we need to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.

There are two key verses in chapter one which revealed three tests that the Bible gives for people who truly belong to God. James is talking about people who really know God, and whose lives are truly being influenced by the Word of God. People who have real religion, not just people who have go through some sort of external ritual or ceremony, should be able to pass these three tests at least most of the time.:

"(26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:26-27)

Basically what James was saying is that true religion, which comes from a real relationship with Jesus Christ will impact your life in three ways:

1. It will cause you to control your tongue.
2. It will cause you to care about those who are less fortunate than yourself.
3. It will cause you to live a separated life.

Chapter two of James further developed that second test regarding how we treat others who are less fortunate than ourselves. James states that God's people should be impartial regarding the treatment of others. It does not matter if the person is rich or poor, cultured or uncultured, educated or illiterate, from the same race or a different race – everyone is equal in the sight of God, and should all be treated equally within the church.

Chapter two fully revealed the main theme of the Letter – Faith without Works is Dead. Our faith needs to impact the way we live and treat other people.

In the first twelve verses of chapter three, James drove home the fact that we need to get control of our tongues. The subject of the tongue is dealt with extensively in the Scripture, but chapter three of James' Letter is by far the most comprehensive passage in the Scripture dealing with the words that we say to each other.

In these last six verses of chapter three, James showed us what godly wisdom looks like as contrasted with the wisdom of this world. God is the source of all wisdom, and He will give us the wisdom that we need to handle all that we will face while here on this earth.

In the first ten verses of chapter four, James continued to give us a lot of great practical truth. In those ten verses, we saw aspects of God that are important for us to understand if we are going to be all that we can be for Him while here on this earth. In vs. 1 – 10, we discovered:

1. God Is the Source – Supplication is the Means (vs. 1 – 3)
2. God is Singular – Separation is the Mandate (vs. 4 – 6)
3. God is Sovereign - Submission to Him is a Must (vs. 7 – 10)

Transition

In these remaining seven verses of chapter four, James continues to give very practical instruction to these 1st Century believers, and to us. This Book is extremely pragmatic. The principles that James gives us here in this letter apply perfectly to life here in America in 2022. Here, in these remaining verses of chapter four, James will help us to carefully consider our lives, what is left of them. He will remind us that we need to be conscious of the fact that we need to get things right now, both with him, and with others. Why? Because we may not have much time left.

I. Don't Sit in Judgement Over Others (vs. 11 – 12)

"Speak not evil (καταλαλεῖτε from καταλαλέω – katalaleō – Pres Act Imp 2nd Per Plu) one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12)

Here in vs. 11 and 12 James gives further instructions regarding sinning with your tongue. Quite a bit has been said previously by James regarding the tongue (See James 1:26; 2:12; 3:1 – 12).

Here James is talking specifically about slandering your brother or sister with your words. The phrase, "speak evil" (καταλαλεῖτε from καταλαλέω – katalaleō – Pres Act Imp 2nd Per Plu) carries the idea of slandering someone, or making somebody else look bad.

*"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they **speak against** you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12)*

*"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they **speak evil** of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (1 Peter 3:16)*

When we speak out against someone, which is against the Law, we are actually elevating ourselves to the position of a judge. We are declaring our superiority over both the person who we are speaking against, and the Law, which forbids us to do so.

Jesus talked about judgement:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5)

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:" (Luke 6:37)

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24)

We must remember, however, that God does sometimes put us in a position where we must make judgements. Parents need to make judgements regarding the behavior of their children. People in authority need to be able to make judgements. Paul talked about the fact that, at times, certain people within the church need to be assigned to make judgements in order to settle disputes between believers within the church.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)

Practical Truth Regarding Judgment:

1. Do not judge what you cannot see. (Motives, Spiritual Condition)
2. Be slow about judging others, even in your mind.
3. Be quick to judge yourself.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Corinthians 11:31)

4. Don't talk about people – talk to them.
5. Remember the principle of sowing and reaping.

II. Don't Suppose That You Will Be Here Forever (vs. 13 – 16)

In verses 13 – 16, James will remind us about something that we need to very carefully consider. Time is running out, and the amount of time that we have left is completely in the hands of God.

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or

that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:13-17)

Notice that James states that when we fail to consider the fact that literally our next breath is in the hands of God, we are boasting. We are actually doing the same thing that that we were doing by bashing other people; we are elevating ourselves to a position of being God. We are not qualified to sit in judgement over others; nor are we able to guarantee that we will be alive in five minutes. Our lives are in the hands of God.

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

(Psalm 39:4-5)

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21)

III. Don't Sin by Omitting What is Right to Do (v. 17)

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Here we have one of the Bible's definitions of what sin is:

"An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin." (Proverbs 21:4)

"The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men." (Proverbs 24:9)

"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

"All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." (1 John 5:17)

We often talk about sin being the commission of a wrong or the doing of an evil act. Here, however, James reminds us that there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission. So, doing what is wrong is sin, but also, not doing what we know to be right is also sin.

Conclusion

In light of the fact that life is very short, we need to get busy doing what we know God wants us to do, and we need to stop worrying about everyone else. Don't waste the remainder of your time here on earth sitting in judgment of what other people are doing or not doing, get busy yourself, doing what God has called you to do.

None of us know when God is going to call us home to Heaven. While we are still here, we need to get busy accomplishing things that will really matter in light of eternity.

What does God want you to do with the rest of your life?

He doesn't want you to spend it gossiping about other people.

He wants you to get busy doing what He has called you to do.

In the remaining years of your life, **consider the end game**. All of your eternal rewards are based upon what you are doing today on the earth. Are you spending these valuable remaining moments of your life living for your own selfish gratification; or, are you living out the rest of your life fulfilling the will of God.