

NOON BIBLE STUDY: JAMES 4 (PT 2)

WE'VE BEEN CHALLENGED IN JAMES 4. AND THIS SOBERING CONVERSATION BETWEEN JAMES AND THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE CURRENT CHURCH CONTINUES AS THE CHAPTER CONCLUDES. IN MANY WAYS THIS SECTION ASKS "WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE" - TO SPEAK EVIL AGAINST ANOTHER CHRISTIAN, TO MAKE PLANS WITHOUT REALIZING OUR LIVES ARE NOT OUR OWN, AND TO THINK WE CAN STAY HOLY JUST BY NOT DOING EVIL AND YET LEAVING GOOD AND RIGHT THINGS UNDONE. HOW APPROPRIATE THAT THIS SECTION FOLLOWS THE CALL TO "HUMBLE OURSELVES IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (JAMES 4:10)."

JAMES 4:11-17

JAMES 4:11-12

SPEAKING AGAINST A BROTHER OR JUDGING A BROTHER → SPEAKING AGAINST AND JUDGES THE LAW (WHICH SAYS DON'T SPEAK AGAINST OF JUDGE YOUR BROTHER). IF YOU "JUDGE" THE LAW, YOU'RE NOT A DOER OF THE LAW, YOU'RE A JUDGE OF IT. AND IF YOU PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF JUDGE, YOU'RE MAKING YOURSELF OUT TO BE GOD BECAUSE GOD IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN JUDGE SOMEONE. SO JAMES CONCLUDES VERSE 12 ESSENTIALLY SAYING "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?"

Q - WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE TO SPEAK AGAINST SOMEONE?

Q - WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE TO JUDGE SOMEONE?

Q - WHAT EXCUSES DO WE MAKE TO JUSTIFY OUR "SPEAKING AGAINST" AND "JUDGING?"

IT IS FAR TOO EASY FOR US TO CRITICIZE EACH OTHER. WE'VE GOT TO DO BETTER. REMEMBER, HOW WE SPEAK IS A REFLECTION OF OUR HEART. SO NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE SAY WE "LOVE PEOPLE", HOW WE SPEAK TO AND ABOUT THEM IS THE REAL TEST. THIS WAS A CRITICAL PRINCIPLE FOR THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH AND HER SURVIVAL TO THE LATER GENERATIONS. **WHY DOES THE DEVIL NEED TO ATTACK IF THE CHURCH WAS CONTENT ATTACKING ITSELF?**

EPHESIANS 4:29 (NIV) - DO NOT LET ANY UNWHOLESOME TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTHS, BUT ONLY WHAT IS HELPFUL FOR BUILDING OTHERS UP ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, THAT IT MAY BENEFIT THOSE WHO LISTEN.

1 JOHN 4:20-21 - IF SOMEONE SAYS, "I LOVE GOD," AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN. 21 AND THIS COMMANDMENT WE HAVE FROM HIM, THAT THE ONE WHO LOVES GOD SHOULD LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO.

IT IS TRUE THAT THERE ARE SITUATIONS OF CONCERN IN THE LIVES OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAMILY. SCRIPTURE SPEAKS OFTEN OF THESE SITUATIONS, BUT ALSO HOW TO HANDLE THEM. HOWEVER, NONE OF THOSE GUIDING PRINCIPLES INCLUDE SPEAKING AGAINST, TALKING DOWN TO OR CRITICIZING SOMEONE ELSE. IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN OR COMMENT TO MAKE ABOUT A BROTHER OR SISTER - SPEAK IT TO GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST IN PRAYER.

GALATIANS 5:13-15 (NLT) - FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED TO LIVE IN FREEDOM, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS. BUT DON'T USE YOUR FREEDOM TO SATISFY YOUR SINFUL NATURE. INSTEAD, USE YOUR FREEDOM TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE. 14 FOR THE WHOLE LAW CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THIS ONE COMMAND: "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 BUT IF YOU ARE ALWAYS BITING AND DEVOURING ONE ANOTHER, WATCH OUT! BEWARE OF DESTROYING ONE ANOTHER.

JAMES 4:13-16 - PLANS

IT IS WISE FOR US TO MAKE PLANS. IT IS WISE FOR US TO SAVE MONEY. IT IS WISE FOR US TO MAP OUT THINGS IN OUR LIVES. BUT WE MUST REMAIN SOBER-MINDED IN LIGHT OF THE BREVITY OF TIME/LIFE. IN FACT, OUR PLANS/DECISIONS/SAVING MUST BE MADE IN LIGHT OF THIS.

JAMES IS ADDRESSING A FEW THINGS. 1ST HE IS REMINDING US THAT OUR LIVES ARE A VAPOR. ANY GREAT PLAN WE MIGHT HAVE FOR A TOMORROW THAT IS NOT PROMISED IS IN VAIN IF WE DON'T AWAKE TOMORROW. TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN LIGHT OF RETIREMENT AND NOT IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY. TOO MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN LIGHT OF GETTING THAT RAISE, GETTING THAT JOB, GETTING THAT CAR. TOO MANY ARE LIVING IN LIGHT OF RELATIONSHIPS (WHEN I GET MARRIED, WHEN I HAVE KIDS) AND NOT IN LIGHT OF THE LORD. SECONDLY, IT'S GOOD FOR US TO REALIZE HE IS NOT ADVOCATING A RECKLESS LIFE OR NO PLAN. WE WOULD BE FOOLS TO OVERREACT AND SAY "WELL I'M NOT PROMISED TOMORROW, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF MAKING A PLAN?!" DON'T DO THAT. LASTLY, HE IS ENCOURAGING US TO MAKE PLANS, BUT MAKE THEM IN LIGHT OF THE LORD. EVEN THE PHRASE "IF THE LORD WILLS..." IS A HELPFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD'S RULE NOW AND FOREVER.

LUKE 12:15-21 - THEN HE SAID TO THEM, "BEWARE, AND BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST EVERY FORM OF GREED; FOR NOT EVEN WHEN ONE HAS AN ABUNDANCE DOES HIS LIFE CONSIST OF HIS POSSESSIONS." 16 AND HE TOLD THEM A PARABLE, SAYING, "THE LAND OF A RICH MAN WAS VERY PRODUCTIVE. 17 "AND HE BEGAN REASONING TO HIMSELF, SAYING, 'WHAT SHALL I DO, SINCE I HAVE NO PLACE TO STORE MY CROPS?' 18 "THEN HE SAID, 'THIS IS WHAT I WILL DO: I WILL TEAR DOWN MY BARNs AND BUILD LARGER ONES, AND THERE I WILL STORE ALL MY GRAIN AND MY GOODS. 19 'AND I WILL SAY TO MY SOUL, "SOUL, YOU HAVE MANY GOODS LAID UP FOR MANY YEARS TO COME; TAKE YOUR EASE, EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY.'" 20 "BUT GOD SAID TO HIM, 'YOU FOOL! THIS VERY NIGHT YOUR SOUL IS REQUIRED OF YOU; AND NOW WHO WILL OWN WHAT YOU HAVE PREPARED?' 21 "SO IS THE MAN WHO STORES UP TREASURE FOR HIMSELF, AND IS NOT RICH TOWARD GOD."

Q - HOW DO WE BOAST? WHAT DOES OUR BOASTING ABOUT OUR LIVES SOUND LIKE?

LET'S MAKE OUR PLANS WITH GOD AND FOR GOD. DON'T SET YOUR COURSE IN LIFE BY YOUR DESIRES AND DREAMS, SET IT BY GOD'S WORD, GOD'S HEART, GOD'S PURPOSES AND FOR GOD'S GLORY. IN THE END, THAT WILL BE LIFE WELL LIVED.

JAMES 4:17 - THE SIN OF "OMISSION"

WE OFTEN THINK OF SIN AS SOMETHING WE "COMMIT" - SOMETHING WE DO THAT IS DISOBEDIENT TO GOD, SOMETHING WE DO THAT IS UNHOLY, SOMETHING WE DO THAT IS EVIL. BUT SIN IS ALSO THE THINGS WE SHOULD DO THAT WE DON'T. IF WE THINK ABOUT A YOUNG CHILD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PARENT, A PARENT CERTAINLY DOESN'T WANT THE CHILD TO YELL CURSES AT THEIR PARENT, BREAK DISHES OR KICK THE CAT. BUT A PARENT ALSO WILL NOT BE HAPPY IF THEY ASK THE CHILD TO CLEAN THEIR ROOM AND THE CHILD DOES NOT. YOU SEE RIGHTEOUSNESS ISN'T JUST NOT DOING BAD THINGS, IT'S ALSO DOING THE RIGHT THING.

I WONDER WHICH SIDE OF THIS EQUATION MOST CHRISTIANS FIND THEMSELVES. DO THEY SIN BY DOING EVIL OR DO THEY SIN BY NOT DOING WHAT THEY SHOULD?

WE KNOW LOOKING AT SEXUAL IMAGES IS WRONG. BUT SO IS NOT SHOWING KINDNESS TO OUR WIVES.
WE KNOW THAT OUTBURSTS OF ANGER ARE WRONG. BUT IT IS ALSO WRONG TO WITHHOLD LOVE.
WE KNOW THAT BEING GREEDY IS WRONG. BUT IT IS ALSO WRONG TO NOT BE GENEROUS.
WE KNOW HAVING BITTERNESS IS WRONG. BUT IT IS ALSO WRONG TO NOT EXTEND FORGIVENESS.

THE WAY OF JESUS IS NOT SIMPLY THE AVOIDANCE OF BAD THINGS, IT'S THE PRACTICE OF RIGHT THINGS. TO ONLY OVERCOME SIN AND NOT LIVE A NEW LIFE, WE ARE OFF TRACK.

"IT IS NOT ONLY WHAT PEOPLE DO THAT MATTERS; THE GOOD THAT THEY FAIL TO DO IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO GOD."
(ESV STUDY BIBLE, JAMES 4:17)

1 JOHN 3:10-11 - BY THIS THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL ARE OBVIOUS: ANYONE WHO DOES NOT **PRACTICE** RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT OF GOD, NOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER. 11 FOR THIS IS THE MESSAGE WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD FROM THE BEGINNING, THAT WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER;

WHAT A CALL JAMES GIVES IN THESE VERSES! THIS IS A CALL TO RIGHT LIVING - FREE FROM EVIL SPEAKING AND HURTING THE BODY OF CHRIST, FILLED WITH GOD-CENTERED PLANS WHICH BRING HIM GLORY, AND DEVOTED TO AVOIDING EVIL AND PRACTICING GODLINESS. AND WITH GOD'S HELP AND GRACE, WE WILL LIVE THESE LIVES! LORD, HEAR THIS PRAYER:

PSALM 19:13-14 (NIV) - KEEP YOUR SERVANT(S) FROM DELIBERATE SINS! DON'T LET THEM CONTROL (US) THEN (WE) WILL BE FREE OF GUILT AND INNOCENT OF GREAT SIN. 14 MAY THE WORDS OF (OUR) MOUTH(S) AND THE MEDITATION(S) OF (OUR) HEART(S) BE PLEASING TO YOU, O LORD, (OUR) ROCK AND (OUR) REDEEMER.