

Sunday Morning Message

December 12, 2021

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

Three Characteristics of God – Source, Singular, and Sovereign

Text – James 4:1 - 10

Congregational Reading – James 4:1 - 10

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 drove home the 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.

Transition

Today, in chapter four, James will continue to give us a lot of great practical truth that will help us, not only in our relationships with others, but also in our relationship with God. In these ten verses, we will see 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.

I. God Is the Source – Supplication is the Means (vs. 1 – 3)

"1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (James 4:1-3)

Here James explains the power of prayer. Once again, James not only tells us what we should do, he also shows what we should not do. Here in these first three verses James explains that we should go to God for the things that we desire; ask Him for the things that we need:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will

he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:7-11)

Notice that we should not get the things that we need by taking them from others, or by fighting over them, like children in the nursery.

Illustration – Westin and Emerson fighting over toys.

A second problem that James points out is that most of what we want is not inside the will of God, but is born out of our lust for things that God would not want us to include in our lives:

*"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing **according to his will, he heareth us**: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."* (1 John 5:14-15)

Another Prayer Problem that we have is the sin in our lives:

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Psalm 66:18)

James will talk more about prayer in the next chapter:

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James 5:13-18)

Practical Helps with Your Prayer Life:

1. Schedule a Time to Pray

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." (Psalm 55:17)

2. Find a secluded place to pray.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mark 1:35)

3. Develop a simple prayer list (Matthew 6:5 – 15)

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:5-15)

Spiritual Needs

Physical or Tangible Needs of Others

Personal Needs

4. Remember to praise and thank God for all that He has already done for you.

5. Remember to confess your sins.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Psalm 66:18)

6. Come to Prayer Meeting and find a prayer partner that will hold you accountable.

7. Stay consistent.

"We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer. It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances." (E. M. Bounds)

God will give us everything that we need, and even some of what we desire as long as those desires are within His will:

*"19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 4:19)*

*"4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."
(Psalm 37:4)*

*"33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall
be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)*

God is the Source – Look to Him for All That You Need.

II. God is Singular – Separation is the Mandate (vs. 4 – 6)

"4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship (φιλία – philia – attraction, affection) of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:4-6)

Six times the Lord states that He is a Jealous God

"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:" (Exodus 34:14)

God will not share His glory with anything or anybody.

"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." (Isaiah 42:8)

God's mandate is that His children live separated lives:

"17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," (2 Corinthians 6:17)

"1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

"15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

God demands exclusivity:

*"5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in **all** his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul." (Joshua 22:5)*

God is Singular – He wants All of You

III. God is Sovereign - Submission to Him is a Must (vs. 7 – 10)

"7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:7-10)

There are actually ten commands in these verses represented by nine imperative verbs, all representing commands:

1. Submit to God
2. Resist the Devil – notice the promise – he will flee from you.
3. Draw near to God – Notice the promise – He will draw near to you.
4. Cleanse Your Hands (Actions)
5. Purify Your Hearts (Minds)
6. Be Afflicted
7. Mourn
8. Weep
9. Humble Yourself

Note – Many of these commands have to do with our contrition and repentance over sins. It carries the idea of seriousness and sobriety. Our relationship with the Lord is not a flippant thing and should not be taken lightly.

Conclusion

What has God revealed to you from these ten verses regarding your relationship with Him?

Regarding Supplication - Do you recognize God as the source of all blessings? Are you asking Him to supply the things that you need? Are your desires in line with His will?

Regarding Separation – Does your love for the things in this world surpass your love for God? God wants exclusivity in your life. He will not tolerate a divided allegiance.

Regarding Submission – Are you wholly submitted to God’s will for your life, or are you still holding on to what you want?

God has got an awesome plan for your life, a life that is filled with purpose; but first you need to let go of your plan.

Three aspects of who God is and who He wants to be in our lives. Three things that we need to recognize:

He is the Source; He is Singular; and He is Sovereign.