

## INTRODUCTION

- Progressing in the Series Practical Faith – Today we are going to finish out CH 4  
James is very practical
  - No long difficult strings of logic – no run on sentences//deep theological ideas (like Paul)
  - James will kind of point to a very deep concept, then move on.
  
- Similar to Martin Luther, not my favorite of bible books.
  - Preface in his German translation of the NT, he called it an ‘*epistle of straw*’ (1522)
  - Removed that line in later publications (1537) – due to the line being misunderstood. Further in the preface, he wrote...
 

*“Though the epistle of James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and consider it a good book”*

    - ❖ He meant more like; it could not stand alone. But it was obviously canonical; if he didn’t think it was, then he would not have kept it in his translations of the NT.
  - These statements are because of a gospel tension with the epistle ...
    - ❖ Seems to not be Christ center at all (yet continually borrowing from the Gospels)
    - ❖ Seems works based (yet is anchored in faith; which need the back drop of John & Paul to be understood)
  - And Luther was very sensitive to the times, where, he was called to challenge the religious works of a very corrupt church. – We’ll talk a little more about that in the end.
  
- The reason I struggle with James is that I am always searching for a literary pattern; I like order -- and at first James seems scattered.
  - ‘Advice’ - ‘Practical’ - ‘Wisdom’ - ‘Imagery’ - - reiterates ideas (wandering discussion)
    - ❖ Example: Warnings to rich (1:9-11, 2:1-7, 5:1-6)
    - ❖ Example: Warning of tongue (1:26, 3:1, 4:11) \*
    - ❖ Example: Law (1:25, 2:8-12, 4:11-12) \*
  - Idea that really helped me, James reads like prophetic wisdom literature
  - Echoes of the past prophet’s denunciation of class abuse
    - ❖ And of pride/humility [“Two kinds of Wisdom” (3:13-18)]
  - Philosophy of Pragmatism
  
- Getting a frame around James helps me out quite a bit.
  - It helps us understand his passions in this letter.
  - Jewish convert || Jesus revealed himself after resurrection
    - ❖ Similar to Paul; but did not come from a highly educated background.
    - ❖ Thus, the practicality fits. Drawing from what he knows.
      - Jesus is the Messiah – foundation is faith (His identity and His promises)
      - God’s justice should be central in human relationship.

- James is very concerned with justice and hypocrisy.
  - In philosophical studies you have to ask, ‘what question is the philosopher trying to answer’
  - Similarly- In hermeneutical study one needs to ask, ‘for what purpose to the author writing’
- Faith and Justice. Justice as an attribute of God
  - God works justice through His appointed (**Mic 6:6-8**)
 

**6** “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? **7** Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” **8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to **do justice**, and to **love** kindness, and to **walk humbly** with your God?
- James is known through Church history as ‘St. James the Just’
  - First noted by Eusebius (260-339) quoting Clement of Alexandria (150-215).
  - Acts 15:13 | James the final word in discussing clean/unclean for gentiles.
  - Acts 21:18 | Cleansing of Paul to go pray in the temple.

### JUDGING and the LAW

- In this section James makes this curious *link* between judging others and judging the law
  - Very appropriate for the Jewish audience.
  - But James is dealing with the law differently than Paul

**James 4:11** Do not *speaks evil* against one another, brothers.

--- Slander, Drag down (G2635)

The one who *speaks against* a brother or *judges* his brother,

--- not Matt 18:15-20!

*speaks evil* against the law and *judges* the law.

--- [Jas 3:9-10] ‘tongues curse’

But if you judge the law, you are not a **doer** of the law but a judge.

**12** There is only **one** lawgiver and judge, he who is able to **save** and to **destroy**.

But who are you to judge your neighbor?

- Simply put, James is saying, to judge another is making *yourself* **THE** judge.
  - Not just over another person, but also over the *function of the law* itself.
    - ❖ A gross mis-understanding of the law.
    - ❖ Thus, a gross mis-understanding of judgement.
- **Jas 1:25**; perfect (complete) **Law of Liberty** || **Royal Law (Jas 2:8)**
  - Law is not God’s *oppression*; it is God’s guidance to not hurt each other and hurt ourself.
  - We often times see it (and it is presented) as...
 

DON’T DO THIS, KEEP OUT, TRESPASSING, RESTRICTED AREA, PRIVATE PROPERTY.

    - ❖ The law is more along the lines of God saying – “I know that looks fulfilling, but it is not. Please don’t, what you desire is not healthy. It is going to hurt people. Please stop.”

**[Willy Wonka]**
  - It feels like we are a rebellious teen. The father says –
 

“NO, don’t smoke that, pre-marital sex does look fun, but it results in emotionally intense suffering, why drive so fast – you’re just going to the next stoplight, and eventually it will result in a \$300 ticket, if not worse – a wreck and injury.”

[12 min]

- But we say – ya, ya, but times are different... Life doesn't work that way anymore... stop trying to control me..."
- **Gal 3:24-26**; Law as guardian (guide) – then Jesus opens door to adoption.
  - No longer under a guardian, now we are His children
  - Gal 4:21-31; 'children of promise, not of slavery'
  - Paul also states (**Rom 3:20**) that the 'purpose of the law'; show us our fallenness.
    - ❖ "We are not sinners because we break the law, we break the law because we sin."
      - William Tyndale
- My heart is so sorrowful every time I meet someone or hear someone talk about how much fear was put into them about 'being good enough' to go to heaven. Most often it is a conversation about their rejection of the church.
  - **Sigh** – bad theology – 'not everyone should be a teacher' James mentioned (3:1)
  - Much of it comes from a gross misunderstanding of the law, and of judgment
- *When we act as the judge*, were the measure of good and evil, we take the place of God.
  - This should not be so. (**3:9-10**)
  - Draws from **Matt 7:1-5** – Sermon on the Mount; measure you judge by.
  - **Royal Law (Jas 2:8)** >> **Matt 7:12!** (Golden rule)
  - **Law of Love (Rom 13:8-10)**
- In good Jamesian manner, he brings it back to action. (v.11b) – “doers but judge”
- **Doer**. G4163 (*poietai*); performer; ie: poet – really creative imagery
  - Same word used in **Acts**; Paul drawing on the Poets of Greek wisdom
  - Looks back on Jas 1:22-27
  - Performers of the law – Poets of the law (or of the word)
    - ❖ Remember it is not a law of oppression, but of healing and encourage and fruit and love
- Parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28-32) – Jesus teaching in the temple.
  - Both sons sinned – but the first son turns and makes it right.
    - ❖ Jesus is stating to the there is always room for repentance.
  - Justice is not idle; Justice begins in the heart – very internal
  - The first son, '*changes his mind*' whatever that means, or how ever that may come about...
    - ❖ That is one of those very easy things to say, with a very complex mechanism behind it
    - ❖ It is very personal and individual - - - and corporate and social -- spiritual; very different for each person and situation – whatever it is – it is **something internal**.
  - Dallas Willard proposed, “our lives... largely, if not entirely [is] a matter of what we become within.” (Renovation of the heart)
- *Personal story* of judging – when first attending the church >> & Tatoo

[18 min]

- But not looking at my own habits and motives >> Matt 7:3-5!
- judge to justify my own sins >> closes reception to what God is doing/saying
- Looking outside – not inside. Inside first!
- If I were idol ... judgment would have prevailed.
  - ❖ Seek wisdom, understanding, forgiveness, love
- Scottish Minister (1813-1843) || Developed the bible reading plan we used for years.
  - Robert Murray **M'Cheyne**
  - “God’s happiness is inseparably linked with His holiness.”
- There is plenty of history of Church judgment. It can do so much damage
  - All the way to the point of judging one’s salvation.
  - That role is left for Christ alone.
- THE judge (**John 5:22-23**)
 

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, **23** that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.
- Judged by the guilty, so that the guilty would be able to be freed of judgment.
  - We have freedom because of Jesus’ blood.
  - Why would you want to pick up the residues of the original sin and attempt to be the **judge of good and evil**, a task we cannot be successful at nor have the capacity for?

## CONTROL

- Then James dives into an extremely practical example of our acting as gods. [25 min]
  - One that should be applicable to all of us. Draw on **Matt 6:28-34**

**Jas 4:13** *Come now*, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”- **14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

**What is your life?** For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.  
(Ps 39:6, 144:4, Prov27:1)

**15** Instead you ought to say, “**If the Lord wills**, we will live and do this or that.”

**16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (G2746: rejoicing; give glory to, pray)

**17** So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. -- sin of omission
- *Personal story* of prayer walk and leaving Jesus on the bench
  - Though James is pointing to financial planning, this applies to many many more thing – if not all things. I experienced this in: leadership, parenting, career, marriage, ministry...
- We are engulfed in the existence with sharp, solid tangible things and experiences  
Yet, what is most important – is the noncorporeal, the sacrifices, the journey.
  - Relationships – living with joy and love with others – entirely non-tangible most important

- **Mist:** how temporary your pleasures are. How temp. success is. How is eternal love.
  - What is actually interesting there – is that – the more I pursue love (that is God’s love not counterfeit love, Law of Liberty) the more peace and joy I experience.
    - ❖ “God’s happiness is inseparably linked with His holiness.”
  - The more I pursue my own pleasures, the more I notice that I am ignoring or even hurting those around me (or even beyond).
    - ❖ Even in the smallest of sin
- This verse is the source to one of Bonhoeffer’s favorite sayings.
  - *sub conditione Jacobea* (under condition of Jacob) “If the Lord wills”
  - Trite at first blush, but continual surrender at its roots.

## LIVING WORD

[28 min]

- Bringing up Bonhoeffer is a good segue to the conclusion.
- During my studies I found it interesting to see the epistles reception through history.
  - Didache | Catechisms |\* | Martin Luther | Kierkegaard | Bonhoeffer |\* | Now  
(James’s teaching influence)                      (Historical influence) >>>>
- There were several historians that suggested (based on James’ position in leadership, style and purpose behind his writing) that he may have influenced a foundational church document (teaching style) called the Didache.
  - The Didache was under constant change and the origins really unknown.
- Eusebius (260-339) also mentions a teaching called the Didache (literally ‘teaching’)
  - This epistle of James has a similar feel to it as the beginning of the Didache.
    - ❖ D 4:4 || Jas 1:8
    - ❖ “The two ways” D 1:1 || Jas “double minded” || Jas “way of world – of God”
    - ❖ Can see how it could develop into a type of catechism –
      - ‘some theologians recognize a style adopted and evolved’
- James presents things in a dichotomy – similar in many ancient wisdom literatures.
  - **Didache** follows suit; as does catechisms.
- From this we think catechisms were organized. Forms of which are still used today.
  - **Catechism:** summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for the instruction of Christians
  - Example: Westminster catechism.
    - ❖ What is the chief end of man
    - ❖ To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.
- We talked about how **Luther** wrestled with the epistle (1483 – 1546)

*Commentary: it was essential to challenge a religion of works with the voice of the gospel. But now grace is cheap and we need to hear James’s call to be doers of the word.*

- Soren **Kierkegaard** (1813 – 1855): epistle of James was his favorite book.
  - His complaint was that everyone in Denmark was a Christian, yet no one was Christian.
    - ❖ They all busied themselves with worldly and not internally convicted by the H.S.
  - *“Let other complain that the age is wicked; my complaint is that it is paltry; for it lacks passion ... Of all the ridiculous things in this world, what strikes me as the most ridiculous of all, is being busy in this world, to be so quick to meal – so quick to work ... [and at their premature death] I laugh from the bottom of my heart. And who could help laughing? For what do they achieve these busy botchers? Are they not like the housewife who, in confusion at the fire in her house, saved the fire-tongs? What else do they salvage from the great fire of life?”* – Either/Or
  - “Men to me are indifferent...truth is something we must live, not simply something to consider and discuss.”
- **Bonhoeffer** (1906 – 1945): Called to return to Germany and speak out against the Nazi influence of the church... truly living out his favorite line from James “if the Lord wills”.
  - Speaking out against the corruption, building the church community.
    - ❖ Living it out to his martyrdom – looked much like Paul returning to Jerusalem –
  - Never has the blending of nation and Church resulted in a holier nation nor has it resulted in a more devout church. Political privilege and religious indifference have historically been the result. – Jerald Sittser
  - Seeking first the kingdom of God – asking for God’s wisdom – Acting out his faith
- **NOW**: We then need to ask, “what is God speaking to us – now, through the words of James?”
  - The word is alive – speaking the same to different times and different cultures.
  - Jesus speaks to us through the words of James.
    - What are these words speaking to us as a Church in this time?
      - ❖ Jesus speaks to us about faith and judgment and hypocrisy.
      - ❖ Jesus speaks to us about law and covenant of love
    - What are these words speaking to you, individually – internally?

## PRAY

- We all judge
- Let us start right now in the forgiveness offered through the sacrifice of THE judge.
  - Please forgive me. Please forgive us.
  - We cry out for wisdom.