

"True Faith and the Believer's Relationship with the World"**James 4:1-12****Part 7**

Introduction: Today we return to our study of the book of James and as we do we again for the 7th time return to the 4th chapter. Within this chapter James is addressing the believer's relationship with the world.

In James 4:1-4 James told us how the believer is affected by the world when he or she gets entangled in it.

1. It affects our testimony life.
2. It affects our prayer life.
3. It affects our fellowship with God.

James then goes on in verses 5-8 and he tells us how to get free from the grasp and the lure of the world.

Now before we move on I need to remind you of the context of this passage which is before us. James is writing to Jewish believers who have allowed themselves to be influenced by the world. They were not content with what they were given by God and therefore they had hearts full of envy and covetousness. They had the hook of the world deep within them because the desire for more of what the world had was completely consuming them.

Now last week we stopped at verse 8 and so today I want us to pick up with verse 9 today but before we do let me show you the points we looked at.

I. Freedom From the World

Starting in verse 6 James gives the remedy which will set us free from the world.

1. Understand the provision which is grace.
2. Surrender to God's will for our lives.
3. Resist the Devil and he will flee from us.
4. Change directions.
5. Clean our hands and our hearts.
6. Understand the seriousness of getting entangled in the world.

Notice James 4:9-10

I do not want to spend time on this because it is really connected with what we looked at last week.

Now we come to the last 2 verses of this section and these are the 2 we are going to focus upon today. In the verses which we are going to look at James is going to address the subject of SLANDER.

II. The Command to Stop Slandering.

In the society in which we live in today slander has become completely tolerated and accepted. In the political realm we hear it all the time. As we get closer to the Presidential election next year it will be the direction the candidates go. It is referred to today as a "SMEAR CAMPAIGN" but it is really slander which is defamation of character. The Presidential candidates will run millions of dollars worth of advertisements with the intent of destroying the character of their opponent.

That is sad but what is really sad is when God's people get involved in slander. Let me just tell you that there is NEVER an occasion when we are justified to use our words to destroy someone's character.

Now I know what a lot of people would think when I say that. They would reply, "Well Pastor you do not know what this person did to me or to someone close to me." The Bible says it makes no difference what someone has done to you or someone close to you we are sinning against our Heavenly Father when we speak words to someone in an attempt to destroy that person's character. Let me back up what I am saying with some verses.

1 Peter 2:1-2

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

² *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

These verses were written to the believers who were being persecuted under Nero and were falsely blamed for burning Rome. If anyone had the right to slander anyone it would have been these people. But Peter tells them to lay aside all slander and all evil speaking.

You see there is never a situation which we face that would justify slander!

Let me show you something that our Lord said in Matthew.

Matthew 12:36-37

³⁶ *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

³⁷ *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

Every idle/useless word we speak we will give account for. Let us now look at what James has to say about slander.

Notice James 4:11a

Peter addressed slander outside of the body of Christ. James addresses slander within the body of Christ. James uses the word brethren and brother 3 times. Within this group of believers that James is writing to strife had entered in and the strife had led to slander among the believers.

Let me just say that this is what happens when strife is permitted to exist within the body of Christ. Slander should never exist between believers. We would expect it from the world but not from within the body of Christ.

Slander is completely contrary to the Divine nature that now indwells those of us who are saved.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

¹⁷ *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

¹⁸ *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

We have been given a ministry of reconciliation so to speak in a way that would destroy someone's character is completely contrary to our Divine nature. Let me show you what John says about we who are believers.

1 John 3:7-10

⁷ *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

⁸ *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

⁹ *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

¹⁰ *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

So we can see that slander should never be a part of our lives because it is contrary to the Divine nature within us. But if a believer gets entangled in and influenced by the world it can happen. James is now going to show how serious slander is in the life of the believer.

Notice James 4:11

Before we get into the meaning here there is something which I need to make clear. When James speaks of JUDGING our brother he does not mean that we allow them to live in sin. There are people that say we are never to point our sin in a fellow believer's life because that is judging them and instead of judging them we are to love them.

Those who say that are ignorant of the Scriptures. The Bible is very clear that when a fellow believer gets involved in sin we are to point out the sin and then do all we can to help them to get free.

Leviticus 19:17

¹⁷ *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

One of the ways we show our love to our brothers and sisters in the Lord is that we point out sin in their lives. To ignore sin and allow a fellow believer to stay in sin is to hate them. So when James speaks of judging a fellow believer he is not saying that we are not to point out sin in their life.

So what does James mean when he says we are not to judge our fellow believers?

Well let me remind you again that James has at the front of his mind the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

² *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

Here is the passage in the mind of James. So what does it mean? Jesus is saying, "Stop criticizing!" Jesus was speaking against the scribes and the Pharisees who were very critical people.

James therefore is telling his readers to stop being critical of fellow believers.

There are people within the body of Christ today who feel as though God has appointed them the gift of criticism. Let me just remind you that criticism is not a spiritual gift. They are constantly watching people in an attempt to catch them in some kind of mistake. They will also watch people and they will claim to know the motive which caused the person to do what they did.

This is what James is speaking out against.

Here is the point: if you are a critical person there are several things you need to know:

1. You will be judged by God with the same amount of grace you show to others.
2. You do not know the motives of people.
3. You yourself are not perfect.

Matthew 7:3-5

³ *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

⁴ *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?*

⁵ *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.*

Now let us see what James says about this.

Notice James 4:11

James tells his readers who were very familiar with the Law that to speak words of slander and to have a critical spirit was to speak evil of the Law and to be a judge of the Law.

What does he mean by this?

In Matthew 22 Jesus was asked a question and His answer will help us here.

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

³⁷ *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.*

³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

The sum of the Law is seen in 2 commands:

- a. Love God.
- b. Love our fellow man.

So to slander or to criticize is to really put ourselves above the Law.

Notice James 4:12

This verse helps us to see how serious this matter of slander and criticism really is. When a believer gets involved in this he or she is guilty of usurping the authority of God. In other words it is an attempt to sit in God's place of judgment.

Conclusion:

Dr. A. B. Simpson, speaking on the theme of slander, and especially the slander of Christian men, once said, "I would rather play with the forked lightning, or take in my hands living wires with their fiery currents, than speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ, or idly repeat the slanderous darts which thousands of Christians are hurling on others to the hurt of their own souls and bodies." Then he goes on to say that the reason why Christians sometimes are not filled with joy, are not blessed and prosperous in their life,

may be that "some dart which you have flung with angry voice, or in an idle hour of thoughtless gossip is pursuing you on its way as it describes a circle which always brings back to the source from which it came every shaft of bitterness and every evil and idle word."

On a sailing vessel the mate of the ship, yielding to a temptation, became drunk. He had never before been in such a state. The captain entered in the log of the ship the record for the day: "Mate drunk today." When the mate read this entry he implored the captain to take it out of the record, saying that when it was read by the owners of the ship it would cost him his post, and the captain well knew that this was his first offense. But the obdurate captain refused to change the record and said to the mate, "This is the fact, and into the log it goes."

Some days afterward, the mate was keeping the log; and after he had given the latitude and longitude, the run for the day, the wind and the sea, he made this entry: "Captain sober today." The indignant captain protested when he read the record, declaring that it would leave an altogether false impression in the minds of the owners of the vessel, as if it were an unusual thing for him to be sober. But the mate answered as the captain answered him, "This is the fact, and into the log it goes." This is a good example of how, by an accuracy of statement, but by misrepresentation of circumstances, one can injure the character of another.

Welcome new members:

David and Trudy White

Don and Carolyn Dively

Brett and Victoria Dively

Lucy Allison

Bob and Phyllis Petrie