

## Bibles???

### The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning we are going to continue our study through the book of James.

We are going to finish chapter 4 –

Let's pray...

*[Jas 4:11-17 NKJV] 11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what [will happen] tomorrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you [ought] to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do [it], to him it is sin.*

In our study last Sunday, James revealed to the early church – and in doing so, us as well – the real reason that we experience conflict with one another.

We tend to blame the external circumstances around us for our conflicts – “He did this to me” – “She did this to me” – “They said this about me”

but James pointed out that the true source of our conflict originates from our own selfish desires.

This is why there is conflict at work, this is why there is conflict at home and this is why there is conflict within the church.

It is all about our pursuit of our own desires.

And because God loves us and cares for us – He is not going to satisfy our fleshly desires – so we develop a friendship with the world – hoping to satisfy those desires.

Unfortunately for many of us, we learn this the hard way.

James instructs those within the church that have turned to the world to satisfy their desires to humble themselves and return to their first love – and God will show them grace.

So - one of the things that I did last week was to draw parallels between what James instructs us here in the first (10) verses of chapter 4 and the parable of prodigal son that Jesus told his disciples – which we find recorded in the gospel of Luke.

And even though many biblical scholars believe that the Gospel of Luke was written after the Epistle of James – it stands to reason that the early church must have been

very familiar with the parable of the prodigal son as it was taught to them by Jesus' disciples and by His half brother James.

And some of those in the church, as they read through James' letter would have identified themselves with the prodigal son and see the necessity to humble themselves and return to their first love.

So – let's look at our text...

**[Jas 4:11-17 NKJV] 11 Do not speaking evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.**

The Greek word that is used here for speak evil refers to the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on confidential information regarding someone else in the church who is unable to be there to defend themselves.

This is the sin of slander – this is the act of putting someone else down, backbiting.

And the reason that James is commanding us not to slander one another is because when we speak evil of one another – we are in fact judging them.

We have already made up our mind about the individual we are slandering – without knowing any of the details.

When we first read this word, it seems out of place – almost as if James shifted to a new topic.

But he did not –

You see, as the prodigals humbled themselves and started to return to the church – there were some – who had never left, who instead of showing them grace – they began to slander them and judge them based on what they had done.

They began to act like the other son in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Turn with me to Luke 15,

We will see why this parable should have been called the parable of the prodigal son(s).

We are going to start in verse 25 –

The prodigal son who squandered all of his inheritance has humbled himself, his father showered him with grace and even had a bbq to celebrate.

**[Luk 15:25-32 NKJV] 25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'**

Notice his behavior now.

**28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 "So he answered and said to [his] father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "**

Even though the father had already demonstrated grace toward the first prodigal son – the second son, the one that stayed home, when finds out that they are throwing his brother a party – he doesn't show that same grace, he resorts to slandering him and in doing so has already made up his mind about him – he has already judged him.

So what James is saying – when we slander and therefore judge our brothers and sisters, we are speaking against the law.

The law that James is referring here is the same law that he mentioned back in James 2:8 - [Jas 2:8 NKJV] 8 If you really fulfill [the] royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

We do not love our neighbors when we are slandering or speaking against them.

**12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?**

James is reminding the prideful reader that through their slander and judgment what they are in fact doing is trying to make himself or herself like God.

We must remember that God is not arbitrary in receiving back the prodigal.

It's part of the work Jesus accomplished by dying on the Cross for our sins, then rising on the third day.

God determined, in eternity past, how He could redeem and restore lost men and women.

It would be by grace, through faith.

He is the author of salvation, the One who has given us this law, so that we might get right with Him, and stay right.

After we are saved, we can lose the war within.

We can war and fight; we can, and do, lust, murder, and covet.

But since the penalty for all our sin has been paid once-for-all by Jesus, there are no works we must do to earn God's presence - except to draw near to Him, to submit to

Him, and to return to Him.

So since we are in the topic of judging –

Turn with me to Matthew 7,

Because here in Matt 7, we probably find one the bibles most quoted scripture – but unfortunately, it is one of the most misunderstood / taken out of context scripture.

Not everyone can tell you where the verse is found – all they know is that it is found somewhere in the bible.

In fact – I have an illustration of how many people read this portion of scripture.

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This is true for nonbelievers as well as some in the church.

And they will turn to this verse especially when their sin has been in order to put an immediate stop to the conversation that is taking place.

**[Mat 7:1-5 NKJV] 1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank [is] in**

**your own eye? 5 "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."**

Now in context, we can see that Jesus isn't warning us against judging an action or behavior.

Instead, He's warning us against self-righteousness and hypocrisy, which Jesus constantly spoke against.

How can one go around judging the speck on a brother's or a sister's eye when they are walking around with a telephone pole coming out of their own eye.

I want you to notice verse 5, because Jesus doesn't say "don't point out your brother's sin," nor does he say we shouldn't help remove the speck, but He does command us to first address this particular issue in our own life, so that we can properly help our brother or our sister in love.

If we judge someone harshly, we can expect to be judged harshly.

But if we exercise judgment—distinguishing right from wrong according to the truths of God's Word—with gentleness and compassion, without condemnation, not only are we doing that person a great service, but they're much more likely to receive it and see their error.

**Matthew 18:15 (NKJV) says, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”**

**Always remember –**

The ultimate goal of confronting the person is to bring repentance. In this sense, we are called to judge sin—always with the goal of repentance and reconciliation.

**Any other motive for judging others is unbiblical.**

Now, James is going to move on to those who take pride in developing our own plans.

**13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";**

I remember when I was in college – in my Engineering Economics class – hearing the phrase, “Plan your work, then work your plan” for the first time.

It involves making a plan for what needs to get done, how’s it going to get done, what’s it going to take to get it done, how long is it going to take to get it done and ultimately getting the task completed.

Engineers do it – people in sales do it – we all do it. We are always planning – even from a young age.

Think about the first time someone asked you what do you want to do when you grow up?

My daughter, Naomi, has already planned that she is going to attend Stanford and have a career in forensic science.

There is nothing wrong with planning.

The disciples and apostles of Jesus made plans.

For that matter, Jesus made plans.

His incarnation followed a plan that had been determined in eternity past.

We like to say that He has a plan for our lives.

So, James isn't saying that we shouldn't have plans – what he is saying is that we must be careful not to leave God out of our plans.

Turn with me to the gospel of Luke 12,

Because we have a perfect illustration in one of the parables that Jesus taught.

**[Luk 12:16-21 NKJV] 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods**

laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, [and] be merry." ' 20 "But God said to him, '**Fool!** This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So [is] he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This certain rich man was blessed by God by having fertile soil.

And as he worked hard, he developed a business plan, he even had a life plan – unfortunately, despite all the planning, he could not control the day that he was going to die. So, all of his accomplishments and plans were ruined.

Notice that God refers to him as a fool – not because he was rich, but because he lived without the awareness of and preparation for eternity.

In other words – he left God out of his plans.

**14 whereas you do not know what [will happen] tomorrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.**

Anyone of us here can go be with the Lord at any time - right.

We can have a brain aneurism as we sleep, we can die in a car accident on I19.

It could happen today, tomorrow or in 30 years.

There are uncertainties in our life that are out of our control.

And this is why James uses the analogy of a vapor – because we are only here on earth for a short while.

When we are young, we may feel like we will live forever, but when we get older, we begin to realize just how quick life can be over – just like a vapor.

James is reminding the born-again believers that we are more than physical beings living in a material world.

We are spiritual, and because we are spiritual – we should therefore always take spiritual things into consideration before and while making any plans.

James was giving us a last-day-on-earth pep talk.

Realizing today might be our last day on the earth, and that tomorrow we'll be with Jesus,

So the question is, how should we plan?

The answer - We should plan according to things that are the Lord's will.

**15 Instead you [ought] to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."**

Our life here on earth may be like a vapor – therefore we should turn to God who is not like the vanishing vapor.

He is a solid rock –

He is eternal –

And as we draw close to Him in a trustful relationship, we will humble ourselves to whatever God's will is for us.

Doing this is a clear recognition that God is in control and that it is best to humbly submit to His will.

It does not remove the responsibilities of decision making on the part of Christians. However, it does remove an arrogant self-assurance and restores a stance of walking with God in all of life's events.

**16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.**

The boasting that it speaks of here in verse 16 is in reference to those that who in their arrogance, were making plans about tomorrow while omitting the Lord's will from those plans.

**17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do [it], to him it is sin.**

We normally think of sin in terms of sins of commission: doing what God has said not to do.

God says, "Do not lie," and so you do not lie.

God says, "Do not covet," and so you do not covet.

This is how we often think of sin—as not doing bad things.

But James here reminds us that just as serious as lying or coveting or doing anything else that God has said not to do – there are sins of omission: disregarding what God's will.

Why do we disregard His will??? Pride – we want to be the master of our fate -

Arrogance – some of us act as though the will of God is something we can accept or reject.

In reality, the will of God is not an option; it is an obligation.

We cannot “take it or leave it.” Because He is the Creator and we are the creatures, we must obey Him. Because He is the Savior and Lord, and we are His children and servants, we must obey Him. To treat the will of God lightly is to invite the chastening of God in our lives.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

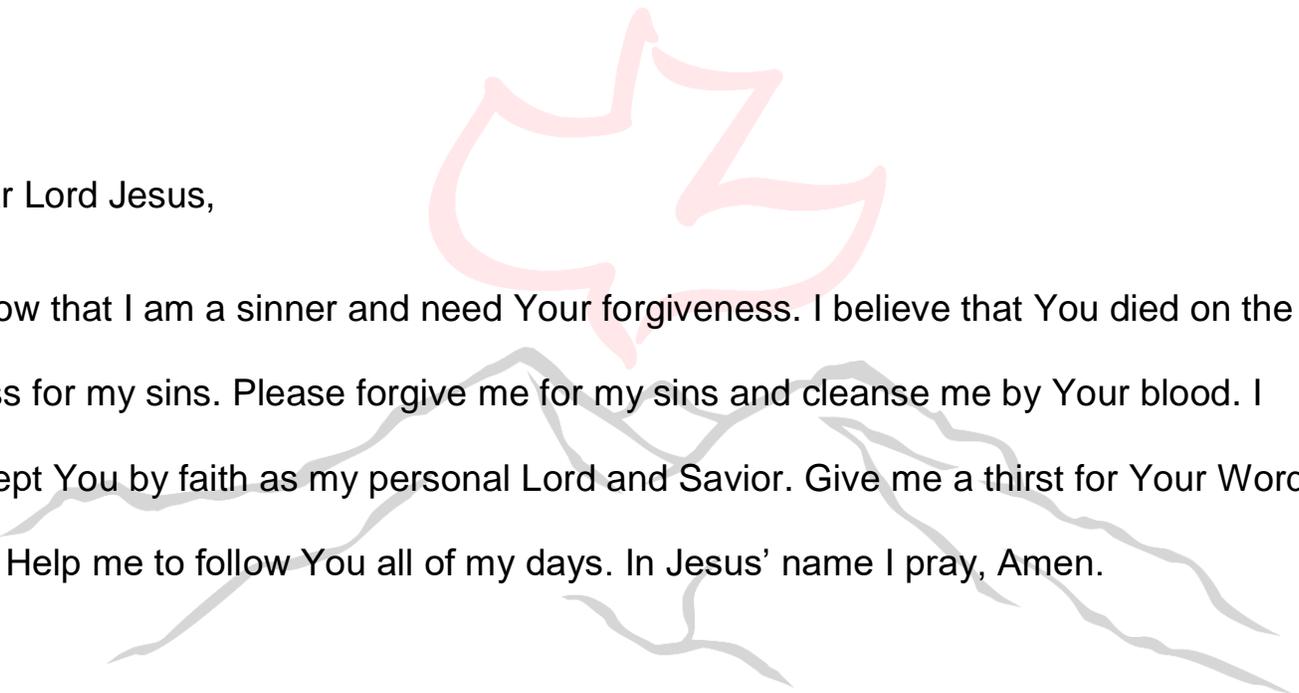
Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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