

James Part 10 - Study Notes

Introduction

Jesus showed us the greatest example of humility. As an introduction to today's study we are going to start with what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church in Philippians 2:6-8 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!* He voluntarily gave up His heavenly position, came into this world, lived in perfect obedience to God and the law, and willingly sacrificed His life on the cross for the sins of all. This perfect humility of God the Son becomes a model for us in our pursuit of humility, Philippians 2:5 *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.* Paul also wrote in Philippians 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

James continued to develop the theme that real faith produces genuine humility. The next two verses have to do with the way we view others. The next four with how we often view ourselves. James 4:11-12 *Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?* James talked about fellow believers who felt they were superior to other Christians and put them down in various ways. They were trying to talk down about a person in the company of others. They wanted the hearer to agree with their view point, have a low estimate of the person being slandered, and in doing so making them look good. They had a *more-righteous-than-you* attitude.

James also spoke about judging believers. These two go hand in hand, speaking against a brother and sister and judging them. The Bible condemns judgmental attitudes and actions. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1 we read: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*

Paul wrote in Romans 2:1 *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.* The Bible clearly warns about malicious judgement.

James was not talking about letting people get away with things. He had already confronted believers about their sins. But there is a difference between confrontation for the purpose of building someone up and condemnation for the purpose of tearing down. James said that if you tear down and judge your fellow Christian, you become a lawbreaker. What law is James talking about? Not the law of Moses, not the additional laws of Judaism, but the Royal Law we have already studied in James **to love your neighbour as yourself**. A self made judge breaks the law of love.

The real problem with judging others is that it comes perilously close to playing God. Verse 12 says *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.* Only God can pass judgement on a person's actions and motives, without fault. In effect James was saying **who do you think you are judging your fellow Christian? Who made you God?** James addressed the problem of playing God in others. When we stand in judgement of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we're playing the part of the Divine Judge.

James 4:13 *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."* These next four verses look at playing God with our own lives. This is where we see ourselves as the final authority in our lives. It is where we place God in a box and allow him out when we are in difficulties. Where we assign Him to certain tasks in our lives. He may become the Boss when it comes to religious issues, morals and questions of faith. But we will handle all our finances, relationships and business decisions ourselves. The core of this is that we believe we are masters of our own destiny.

James said people where:

- ✚ Setting their own schedule - *Today or tomorrow.*
- ✚ Selecting their own path - *we will go to this or that city,*
- ✚ Placing their own limits - *spend a year there*
- ✚ Arranging their own activities - *carry on business*
- ✚ Predicting their own outcome - *and make money,*

There is nothing wrong with planning ahead, nothing evil about setting a schedule, nothing abnormal about engaging with business and nothing sinful about making a profit. James' point is that God must be considered in **every** aspect of

James Part 10 - Study Notes

out lives. He must be part of all our decision making.

James 4:14 *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.* The truth is that we do not know what tomorrow will bring. We don't even know what will happen today, let alone next year. One unexpected plan could put an end to all our plans. We could live to be 100 years of age or die tonight. And only God knows that. None of us have the assurance of a long life. James described our life as a mist or vapor that appears suddenly and then disappears. That's life! Even a relatively long life flies by. Before we know it the vapor of life disappears.

James 4:15 *Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." God willing* in some cases has become almost a cliché for some people, a tag-on, that is added to personal plans to make sure people are not perceived as presumptuous. James' instruction was a way of life. It meant submitting humbly before the **One True God** who is entitled to be Lord of all of our life not just some things. There is not a sacred and a secular separation that delegates some things to God and some things to us. He owns it all.

James 4:16 *As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.* They lived their life as if they were master of their fate.

James 4:17 *If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.* James concluded that the believers know the right thing to do and to start to do the right thing. God has a standard for right living that transcends our own interests and pursuits and He wants to guide us along the path He has for us. We need to stay close to Him and His Word. When we know what God wants us to do then we must do it.

If we try to live independently doing our own thing and not do what God wants, this is sin. James warning is that when we know the right way; then we humbly submit to it.

It is vital for the Christian Believer that we live our life according to God's Word. Once the Word of God is made known to us it is our responsibility to apply it to our lives.

There are some questions we are going to ask today?

- ✚ Have I been speaking about my brother or sister in a judgmental way?
- ✚ Have I confronted others under the guise of looking out for someone's interest while having a heart of envy or jealousy?
- ✚ What must I do to stop this pattern of behavior?
- ✚ What decisions have I made lately in which I failed to include God's perspective?

We must not play God!

Frances Radley Havergal wrote these words:

*Take my hands and let them move. At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be. Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing. Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be. Filled with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold. Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use. Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it Thine. It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own. It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour. At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be. Ever, only, all for Thee.*