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Insights and Life Lessons
From Jacob:
Study on the Book of James
Pt. 6 (James 3)

Scripture Memorization: Philippians 2:3-4 “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Introduction:

In the second chapter of James, there is a focus on the danger of partiality in the family of God. He encourages those of us who have put our trust in Jesus to follow his example by checking the discrimination we may have in our hearts. James was writing to a group who were guilty of partiality, filled with prejudice and hatred based on class, ethnicity, nationality and religious backgrounds. He joins the other apostles of his day to preach about the kind of unity there should be in the church; a unity that isn't based on wealth or fine clothes.

The Lord recognizes that the poor of this world have greater opportunities to trust in Him, which makes them rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. On the other hand, the rich are the ones who often sin against humanity through oppression and blasphemy. We must fulfill the whole of the law and scriptures

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when dealing with all men and this law is royal because it was handed down by our King Jesus who taught that our neighbors shouldn't be based in status. As we show mercy to others by refraining from partiality, then we know that we will be extended mercy on the day of judgment.

Next, James turns his attention to the kind of faith we should have in our lives. He is writing to a group who has discovered the glory of salvation by faith, and the freedom from works. However, they had swung too far by falsely believing that works didn't matter at all. James corrects this error by speaking of a faith that saves vs. a faith that is dead. If we fail in the basic decency needed for humanity and offer nothing but religious words, then our real faith is on display. Our faith can only be alive if it's accompanied by works, because if we really belong to Christ then we will obey his word and care for those who are naked and destitute.

There is no separation of faith and works, as the two are intrinsically linked. You cannot see someone's faith, unless it is demonstrated through their actions. And if you are not walking in a saving faith which is expressed in how you care for those in unfortunate situations, you may be just like the demons, who believe, yet have a dead faith because their works do not accompany it.

Lastly, James reminds us of two characters from the Old Testament, one the father of the Jews and the other a Gentile. Both are revered as people who God honored because of their saving faith. The first was Abraham, who was justified by faith long before he was blessed with his son, but his obedience to God in sacrificing that son was the demonstration that he actually believed in the Lord. The second was Rahab, who believed in the God of the Israel and showed her living faith by hiding the spies so that her entire family would be spared. Just like Abraham and Rahab, our living faith will only be seen through our obedience to God's word and this living faith will manifest much fruit and produce great results in our lives.

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1. **James 3:1-2** How living faith is produced in our lives.
 - a. The greater accountability of teachers
 - i. Teachers must take their responsibility very seriously because they will receive a stricter judgement.
 1. Luke 12:48
 - ii. The department of church-work had become extremely popular in that day and James wanted to warn of its serious responsibility.
 - iii. Teaching is more than just having natural or even spiritual gifts; there is an additional aspect of appropriate character and right living.
 - iv. “Their case is awful; *they shall receive greater condemnation* than common sinners; they have not only sinned in thrusting themselves into that office to which God has never called them, but through their *insufficiency* the flocks over whom they have assumed the *mastery* perish for lack of knowledge, and their blood will God require at the watchman’s hand.” (Clarke)
 - b. Stumble: doesn’t imply a fatal fall, but something that trips us up and hinders our spiritual progress.
 - i. James includes himself in this category as all of us are fighting to grow in our relationship with the Lord which should include less and less stumbling. Ecclesiastes 7:20.

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- ii. James is holding those of us who teach accountable. Especially in our speech, because we have so much opportunity to sin with our tongues.

2. James 3:3-6 The tongue.

- a. The bit for a horse's mouth and a rudder for a ship are very small but extremely important because if they aren't controlled then the entire horse and the entire ship will be out of control.
- b. The problem of an unruly horse or a hard-to-steer ship isn't solved by just locking them up.
- c. James encourages us to allow the Spirit of God to work through our new man in setting His hands on the reins and the rudders of our tongue.
- d. The fire of the tongue has been used to burn down and destroy many people.
 - i. Proverbs 26:18-19.
 - ii. "What others say to us and what we say to others can last a long time, for good or for evil. The casual sarcastic or critical remark can inflict a lasting injury on another person. The well-timed encouragement or compliment can inspire someone for the rest of their life." -Guzik
- e. The reason why the tongue is a fire and a world of iniquity is because there are few sins that don't involve talking.
 - i. Psalm 73:9

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- ii. Psalm 52:2
- iii. Psalm 42:10
- iv. Proverbs 10:19-21
- v. Proverbs 12:25
- vi. Proverbs 16:24
- vii. Proverb 18:21

3. James 3:7-8 The difficulty of taming the tongue.

- a. It is even easier to tame wild animals than it is to tame the tongue.
- b. No one can tame their tongue and we can only see a change when we bring the human tongue under the power and control of the Holy Spirit.
- c. What is the poison of the tongue?
 - i. “The poison of the tongue is no less deadly, it murders men’s reputations by the slanders it utters, their souls by the lusts and passions it stirs up in them, and many times their bodies too by the contentions and quarrels it raiseth against men.” -Poole
 - ii. “A woman once came to John Wesley and said she knew what her talent was and she said, ‘I think my talent from God is to speak my mind.’ Wesley replied, ‘I don’t think God would mind

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if you buried that talent.’ Speaking forth everything that comes to mind is unwise, poisonous speech.” -Guzik

4. James 3:9-12 The contradictory character of the tongue.

a. Our tongues can go from the highest calling of blessing the Father to the lowest evil of cursing men. This shouldn't be spoken of those who belong to the faith.

i. Jesus' disciples were guilty of this.

1. Peter- You are the Christ vs. denying his relationship with him.

2. John- little children, love one another vs. wanting to bring fire down from heaven upon a Samaritan village.

b. Our conversation should be consistent in every setting, whether in church, home or job.

i. He uses the fig trees and waters to show the impossibility of such a contradiction.

ii. Matthew 12:34-37.

iii. “Unless you are regenerated, born from above by a new and heavenly birth, you are not Christians, whatever you may be called, and you cannot, produce the fruit which is acceptable to God any more than a fig tree can produce olive berries.” -Spurgeon

5. James 3:13 Wisdom.

a. Not only does James speak to those who want to be teachers about how they should talk, but also how they should live.

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- b. Wise: a technical term, *Sophos*, which refers to a teacher, scribe or rabbi.
 - c. Our wisdom will be shown by our good conduct. Although wisdom and understanding are invisible qualities, these inner traits must show themselves in regular life and will help us judge if a person is truly wise and understanding.
 - d. Meekness: the word, *prautes*, is gentleness, an active attitude of deliberate acceptance. A willingness to put yourself in second place and a submitting to achieve what is good for others.
 - i. Those who do good works in a way designed to not bring attention to themselves.
- 6. James 3:14-16** The character of earthly wisdom.
- a. This person is the opposite of who is mentioned in the above verses. They are critical, contentious and have a fight-provoking manner.
 - b. This person is overbearing, self-seeking and unscrupulous.
 - c. Earthly: having this life only in view.
 - d. Sensual: animal-having for its object the gratification of the passions and animal propensities.
 - e. Demonic: inspired by demons and maintained in the soul by their indwelling influence.

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- f. “This wisdom” that James referred to was not really wisdom at all. “It is the wisdom claimed by the would-be teachers of James 3:14 whose lives contradict their claims. Such ‘wisdom’ evaluates everything by worldly standards and makes personal gain life’s highest goal.” (Burdick)
 - g. The fruit of this type of earthly wisdom will always be confusion and every evil thing.
- 7. James 3:17-18** The character of heavenly wisdom.
- a. The description of the fruit that comes from God’s wisdom.
 - i. First pure- the absence of any sinful attitude or motive.
 - ii. Peaceable- “This is one of the great words of character description in the NT. In the LXX it is used mostly of God’s disposition as a King. He is gentle and kind, although in reality he has every reason to be stern and punitive toward men in their sin.” (Burdick)
 - iii. Gentle- “The man who is *epieikes* is the man who knows when it is actually wrong to apply the strict letter of the law. He knows how to forgive when strict justice gives him a perfect right to condemn... It is impossible to find an English word to translate this quality. Matthew Arnold called it ‘sweet reasonableness’ and it is the ability to extend to others the kindly consideration we would wish to receive ourselves.” (Barclay)

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- iv.** Willing to yield- "*Eupeithes* can mean *easy to persuade*, not in the sense of being pliable and weak, but in the sense of not being stubborn and of being willing to listen to reason and to appeal... true wisdom is not rigid but is willing to listen and skilled in knowing when wisely to yield." (Barclay)

- v.** Full of mercy- Matthew 7:2.

- vi.** Full of good fruits- there will be an expression coming from wisdom that will be seen.

- vii.** Without partiality and without hypocrisy- without judging or without pretending to be what it is not; seeking nothing but God's glory.

- viii.** This fruit is like a seed that will bear fruit as it is sown by those who make peace.