

FAITH IN ACTION #1 — INTRODUCTION

INTRO: The inspired letter which James wrote in the New Testament is a wonderful epistle because it presents faith in action. It forever dispels the myth that a person can have faith in God without that faith changing him and causing him to act a certain way. His discussions are practical, everyday applications of our faith.

Faith is both subjective and objective. Faith is an inner experience which God is able to see (subjective). But man cannot see this inner disposition except through an expression or demonstration. This is the only thing which can cause men to see our faith (objective).

I. INTRODUCTION TO BOOK OF JAMES

A. James Deals With The Outward Show Of Our Faith. He deals with our actions which come as an outgrowth of our faith. The epistle of James emphasizes conduct more than creed.

You do not find in the book any great doctrine of Christianity, but simple, practical, everyday Christian living. It helps us apply those great doctrines of Christianity to everyday situations, problems, and temptations.

Many similarities exist between James and the Sermon on the Mount. Specifically, "James says less about the Master than any other writer in the New Testament, but his speech is more like that of the Master than the speech of any of them" (D.A. Hayes, 'Epistle Of James', ISBE 3.1564).

B. Authorship. It is generally agreed that James "the Lord's brother" was the author. It was possibly one of the first letters written in the New Testament (45-50AD or 60AD). I find this very interesting because James was not a believer while his brother was still living.

1. Mark 3:20-35. His own people came to get Him because they thought He had "gone off the deep end". His own mother and brothers thought He had gone crazy and actually started believing that He was something special.

2. John 7:2-8. Jesus' brothers spoke to Him mockingly and sarcastically. They did not believe He was anything special. If anything, they were jealous of His popularity, but too proud to admit that their own brother was anything more than a know-it-all big brother (cf. Matthew 13:54-58).

3. John 1:11-13. He came to His own, but they rejected Him.

But then something happened and James became a believer in His brother Jesus (Acts 1:12-14). What more could it have been than the appearance of Jesus to His brother after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). This was the only other sign Jesus said He would give to the unbelieving Jews (cf. Matthew 12:38-40). It was the ultimate proof of His Deity (Romans 1:4).

James later became a "pillar in the church"... much respected for his wisdom and faith (Galatians 1:19; 2:9; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18ff). It is very possible, even probable, that many of these trials or tests of faith that he writes about, were some which James had at first failed after facing them (e.g.. Respect of persons, being hearer and not doer, relying on own wisdom and false pride, impatience, etc.). But later he overcame all these to believe in his brother as the Messiah.

C. Principles For Practical Christian Living. James lays down some principles for practical Christian living... day to day... which we will examine for the next few weeks together in a series of lessons from the Book of James. We will talk about such things as:

1. The value of trials in testing our faith (1:2-18).
2. Being doer of God's word instead of a hearer only, deceiving ourselves (1:21-27).
3. Partiality and showing favoritism (2:1-13).
4. Faith and works and how the two complement one another and work together to please God (2:14-26).
5. The danger of the tongue and our proper use of it (3:1-12).
6. The distinction between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God (3:13-4:12).
7. Man's dependence on God for the things we need (4:13-17).
8. The proper and improper use of riches (5:1-6).
9. Patience in adversity and the right way to handle difficulties (5:7-11).
10. Healing and God's providence (5:13-18).

CONCLUSION: We want to encourage you to join us at this same time each week as we continue a study through this ancient book of Divine instruction with its fresh message dealing with Christian living even in this century. Thanks for listening.

FAITH IN ACTION #2 — TESTING OF FAITH (1:2-18)

INTRO: In the writings of our Lord's brother James, we learn some of the practical applications of a faith in Jesus Christ. From beginning to end we see faith in action.

James begins his letter by emphasizing the value and benefit of trials (1:2-18).

I. TESTING OF FAITH IN TRIALS

A. The Value Of Trials (1:2-4). Trials and difficulties are real character builders. God does not tempt man with sin, but He allows man to be tempted and tested so that the individual can emerge after overcoming it, a stronger, purer person. Fire is used to burn the dross (the waste) out of gold in order to purify it. That is what trials do for our character (1 Peter 1:6-7).

These trials (tests) are not meant to defeat us, but to be defeated (1 Corinthians 10:13). They are not meant to make us fall but to soar. Like callouses on the hands of a hard-working man, when overcome, they toughen him.

B. Acquiring Wisdom For Trials (1:5-8). Where do we get the wisdom to deal with and overcome our problems? From God! He can supply it liberally since all wisdom begins with Him. The problem comes when we begin to doubt because we don't understand how God will do it.

We cannot stand for a person to be "two-faced". How do you think God feels with someone asks for something doubting the whole time that God will give it?

So, with God's help, we can acquire wisdom for facing the trials, and then He supplies us with the wisdom of experience after the trials! As they say "experience is the best teacher". The trials and tests of our faith are chances for us to sow our faith so we can eventually reap maturity, perfection, and completion.

C. The Blessings Of Trials (1:12). The blessing comes in perseverance. It is not good to be tried just for the sake of being tried, but when we overcome, we are blessed because God knows the depth of our faith and we are able to withstand the storm the next time.

Our faith is proven to be steadfast and worthy. It has been purified and made stronger because sin and weakness cannot stand the fires of trial. Trials separate the spiritual men from the boys make us stand approved when we have endured them

D. The Source Of Trials And Temptations (1:13-18). It's always someone or something else that is to blame for our ungodliness or inability to withstand the fires of trial (the kids, my friends, my family, the way I was brought up, etc.). But it is never our fault... is it??

Some people even want to blame God. And if we do not come right out and say it, the truth is that all the excuses we offer eventually trace back to God. They are an indictment against God. Essentially, we are saying "God, it is your fault I sinned because you expected more

of me in that situation than I was capable of doing".

Since the first sin, man has been blaming God for his actions (Genesis 3:11-13). The temptation we often face is to justify ourselves when we give in to temptation. But when that justification of self points an accusing finger at God, we have gone too far (Job 9:20; 40:8).

1. Why do we sin? Temptation does not come from God... It originates within the uncontrolled desires of our own selves... It lures us, appealing to our desires... It entices us like bait... It conceives, takes hold, finds lodging in a person's heart and then brings sin to a reality in his life... As full-grown sin, it results in death (Romans 6:23).
2. Don't be deceived anymore. Because everything which is good comes from God and God cannot send anything evil on us. Instead, when we are born again unto Him, we should be a new and different creation!

My friend, when you sin... own up to it... never offer excuses. The reason we do not overcome temptations is because our own faith is not up to the test... not because the test was too hard. God can supply you with the wisdom to pass these trials of life. ask Him for it, then put it to use.

CONCLUSION: There are many people who will talk of their faith. But we must demonstrate it, we must show it to men. What are you showing God and man? Have you passed the test thus far?

FAITH IN ACTION #3 — THE WRATH OF MAN (1:19-20)

INTRO: Anger is a proper emotion and is even commanded sometimes (Ephesians 4:26). It is a proper response to injustices and sin. But quick-temperedness and outburst of anger and wrath are an abuse of this God-given emotion.

Self-restraint or self-control is one of the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-24). Christians must crucify human passions and relinquish the control they have over us... because uncontrolled human emotions do not produce the righteousness of a God who is not a slave to such!

Anger must always be consistent with the kind of righteous anger that God exhibits, not the self-serving anger that man vents. Here, James shows how anger is such a test of our faith (James 1:19-20).

I. THE WRATH OF MAN

A. Be Swift To Hear. When we become angry toward someone, what is one of the first things that we do to them? We quit listening to them, don't we? We must be swift (ready, eager) to hear out the other person. If you will listen to his explanation, your might see that there is no reason to be angry with him. It may just be a misunderstanding.

There is "a time to keep silent and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7) and a lot of us never learn the right time for either one of them! We speak when we ought to be listening and sometimes we fail to listen all together.

1. Marriage problems occur when there is such a miscommunication between partners.
2. The so-called "generation gap" is really a communication gap too. In such cases, neither the adults nor the young people listen.
3. Problems in the church are often problems of not listening to a brother or sisters point of view, and therefore being unable to understand.

Before you think, form an opinion, or act, it is always best to listen to others (Proverbs 18:2,13). Notice God places "listening" first in this admonition. That is how important it is!!!

B. Be Slow To Speak. Because once a word is spoken (either good or bad) it cannot be taken back. Even an apology cannot undo the damage of angry words spoken in haste.

James warns us to recognize the awful potential of the tongue and the "be slow to speak". It only takes a small spark from a match to ignite a fire that destroys millions of acre of timberland. Likewise, it only takes a little spark from the tongue to kindle a great fire (James 3:5-6).

1. Be slow to impugn motives before knowing all details (Romans 14:4)

2. Some people have the answer to everything before he even knows what is being talked about
3. Be slow to make rash statements and promises, and then keep them faithfully (Ecclesiastes 5:2-5).

Someone has very wisely said "It is better to be silent and thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt (Proverbs 12:23).

C. Be Slow To Wrath. Some people even take pride in their anger — "You don't want to get me angry... You had better watch it. I have a low boiling point"! Some people even think that the evidence of a man's strength and masculinity is the fierceness of his anger. Actually, that is completely the opposite from the truth (Proverbs 16:32).

1. The man who "blows up" and throws a tantrum when mad is called a fool (Proverbs 12:16).
2. A hot tempered man only stirs up strife (Proverbs 15:18). It is doubtful that anything constructive is ever said when people are in an angry rage.
3. Outbursts of wrath are one of the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

CONCLUSION: The wrath of man never does produce or bring about the righteousness of God. It can't! God is never glorified in such squabbles (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

Anger is a natural human emotion. But we are expected to control it and not allow it to control and manipulate us. How can we do that? Look to the life of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-24). And then heed the commands of James (1:19-20).

FAITH IN ACTION #4 — HEARER OR DOER? (1:21-27)

INTRO: Our faith is continually being put to the test. The depth of our faith is shown through these tests. It is exhibited through our words and actions. These situations become good gauges for determining the depth, strength, and steadfastness of our faith (1:2-4).

In the little epistle of James, our Lord's brother deals with another trial or test, which determines the worth of our faith (1:21-27). This situation is one in which a man hears the word of God. Thus, his test becomes "Am I going to be a hearer or a doer?"

My friend, what happens to you after you hear a lesson on the radio, come home from church, or finish reading a passage of Scripture? Perhaps you see you are falling short of the goal, or are guilty of some sin. The test comes when you must make the decision to become a doer of the word or just a hearer!

I. HEARERS OR DOERS OF THE WORD

A. Remove Impurities And Replace With The Word Of God (1:21). From time to time all of us fail this test. We hear God's word and say "Well, yea, I know I should do that, but..."

In order to overcome this temptation we are going to have to remove all these spiritual impurities from our hearts and replace them with God's word (1 Peter 2:1-2; Colossians 3:5,16).

1. First, we must remove all the spiritual filth from our lives. We must cleanse them. Some people want to become Christians without giving up all the sin in their lives. God will not accept that (1 John 1:5-6).
2. Second, we must receive the word with "meekness". That means accepting it without resentment or anger, and being able to face the truth even when it hurts and condemns. It is without prejudice.

B. The Test... Will We Be Hearers Or Doers (1:22-25)? The test comes after we have heard the word of God. What are we going to do with it? Some people have gone to church every time the doors have been opened all their lives... but they have never changed much.

After hearing God's word, we must become completely different people!! If the same sermon steps on your toes time after time, there is something wrong!! The word of God will save us, but only if we are doers of it!

1. The word of God is like a mirror. We look at our spiritual reflection when we open it to see where there are blemishes in our lives or spots of corruption on our garments.
Likewise, we behold Christ's glory so that we can be changed into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).
2. What was one of the first things you did after getting up this

morning? Didn't you look in the mirror? What did you see? Was it clear that you needed to shave, comb your hair, shower, and brush your teeth? The first look we take in the morning is generally a pretty gruesome sight. Before we go anywhere, we take care of all we see that needs to be done, don't we?

But suppose we left the mirror, ate breakfast, changed clothes, went out to the car and forgot to go back to the bathroom to shave, shower, and shampoo? That would be ridiculous! That's the reason we looked into the mirror in the first place, to see what we could do about those things.

3. But that is exactly what we do, if, having heard a lesson from God's word, we turn the radio off and go back to our everyday lives without making some kind of corrections.

We must learn to turn what we have listened to into action. You and I must determine to go away from each lesson and Bible Study as a better person. Determine how each lesson you hear applies to you, and not to someone else.

Look intently into this perfect law of liberty and be a doer. This will bring you immediate fruit.

C. Pure And Undeified Religion (1:26-27). Religion is not a form we go through on Sundays. We must make religion a life, not a mere ritual. Ritual has never been a substitute for doing God word (Micah 6:6-8).

1. Pure religion is doing something! Not just hearing and knowing we should do something!! Controlling our tongue... helping orphans and widows in their troubles... Keeping unspotted from the world.

CONCLUSION: My friend, how deep is your faith? Every time you hear God's word proclaimed on this radio, it is being tested. Will you respond by becoming a doer of what you hear? Or will you be a faithless hearer only?

How deep is your faith? It is being tested right now. Have you been applying this lesson to yourself or to someone else you know who needs to hear it? Have you determined that you are going to be a better person today than yesterday? Dear listener, be a doer of the word!!

FAITH IN ACTION #5 — SHOWING PARTIALITY (2:1-13)

INTRO: Life as a Christian is continually full of tests of our faith. Each test we pass builds our character that much stronger so we are better able to handle the next one.

The temptation to show partiality to one person over another is a test of the depth of our faith too. In our aim for maturity or perfection in our faith, prejudice or partiality is another barrier which can stand in our way. Such favoritism is wrong, even though it may seem perfectly natural to us, because it is inconsistent with our command to love our neighbor as ourself.

The Lord's brother James, explores this test of our faith in his book, in the middle of all the others we have been studying (James 2:1-13). Will we be guilty of spiritual snobbery or will we realize what both the rich and the poor have in common (Proverbs 22:2).

I. SHOWING PARTIALITY

A. The Principle Stated (2:1). We are not to show an attitude which gives one man a distinction over another. Without question, there are differences in men — in their degrees of education, wealth, prominence, influence, position, etc. — Not everyone is equal in these achievements. But these do not make one person more important than another.

Both have the same important possession, more important than anything else... their soul!! And no soul is more important to God than another. If God would sacrifice His own Son for sinful man, surely we should see that.

1. No man is more important than another (Matthew 22:16). We are all brethren... not even preachers are to be given more honor than brethren (Matthew 23:8-12). Jesus condemned the wearing of religious title like "father", "reverend", "most holy father", of "your eminence".

God is no respecter of persons and neither should we be (Acts 10:34).

B. Application Of The Principle (2:2-7). Now here comes a test of my faith. Two men come to worship... perhaps out of curiosity or whatever. One is wealthy and would really be able to boost the balance in the church treasury and maybe have many contacts of other well-to-do people. So we all shake his hand and welcome him... and then usher him to a nice seat... a special seat.

But then a poor man comes in with a Bible in his hand, but he doesn't have on an expensive Italian suit, but just a pair of faded jeans and a dirty, torn jacket.

Everyone is too busy talking with the rich man to bother with this poor man... besides there are plenty of seats and he can find his own. We have shown partiality because of our natural tendency to think that the rich are more important — VIP's!!

1. Jesus Preached To Everyone. Rich, poor, middle-class, but not many responded (Mark 10:17-22). The gospel demands more of them than they are willing to give (Mark 10:23-25). But don't give up teaching them... some will obey (Mark 10:27)
The common people heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). The gospel offers much to the poor and common folks who know they are in need (Luke 4:18-22).
2. Three Reasons Why Favoritism Is Wrong.
 - a. It is not consistent with Christianity. By making distinctions among men, we make ourselves judges of one another (James 2:4; Matthew 7:1). Partiality is inconsistent with the second greatest command "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13:8-10).
 - b. God chose the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of kingdom (2:5). More often, the poor man has the humble and contrite heart which is essential to citizenship in the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3).
Besides, it is the rich who cheat and defraud you for the few dollars that you have (2:6-7). It is the rich who foreclose your mortgage and throw you out into the cold, not the poor!
 - c. Such a transgression of God's law makes one guilty of the whole law (2:8-13). It's not just a bad attitude. But is a breaking of the law.
Each law of God's is part of the system or the unit of the Law. Violate one and you violate the whole unit itself. For example, if you drop a plate and a little piece breaks off, you have not just broken the piece, you have broken the whole plate!

CONCLUSION: Snobbery is out of place in Christianity. We should not look down on the lower class and look up to ourselves. If we cannot show love and mercy to them, we cannot expect God to show love and mercy to us (2:12-13).
The poor should not be looked down on or excluded. But neither should they be catered to simply because they are poor, to the neglect of others. That is reverse favoritism, but it is still showing partiality or respect of persons.
We need to see beyond a person's possessions to what he is!! Then we will see ourselves as God sees us... worthless, but important!!

FAITH IN ACTION #6 — FAITH AND WORKS (2:14-26)

INTRO: Do faith and works come in conflict with one another? Not hardly... But to listen to much of the religious world, they are as far apart as good and bad, day and night, heaven and hell.

It is a real problem when some people tell us there is nothing you must do in order to be saved, and if we say there is then we are saying that a person is saved by his works. The truth is that we cannot be saved by works alone and earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8). But neither can we be saved by faith alone and receive our salvation as a completely free gift apart from accompanying works (James 2:24,26).

The idea that we are saved by faith alone did not start with Billy Graham or your favorite Presbyterian or Baptist preacher. It has been a problem since the early days of the church (Jude 4). And James deals with it in his book (James 2:14-26).

I. WHAT IS THE PLACE OF FAITH AND WORKS?

A. Works Are Faith's Partner (2:14-18). What use is faith without works? What good does it do? What makes a person who has faith any different from an atheist or infidel? James shows how ridiculous it is to think that faith is beneficial apart from works by using a practical illustration.

Here is a good work someone can do — a brother or sister is hungry or in need. This person's appetite is not quenched nor is he any warmer or more comfortable if you have faith alone. You might look to this person and say "Don't get discouraged, things will start looking up". Have you done your Christian duty (cf. Matthew 25:34-46)?

1. Faith Without Works Is Dead (2:17). What was Jesus' supreme criticism of the Jewish leaders? They said but they did not do (Matthew 23:1-3).
2. Works Are The Demonstrators Of Faith (2:18). Actions are what make known our faith. A silent, inactive faith is not faith!! We must be careful to make sure we do good works (Titus 3:8; 1:16).

Faith and works are not opposites... they are so integrally intertwined that you cannot truly have one without the other (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46). Jesus, the author of salvation, shares it with those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

B. Faith Is Not Merely Intellectual Assent (2:19-20). It is not simply admitting you believe in Jesus and accepting Him as your personal Savior. You cannot read of even one person in all the Bible who did that in order to be saved!!

If we could be saved by that kind of faith — merely accepting a belief — then so could the demons!! The demons even go a step farther — they confess Jesus as Lord (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:23-24).

If you say that you believe there is a fire in the house and then do nothing about it, what will happen to you?? Such a faith as that is worthless!!

- C. **Faith Leads To Obedience (2:21-26).** Paul and James seem to use the example of Abraham in contrasting ways (Romans 4:1-5; James 2:21-23). But the fact that each of them can use him to establish their points, shows that faith and works are inseparable.

Remember that Paul is preaching to those who think that works we have done will earn our salvation. He points out to them that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness.

On the other hand, James is combatting the opposite extreme, that one can have faith without works. He argued that Abraham's faith justified him because it made him do works in keeping with God's will. Abraham's faith and works were not pulling against each other but working with each other to perfect (or complete) a justifying faith (2:22).

The Bible clearly says that a person cannot be saved by faith alone (2:24). If you are constantly hearing from the pulpit that a person can be, then ask your preacher why he would preach something opposite from what the Bible says... and make sure he answers the question!!

CONCLUSION: There are many degrees of faith a person can have... but only one degree can save him. He can have "little faith" (Matthew 17:17-21), "weak faith" (Romans 14:1), "useless faith" (James 2:20), "dead faith" (James 2:26), or "perfect faith" (James 2:22).

My friend, which kind of faith do you have? Faith and works are not opposites... they are inseparable! Jesus does not want fans who claim to love Him and have faith in Him... He wants followers who obey Him (John 14:15). You don't want a child who says he loves you but will not obey you... Why should God want one?

FAITH IN ACTION #7 — USE OF THE TONGUE (3:1-12)

INTRO: If you want know what is going on inside a man's heart, one of the best ways is to listen to what he says (Matthew 12:34). Our conversation reveals the purity or impurity of our hearts. It is either like taking off the top of a perfume bottle, which releases nothing but fragrant aromas coming from a godly heart... or... it is like a man-hole cover which when opened releases a terrible stench from the filth and waste running beneath the street.

The depth of my faith determines how well I am able to control my tongue (James 1:26). There are many ways in which my tongue can cause me to stumble... cursing, anger, gossip, filthy stories, lying, talebearing, slander, idle words, blasphemy and murmuring.

In many ways my tongue can be used improperly (read James 3:1-12).

I. IMPROPER USE OF MY TONGUE

A. Slow To Speak (3:1-2a). Does James here encourage Christians to leave all the teaching to someone else who is more qualified than them? Evidently not (Acts 8:4; 2 Timothy 2:2)!

Love for our fellowman and our brethren should compel all of us to be teachers of what we know to be the truth. But since this is such a great responsibility, controlling what goes into unknowing minds, with this greater responsibility comes a stricter judgment.

1. There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We must learn to bridle our tongues and keep our opinions in religious matters to ourselves... or back them up with Scripture.

I don't deserve to be heard unless I can show you book, chapter, and verse for what I teach and neither do you or anyone else on this radio. We must be students before we can become teachers (Ezra 7:10).

B. Tongue Controls The Whole Body (3:2-5a). Although a small part of the body, the tongue controls the entire body. A man who is able to control his mind can control his tongue (Philippians 4:8). If the mind is disciplined to think only on good, pure things, then the tongue will speak only praiseworthy things.

The man who can control his tongue has control over his entire body. He has it in subjection to himself rather than the body and its desires ruling him.

1. If we can bridle our tongue we can keep ourselves out of trouble (Proverbs 21:23).

a. An ounce of "keep your mouth shut" is worth a bushel of apology.

b. Ask three questions before repeating any story... Is it true? Will it do any good to tell it? Will it help the person involved?

C. Tongue Is Destructive (3:5b-8). There are many things said about it which emphasizes how deadly and destructive it is.

1. Fire (3:6). How great a forest is set afire by a cigarette, match, campfire. A few uncontrolled words in a fit of anger can spread like wildfire in destroying every aspect of a person's life. But, where there is no wood (fuel for the fire) the fire goes out (Proverb 26:20-21).
2. World Of Iniquity (3:6). It defiles the whole body. This little member corrupts the whole person.
3. No One Can Tame It (3:7-8). God made the animals subject to man. Even those much bigger and fiercer than him (Genesis 1:26). But only man can make his own tongue subject to himself.
4. Deadly Poison (3:8). Which is more dangerous? The fangs of a rattlesnake or the tongue of a gossip, slanderer, profane person, or blasphemer?
5. Restless Evil (3:8). It is unstable and unruly. It is just waiting to go off at any time and speak the most damaging and destructive words possible (Proverbs 29:11).

D. Inconsistent (3:9-12). Such inconsistency is despised by the Lord (Matthew 12:33-37). Either make them good or make them bad. It is always best to make your words sweet... because one day you may have to eat them!!

James' point in the three illustrations is this... no one can bless God and be justified with the same mouth that he curses men. Blessing and cursing cannot come from the same heart.

The tongue can either benefit or hurt... wound or soothe... but it cannot do both (Matthew 5:22-24; 1 John 4:20-21).

CONCLUSION: James, the Lord's brother, does not say that silence is the answer to the problem. He is pleading for control. The tongue has its proper use, and should be used in such a way (Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:16-17; 4:6).

Before you speak, remember that once a word is spoken, it is gone from your control... and make sure that you think before you speak because although you cannot get it back, you most certainly will have to answer for it.

FAITH IN ACTION #8 — HEAVENLY WISDOM VS. WORLDLY WISDOM (3:13-4:12)

INTRO: Selfish pride has led to more factions in the body of Christ than any other thing. It has also led to the establishment of many of the major denominations of the last few centuries. Men were not satisfied to live only by the Bible's teachings, so they formed factions and divisions of their own.

The kind of wisdom that would split up and divide God's people over opinions, incidentals, or expedients is not wisdom from God, but from somewhere else much lower (read James 3:13-4:12).

I. WISDOM FROM ABOVE OR BENEATH (3:13-18)?

A. Who Is Wise And Understanding Among You? There is a vast difference between godly wisdom and worldly or fleshly wisdom. Godly wisdom is from above. It is the answer to man's prayers and his searching (James 1:5; Proverbs 2:6-9).

Notice that the wisdom God gives leads one to righteousness, justice, and uprightness. But this earthly, natural, demonic wisdom produces faction and jealousy. The individual who truly has wisdom will be gentle or meek and will show it by his good behavior (3:13; 1 Peter 2:12).

True wisdom (real insight into God's truths) is neither arrogant nor assertive like these Christians were. Evidently, they were so bad in pursuing those unimportant things that they thought it was necessary to split churches and produce factions which had real hatred toward one another.

1. Usually, such people think they are upholding the truth, when actually they have a party spirit (3:14). They bring with them only confusion and every evil thing (3:15-16).
2. On the contrary, the wisdom from God causes us to be loving, peaceable, and gentle. This is not passivity... notice he also including "without hypocrisy" or "unwavering" (3:17).
3. God's wisdom causes men to conduct themselves orderly, even when confronting error (2 Corinthians 1:12). Those who are self-willed will break up churches, as they delude themselves into thinking they are standing up for the truth (Jude 17-19)

II. DEMONSTRATIONS OF EACH KIND OF WISDOM

A. Earthly, Sensual, Demonic Wisdom. These are the kind of things that men in their own wisdom think are solutions to problems, or are the right way to deal with circumstances.

1. Wars And Fightings (4:1-3). Problems and difficulties should be peacefully resolved. When one resorts to fighting with slander, backbiting, false accusations, and lies, it is because he hates

his brother. And anyone who hates his brother is already a murderer (1 John 3:15).

They don't receive the wisdom of God because they accept the carnal, worldly wisdom (sneaky and conniving). The source of these wars and fightings is not a love for the truth but from a worldly heart (Romans 7:22-25).

We must shun those controversies which produce strife and faction and do not lead men to the truth. Reject a factious man who insists on binding where God has not bound, or loosing where God has not loosed (Titus 3:9-11).

2. Compromising With The World (4:4). One who would compromise like that is spiritually unfaithful to God. God is opposed to the proud, and it is the proud who will cause factions in order to get a following. God resists such a one (4:5-6).
3. Judging (4:11-12). Sitting as judge to determine whether a person is going to heaven or hell is not my job... that is God's job!! I am to show such people from the Bible what they must do to go to heaven. If one is not obedient to that gospel message then I am not his judge if the Bible says he is going to be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The words that Jesus spoke are judging him (John 12:48).

Let God do the judging, and let me only tell men what standard God will use, rather than becoming a lawmaker myself!

B. The Wisdom From Above. There are certain imperatives found in these verses which show what we will do if we have heavenly wisdom (4:7-10).

1. Submit therefore to God.
2. Resist the devil and he will flee.
3. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
4. Cleanse your hands (outward) and purify your hearts (inward).
5. Be miserable for sins. Mourn and weep because of them.
6. Turn laughter to mourning and joy to heaviness.
7. Humble yourself.

CONCLUSION: My friend, what is the source of your wisdom? You show it by the life you lead (3:13). If you are always scrapping with someone about things you need to reevaluate your motives. God's wisdom is not spiteful, hateful, or harmful. Where does your wisdom come from?

FAITH IN ACTION #9 — DEPENDENCE ON GOD (4:13-17)

INTRO: Life is uncertain. Tomorrow is not a promise, yet we often trust in that which we have no assurance of nor control over. A new day has begun after every night for thousands of years now since the time of creation. With this law of averages we seem pretty confident of the chances of tomorrow coming (2 Peter 3:3-4). Actually, the more days we come to and pass, the closer we are getting to the end. Our chances keep dwindling daily!

The simple fact is that we cannot speak boldly or confidently about the future (Proverb 27:1). Today is all we really have... and it is standing on shaky ground, because we may not have all of it left until the end.

"Oh, but we have to make plans for the future and not just live every day however it comes about". I know that!! But we cannot live in the future, nor live depending on the future "When I get this or do that, then I will..." You may not have time... Do it now (James 4:13-17).

I. TRUSTING IN TOMORROW

A. Mistaken Confidence. Tomorrow is one thing we cannot base one ounce of trust in. Tomorrow is elusive. Once it gets here, we still look and live for tomorrow.

Man is like a mere breath (Psalm 144:4). He goes just as quickly as he comes.

Tomorrow is out of our hands. Until it gets here, we can't be certain it will. Whether or not we have a future is in God's hands. Life is like a vapor from a boiling pot of water (James 4:13-15). It doesn't dissipate and dissolve slowly... all of a sudden it vanishes. So it is with our lives.

1. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21). He trusted in something which would never come for him. It was to be a future of ease, but his dream ended abruptly. So do the dreams of many today.

So, make plans for tomorrow, but don't make tomorrow a part of your plans. Be ready if tomorrow comes, but don't make your plans for today depend on the future.

B. Lack Of Dependence On God. By placing so much confidence in the future and ourselves, God is left out of our lives. The fact that you and I are transitory and life here is temporary ought to make us more dependent on God. He is eternal and we are destined for an end (death)... And He has the power to give us life and He can take it away from us (Matthew 10:28).

Like those James talks about, don't make your plans and leave God out. Actually, make Him a big part of them. Man at his best in vanity (Psalm 39:4-7). Depend on the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17)... who gives them to you whether you acknowledge Him or not.

C. Lack Of Faith In God. The man who is busy living tomorrow today shows a lack of trust in God. One who is preoccupied and worried sick about

something that has not yet even come about lacks faith in the deliverance that God will provide (Psalm 33:18-22; 2 Timothy 4:18).

Don't we know that as we are busily engaged in His work, we are provided for? (Matthew 6:25-33). Those preoccupied with providing the things of the world are those "men of little faith" (Matthew 6:30).

My friend, will we become so preoccupied with providing these things that we neglect our spiritual duties? Sometimes we get so busy with life's pursuits that we have gotten certain things out of perspective. "I can't do this good thing or help with that part of the work because I just don't have time. I am so busy trying to provide all these things for my family. After we get a little ahead, I will get more active in the work of the church". Then we have misplaced priorities!!

- D. **Causes Procrastination.** Time is misleading. We always think we have plenty so we fail to make the proper use of all we do have. We must make use of what time we have while we have it (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Jesus brings home the need to work while we have time and opportunity... two things which may soon be taken away from us (John 9:4). Jesus said that 2000 years ago, but with the urgency which would make us think time was about to cease. This is the urgency with which we must work... before it is too late.

One who procrastinates assumes there will be a tomorrow. That is a dangerous assumption. Therefore, we must not put off doing good (James 4:17). Whatever the reason — procrastination, misplaced priorities, unhealthy trust in tomorrow, big planner and little worker — when we know to do something good, right, and beneficial and do not do it, we have sinned and fallen short (Romans 3:23). We have not reached our capability.

1. Faithful And Evil Steward (Luke 12:35-48). We cannot afford to wait until close to the end of our lives to begin doing good. We must be constantly engaged in good so that we will be prepared.

CONCLUSION: We must realize our complete dependence on God. Don't trust in tomorrow. You are relying on something uncertain. Don't wait to do what you know from the scriptures to do that is right.

You have no assurance that you will see tomorrow. You may die before this day is over. Maybe you think that only happens to the "other guy". What do you suppose he thought??!! Make today the day of your salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

FAITH IN ACTION #10 — RICHES (5:1-6)

INTRO: The wise man states that "He who trusts in his riches will fall" (Proverbs 11:28). Some people have jumped to false conclusions because of what verses like this one say about riches. They then think God condemns all men who have wealth.

But nowhere does God condemn having wealth. Actually, He prospered many of His faithful servants (Job, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon). The Bible does not condemn wealth... but there is no other book which points out wealth's responsibilities and dangers more than the Bible.

The problem is in the improper use of riches... not just the having of them. People tend to allow themselves to become selfish when they have wealth. Thomas Carlyle once said "For every twenty men who can stand adversity, there is one who can stand prosperity". I think that is true. Our possessions tend to possess us (1 Timothy 6:9-10; Luke 18:24-25).

It is not money which is evil, but the inordinate, improper love of it (James 5:1-6).

I. RICHES

A. Worthlessness Of Riches (5:1-3). James warns those who are rich of the vanity and corruptible nature of these possessions. Even the most precious of our riches will be destroyed.

1. **Our Riches Will Rot And Decay.** Those expensive clothes we bought will become moth eaten and grow old. The glitter of precious metals tarnish and our most cars will rust and grow old. If you have anything of value, there are also unscrupulous people who want it and who will take it away from you if they have the opportunity (Matthew 6:19-21).

If we have laid up treasures on earth, then our hopes are dashed when they are lost. Riches should be used to provide for ourselves and others, but anymore than that is a misuse of what God has entrusted to us (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

B. Selfishness Is Often The Result Of Riches. Few of us have the raw strength to control riches. Great wealth has a power and a way of controlling us. Selfishness is the result... and selfishness always leads to the damnation of our soul. Therefore, we must learn contentment (1 Timothy 6:6-8; Proverbs 30:8-9).

James gives a number of illustrations of how they are being selfish and that is leading them to criminal acts of injustice. He then relates all these things back to their riches.

1. **Laid Up Riches (5:3).** No one has profited from their wealth. Not even themselves. They laid it up, saving it for later and no one received any benefit from it. Selfishness causes us to forget about others who need help (Luke 16:19-21; 18:18-25).
2. **Gained By Fraud (5:4).** Laborers of that day were so poor that without their wages at the end of the day, they were unable to put

food on the table for their families. Therefore, employers were to pay them at the end of every day (cf. Deuteronomy 24:14-15).

It wasn't that the rich man needed that little bit of money. He was so selfish that he didn't want to lose a penny of it!

3. Using It On Pleasures (5:5). It would be bad enough to cheat if he were trying to make ends meet for his family, but he just wanted to have more to spend on his pleasure.

This kind of soft living robs a man of any moral conduct or character. He can only think of gratifying himself in his comforts and luxuries and has completely forgotten about his duty to his fellowman.

4. Condemned And Killed The Righteous Man (5:6). The poor, righteous man cannot resist nor withstand the oppression of the selfish and powerful and wealthy.

II. THE RESULT OF HIS ACTIONS

A. Riches Pass Away (5:2). All these things which are precious to men are soon consumed. They wear out, they are lost, they are stolen, or someone else gets our share. Rather than helping others with their riches, selfishness prompts them to hoard these things up without being used.

B. Punishment Is The Result. Such actions do not go unnoticed and God will not allow them to go unpunished.

1. Weeping And Howling (5:1). They have laughed and yelled in their carousings, parties and lives of ease. They have eaten, drunken, and been merry but their joy will be turned to sorrow.
2. Face The Lord Of Sabaoth (Hosts [God of Battle]) (5:4). They have selfishly hoarded their wealth to themselves, spent it on their own luxury and unfairly exacted money from the poor. The God of Battles will bring judgment (Galatians 6:7-8).
3. Fattened Hearts For Day Of Slaughter (5:5). They have feasted themselves on the riches of the earth and fattened themselves on them. The end of the specially fattened calf is slaughter. Likewise the end of fattening self is slaughter.

CONCLUSION: Perhaps we don't have to worry about being the rich of the world... but is it any different when we are capable of doing good and do not do it (James 4:17)?

The more money you have, the more your faith is being tested. Will you do more for the Lord and others because of it... or will you hoard it for yourself?

FAITH IN ACTION #11 — PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY (5:7-11)

INTRO: How do we handle adversity? What do we do when some conflict arises?

Suppose we are being mistreated by another person, or group of people. DO we take things into our own hands and "get even"?

James had just given instances of this type of oppression (James 5:1-6). How do we handle it? The depth of our faith and humility is going to determine the reaction we have. Suffering and persecution are a test of my faith (James 1:2-4). Will I be a strong enough person to leave vengeance in the hands of God? Or will I take matters into my own hands (Romans 12:17-21)?

Patience is not a passive type of attitude which allows everyone to walk over us. Patience is the ability to endure oppression realizing God will repay (James 5:7-11).

I. PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY

A. Patience (5:7). Throughout the entire epistle the point has been this — trials are a test of our faith. The more trials we face and overcome the stronger our faith becomes. Our character is built as we learn to endure the tests of life.

Patience, or endurance, is the immediate fruit of a temptation when we overcome it. It becomes easier then to say "no" the next time (Luke 21:19).

1. Example. The farmer who plants. He doesn't go out excited early in the morning, every morning to see if his crop is ready yet. He is patient and waits for nature to work in producing his crop.

He trusts that God will bring the early and latter rains (rainy seasons October—November, April—May), causing the seed to germinate and produce. He depends on God to bring the increase of the crops and his faith in God's working helps him remain patient (Galatians 6:9).

B. Let The Lord Punish (5:8-9). For those who might be tempted to take matters into their own hands, James says "You also be patient". There is no need to murmur and complain of the injustices we face. God already knows about them.

1. The Coming Of The Lord Is At Hand (5:8). Jesus was coming soon to judge the Jewish nation which was oppressing the Christians (cf. Matthew 24).

2. The Judge Is Standing At The Door (5:9). Be patient, because in time, the judge will come to render to every man according to his deeds (Romans 2:6). Judgment will come upon the rich who were oppressing them (5:1).

The "coming of the Lord" he is talking about is the judgment rendered and executed by the Lord of Sabaoth. He is coming in judgment upon them and they will reap what they have sown (Galatians 6:9; James 5:3-6).

- a. Be patient and wait for their latter end. Asaph had a hard time doing that... until he saw their bitter end (Psalm 73). Then, by perceiving that, he was able to endure the hardship and learn patience... to allow God to work in His own time and own way.
- b. Patience pays off, but revenge always costs us.

B. Examples Of Patience (5:10-11).

1. Prophets. They patiently preached to the people despite imprisonment, hatred, and attempts on their lives. They could endure the reproaches of the people because of a great faith in God (Hebrews 11:32-34). It cannot be avoided.
 - a. Matthew 5:12. They persecuted prophets before us.
 - b. Matthew 23:37-39. Jesus accused them of persecuting.
 - c. Acts 7:52. Stephen accused them.
2. Job. He was confronted with a great test of his faith. Over a course of time Job lost his cattle and herds, his riches (being the richest man in the East), his children, the support of his wife, his health, his friends, his pride, but worst of all he could not find God.

He hit highs and lows -- he fell into the pit of doubt and despair, but his faith finally brought him back to a higher plateau. He survived these tests, even though he did not know why they were upon him, because of his deep faith in God.

Ultimately, his trials gave him a better understanding and application of God's work in a person's life (Job 42:5).

CONCLUSION: The depth of our faith determines how patient we can be and how much we can endure. Don't give up when things start getting tough. Your faith is being tested and it is strong enough to withstand the onslaught of temptation if you will rely on it.

Be strong in the faith and you will be able to endure. You may long for things to get better but you will never give up. Until they do get better you will continue "plugging away"!

This series of lessons on the book of James has been taped and if you would like a copy of these lessons on cassette tape, we would be glad to make that available to you completely free of charge. Just write the Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330

FAITH IN ACTION #12 — HEALING (5:13-18)

INTRO: Who do we turn to when the afflictions of life hit us? Do we look to God, to friends, or to ourselves? When we are physically or spiritually sick and weak, where do we turn for healing (James 5:13-18).

I. HEALING POWER OF PRAYER

A. What Do We Do (5:13)? When we suffer, do we complain and gripe or do we pray? When we are happy do we forget to be thankful and take God for granted or do we sing praises to Him? When we are sick physically, do we call for the elders or strong praying brethren to pray for and with us? When we have sinned, do we confess our sins and appeal for the effective prayers of righteous men and women?

1. Do we turn to God and faithful brethren in times of distress or happiness? The prayer of a suffering heart and songs of a glad heart are expressions of one's feelings and emotions. The Old Testament Psalms are good examples of the expression of feelings of guilt, forgiveness, fear, love, hatred, etc.

Prayer and praises shows a dependence on God. That is what it is all about. Do we depend on God enough or do we look to ourselves for solutions? This is the main thrust of the passage.

B. Healing Of The Sick (5:14-15). What do we do when we, or someone we love, comes down sick? Can prayer do any good? Yes!! Some people believe that God performs miracles for us when we pray. But there is a difference between divine healing and miraculous healing. All healing is divine (in the sense that it comes through God) but not all healing is miraculous. God can use natural means to heal us!

1. In this passage, we are told that when elders, who are to be praying men, are called for to pray for the sick. The sick should be anointed with oil too. In New Testament days, oil was a popular medicine used for wounds and sickness. There is no spiritual power in the oil or its symbolism. They just used it as medicine back then (cf. Luke 10:33-34; Mark 6:13).

The elders, like Elijah who is given in the example, would be praying men in their own lives, and the combined efforts of the prayers of God's children plus the medicines and natural cures of the day would be helpful in healing the physically sick Christians.

Such prayers are to be uttered in faith ("without doubting" 1:6-8) and he will be healed.

2. Elijah is given as an example of the effectiveness of prayer too. He prayed that it would not rain for 3 1/2 years and it did not. He prayed again, and God, through natural processes and not a miracle, caused it to rain. God used the physical laws of nature to make it rain without a miracle being involved (1 Kings 17:1-7; 18:41-46).

- C. **Confessing Our Sins (James 5:16).** He also tells us that the prayers offered to God for the forgiveness of our sins are powerful when we confess our sins to one another and then, in turn we are healed!!
Never discount the power of prayer! Never discount the power of one man's prayer (5:17-18).

CONCLUSION: What is the point of the writer James? Place your trust in God while you do all you can (Matthew 7:7-8). Some people think God is just some kind of glorified Santa Claus... and all we have to do is make out our list and ask for what we want, then we will get it.

Don't underestimate the power of prayer in its dealings with men today (5:16). God does not exaggerate about the power within us and the works He can do within us (5:17-18; Matthew 17:20; Ephesians 3:20).

Put your life and work in the hands of God and let Him mold you into a vessel of honor (Romans 9:21). Be clay in the hands of the master Potter.

This lesson concludes our series of lessons on "Faith In Action" from the book of James. If you would like to have a free set of cassette tapes with these messages, please drop us a postcard or letter to the Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN GOD

INTRO: In Eliphaz's speech in the fourth chapter of the book of Job, he asked "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job 4:17).

That's a good question for us to ask today. It seems there are people today who are making themselves more righteous than God. Let me suggest a few examples and see if you agree.

I. MEN MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN GOD

A. Capital Punishment. There is a vocal group of people in America today who oppose capital punishment. If you are not familiar with the teachings of the Bible, you would think that anyone who does advocate the death penalty for serious crimes is about as hard-hearted and cruel as a person can get.

1. But it is God who first ordained capital punishment as a world-wide law (Genesis 9:6).
2. Then it was God who commanded it under the Law of Moses, the Old Testament Law. This life for life punishment was imposed by God, not out of disregard for the sacredness of life, but because of it (Exodus 21:22-27; Deuteronomy 21:22).
3. And then there is no doubt God has authorized capital punishment under the New Testament law (Romans 13:1-6). This passage emphasizes that civil government has been ordained by God and is established for two reasons — it is God's minister for good, and His arm of wrath to execute justice.

So the point is very simple. Those who oppose the death penalty today because they think it is cruel and inhumane or unloving, are more righteous than God. They make God out to look like a murderer because He is the one who authorized it. God could take life (Acts 5:1-11) or command it to be done (Exodus 21:15-17), but we have people today who are too good to do it.

B. Discipline Of Children. Disciplining children has to be one of the most unpleasant tasks a parent has. There are many people today and parents of a generation ago who advocated the philosophy that they did not spank their children, but instead gave positive reinforcement to help their children develop and grow.

They have been heard to say that they "love their children too much to spank them". So even go so far as to say that such discipline will warp a child's little psyche and bring them problems and maladjustments as they get older. They are "too good to their children" to do such a thing.

1. Discipline is administered for a child's benefit because a parent loves that child (Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:5-12).

THE HARVEST IS PAST

INTRO: The nation of Judah was the last remnant of God's chosen people during the prophet Jeremiah's day. They were about to be plucked away from their land and exported to the land of Babylon as captives. They had provoked God to anger with their idols. Judah's sins had become so horrid that God had to punish them. With no hope of rescue or deliverance, they cried in despair "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Such is truly a terrible cry, but we too can reach such a point of no return, when we have squandered all our opportunities. Salvation is such an important thing that we should not neglect it or allow anything to stand between us and salvation (Matthew 16:26).

I. THE HARVEST IS PAST

A. Negligence. One day we may have neglected salvation so long that "the harvest will be past" and salvation will have eluded us! If we don't give heed to the things we have heard, and those things we are hearing today, we may allow the time to slip up on us and catch us unprepared (Hebrews 2:1-3).

More people may neglect salvation than will lose it in any other way! We can only pass up so many opportunities for salvation until the last one rushes by!

But I really think that neglecting salvation will be the worst thing we would have to live with throughout eternity... because neglecting it means I had it right in the palm of my hand, yet did not grasp hold of it! Friend, do you want to live with that!!

B. Hardened Heart. One day our heart will become hardened and "the harvest will be past". Then it will be too late for us to be saved. The hearts of some people are touched when they hear the word of the gospel, yet do nothing about it (Acts 24:24-25).

The man who continually rejects Christ and His word, who knows what to do but refuses to do it, will one day reach a point where his heart has become so hardened and calloused that he will never seek salvation. His heart becomes like the wayside ground of Jesus' parable (Luke 8:12).

My friend, you may be waiting for a better time to give your life to Christ... but don't put it off... one day it will be too late!!

C. Death. One day our life on earth will cease, we will die, and "the harvest will be past". Death snatches us from this realm and ushers us into eternity. Death comes suddenly and unexpectedly (James 4:14).

We can never regain what death takes from us, and if we are not prepared to meet God, we are lost eternally. Man receives no second chance after death. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus told us about a rich man who looked for some relief from his torment, but there was none. Another dead man, Abraham, told him that his fate was sealed (Luke 16:26).

Dear listener, death is beyond your control. When it comes you

#147b

cannot escape it or make up for a life of sin. Don't put off Christ. Accept Him now and obey!!

D. Return Of Christ. One day the Lord will come again to judge the world and "the harvest will be past". Opportunities to get our house in order will be gone. He will come suddenly (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and unexpectedly (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Jesus will destroy everything that is now existing in the world (2 Peter 3:10). Time will be gone and we will face God in judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

CONCLUSION: God has been gracious to give us the time we have. But sometime soon it will be taken away from us in one of the manners we have described. Time is running out and we need to make preparations for the inevitable harvest (Romans 13:12).

Don't delay your salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Won't you be saved today (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)?

SIN

INTRO: Some people frighten easily. Stephen King and the movie industry capitalizes on that fear, making millions annually scaring us. Everyone is afraid of something — spiders, the dark, the woods, sudden noises, the wind, thunder and lightning, etc. We literally tremble with fear when experiencing some of these things.

But there is a monster today roaming the earth more terrifying than any of these other things! It seeks to consume and destroy us and has sufficient power to succeed!! Sin... is a gruesome and merciless fiend. Sin should frighten us to death!!

I. THE NATURE OF SIN

A. Sin Is A Transgression Of God's Law. Whether a flagrant and intentional action or an unknown and unintentional misdeed, transgressing God's law is a sin (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15).

Even more though, Christianity is not only a life of "not doing" certain sinful things, but also is a life of "doing something". We also sin when we fail to do what we know we should (James 4:17; Luke 12:47-48). *Sins of "omission" or "commission".*

B. Sin Is A Universal Action. Everyone, no matter how good they are, commits sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10). That means that you are guilty of sin and so am I! We may get tired of hearing the Bible's warnings against sin proclaimed every day... but we need to be warned and delivered from its clutches (Hebrews 3:12-15; 2 Peter 1:12-15).

C. Sin Is Enjoyable. We have to admit that is true (Hebrews 11:25). It would have no allure or enticement if it was not. But sin does bring certain dreadful consequences.

1. Sin Enslaves Us (Romans 6:16). It gains control of our lives and becomes our master. We think we are free to do what we want to do, when actually we are chained and bound by sin (John 8:34-36; 2 Peter 2:19).
2. Sin Separates Us From God (Isaiah 59:1-2). That is the most terrible consequence of sin. Apart from God we are lost (Ephesians 2:11-12).
3. Sin Works Spiritual Death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15). Sin will destroy our souls and destine us for punishment apart from God eternally.

D. Sin's Consequences. The consequences of sin should send shivers up and down our spines, and strike terror in our hearts. Sin paints an utterly gloomy picture. It exhibits no bright spots — only condemnation. But the "good news" of the gospel is that one has died for the sins of all and has made the cleansing power of His blood available to all who come in contact with it.

#148b

CONCLUSION: My friend, the blood of Jesus Christ is the remedy for the dreaded plague of sin (Revelation 1:5). But it only benefits us when it is taken and received according to God's directions!

Our lives will end too soon. Will yours have been well-spent or consumed by the consequences of sin? You can be released from the guilt and consequences of this terrible monster. The Bible, God's word, tells you that you must believe in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), and without delay be baptized into Christ that His blood can wash away your sins (Acts 22:16).

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT ?

INTRO: "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Jesus' words pierce through our very moral fiber and cut directly to our hearts. He asked the most soul-searching questions ever asked... and His words echo down through the centuries to everyone who lives in this world. These questions need personal answers... answers from every man, woman, and child... honest answers... probing, searching answers... answers that come from the very core of our souls.

I. THESE TWO QUESTIONS

A. "For What Is A Man Profited If He Gain The Whole World, And Lose His Own Soul?" Sadly, most people sell their souls for much less than that! Satan has found many bargains, offering us the world, then watching us settle for so much less in return for our souls.

Like with me, Satan sits back in his easy chair and says "Offer Rob this and he will sin"... and he does... and I do! I sell out for almost nothing. What about you?

1. Centuries ago, a man who came closer than any other man to obtaining the whole world, Solomon lived, and said it wasn't worth the price (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)!! If anyone would know... he would!

2. Everything you have sacrificed for and worked so hard to accomplish will one day be gone. All the works you have done so meticulously and taken so much pride in will be destroyed. Everything which seems so important now will be taken away (2 Peter 3:10).

If your life has consisted wholly of the things you have done while you are here, what will you do then? What will you have left? What will you take of value into eternity?

3. We cannot take anything with us (1 Timothy 6:7). Did you ever see a hearse towing a U-haul? We must not put our trust in earthly things. Look for higher, heavenly things (Colossians 3:1-2)! Make treasures out of things that will last (Matthew 6:19-21).

B. "What Shall A Man Give In Exchange For His Soul?" This second question, like the first, is a rhetorical question. There is no answer! There is nothing we can trade for our soul and benefit. Nothing in this world, or any other world, is precious enough to barter for your soul.

Are you willing to trade your soul for a couple of extra hours of sleep on Sunday morning? A few more dollars overtime money? A promotion? A momentary physical impulse and gratification? A few beers? A few dirty words or dirty jokes?

Are you willing to exchange your soul for whatever excuses you

#149b

have for not serving God? Seriously consider the implications!! All that you will be left with is eternal regret (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

CONCLUSION: We overlook the really important and meaningful pursuits of life by spending so much time concentrating on the trivial. When everything else is gone, the one thing you will always have is your soul. God created it immortal... never to die!

You will always exist now... either in God's presence (heaven) or away from the presence of God (hell). Don't accuse God of unfairness for sending people to hell. He sent His only Son to die for everyone and save us from that fate. But He leaves the choice up to you!

My friend, take a serious look at your life. Take inventory of everything you possess... What will it all profit you if your soul is lost forever? God is seeking you. He is pleading with you (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Can we help you find Him before it is too late? If so, please contact us at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ, or call me, Rob Harbison... we have no other way of finding out who you are!! Won't you begin to do something about it today?