



Lesson 10 May 6, 2010

Pride or Humility

James expands his commentary from verse 1 of the wars and fighting among believers by yet another criticism of evil and vindictive speech against each other, an unfortunately recurring theme throughout his epistle – “these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10). James then declares that such evil speech degenerates even further into judgment, or condemnation of others, something that scripture harshly denounces.

1. In verse 11, James commands that no one should speak evil of his brother, nor judge his brother. The act of judging proves that one is not a doer of the law and not a doer of the word from chapter one, perhaps the key verse of the book. How do these verses convey similar ideas?

Psalms 34:13; 50:19-22

Proverbs 10:12; 15:28; 17:9

Romans 2:13

Ephesians 4:29-32

1 Peter 2:1; 4:8



Lesson 10 May 6, 2010

2. In verse 12, James emphatically proclaims that there is only One Who is qualified to judge – to save or to destroy – and contemptuously asks who do we think we are when we presumptuously judge anyone? Note that James' definition of judgment in the text means condemnation to hell, and we need to make that important distinction since we are commanded throughout the Bible to make judgments via careful and thoughtful discernment. How do these verses reinforce each of James' points?

1 Samuel 16:7

Psalms 139:23

Matthew 7:16-20; 10:28

Romans 2:1, 19-23; 8:1

Personal Application

In continuing his theme of the three enemies to our faith in this section of chapter four, James returns to the problem we face with the old nature (the flesh), which attempts to lead us into all manner of selfish behavior. Unfortunately, we all too often serve self and try to impose our own will in life's circumstances becoming the "presumptuous and self-willed who walk after the flesh in uncleanness" (2 Peter 2:10). Our old nature of self and its accompanying vice of pride, form the root of the strife and envy that James emphatically cites as the cause of the wars and fighting among believers and which lead to "confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16) – "for you are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men" (1 Corinthians 3:3).



Lesson 10 May 6, 2010

Earlier in the chapter, James had provided three specific imperatives to actively combat the desires of the flesh and the old nature when he commanded us to submit to God, to draw near to God, and to humble ourselves before the Lord. In an active commitment of our will we need to “mortify therefore our members which are upon the earth” (Colossians 3:3), mortify meaning to put to death. Jesus declared the same principle -- “whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, shall save it” (Mark 8:34-35).

If we do not carefully and prayerfully heed and apply, as “a doer of the word,” James’ three exhortations outlined above, we will by default succumb to strife, envy – “against which “who is able to stand” (Proverbs 27:4) – and fightings – “you bite and devour one another” (Galatians 5:15). Consider that when brother speaks evil of brother, he in essence is imitating the work of the enemy, “the great dragon who was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceived the whole world... and I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:9-10). How can anyone want to be known as an accuser of the brethren and share that name with the evil one?!?

Let us rather “also put off all of these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, seeing that you have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge of Him that created him... put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another” (Colossians 3:8-10, 12-13). In so doing – note the active application of “doing” yet again – may we reject pride and its author, Satan (Isaiah 14:12-16), and embrace the humility of our Lord, Who is “meek and lowly in heart” and in Whom we “shall find rest for our souls” (Matthew 11:29).