

The Epistle of James
November December 3, 2017
Saving Souls From Death

Sermon #22
Reading: Galatians 6:1-10
James 5:19-20

Sin Brings Death

Today with the 22nd message from the Epistle of James we arrive at the end of his letter that we began studying in April of this year. It has been a wonderful journey for me and I have gained a tremendous amount. I hope this journey was fulfilling for you as well. James wrote this first letter of the New Testament with the primary objective of provoking those within the new church of our Lord Jesus Christ to help them determine who had true faith and who possessed insincere or lifeless faith. James' letter was read in the churches of the scattered saints and it was not primarily evangelistic in nature, but one directed toward those within the church. James wanted those within the church to examine themselves to gain understanding of what their faith was based on and to see if it was a real faith in Jesus Christ. These young churches were made up mainly of Jews who had converted from Judaism to Christianity and James was concerned that no one was deceived concerning their faith and their salvation. As Jews historically they considered themselves to be saved because they were descendants of Abraham and through works. James teaches salvation is based on true faith in Jesus, which is a gift of God by his grace. True faith pours out in ones life through good works. Here in the last two verses James calls the true believers, those with true faith, to pursue those people within the church that show no fruit of salvation; they need to repent and come to Christ. So these verses are evangelistic even though the focus is within the church.

Jesus himself raised this very concern as recorded in Matthew, ²¹ **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me,**

‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ ” (Matthew 7:21-23) In these last two verses James is echoing the concern and words of Jesus for those within the church to possess true saving faith.

Remember in Matthew chapter 13 Jesus went out a little way from the shore and sat in a boat teaching to the large crowd. He shared a parable that applies to his church, ²⁴ “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ” (Matthew 13:24-30) It is with sadness to know the reality of what Jesus knew and taught; from the time of his resurrection until his return the church would be filled with both those with true saving faith, “wheat” and those whose faith is based on something other than Christ which he calls “tares”. Though they may look and sound Christian - they are not. Just prior to Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tares he gave the parable of the sower of seed with some falling on the shallow and rocky ground that had not root to grow true faith and the seed that fell amongst the thorns of the world and the salvation found in Christ never happens because faith is choked out by the world.

James taught that true saving faith is marked by one's response to the trials of life, the temptations of the world, one's desire for the Word of God and living God's standards found in His Word alone. James addressed holy living in chapter 1. In chapter 2 he dealt with people of different socio-economic classes and how they are to serve Christ's kingdom and each other demonstrating their faith. Having clean speech, seeking God's wisdom for how to live and maintaining separation from the world in behavior and deed is James' concern in chapter 3. In chapter 4 he is concerned with living life in humility and submission to God's will as a mark of a true believer. How one views money and truthfulness is the concern of most of chapter 5. All of these behaviors and attitudes are the outward benchmarks of one's inner faith.

James made his first evangelistic plea to those unbelievers within the church in chapter 4. Follow me in James chapter 4 as I read beginning in verse 7, **“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”** James desires those who do not truly know Christ to submit their lives to Christ, to **“draw near”** to him through reading the Word of God and prayer. They need to quit being **“double-minded”** and their sin should make them **“miserable”**. They are to separate themselves from the world and practice righteousness. If one does these things James feels confident that the Lord will bring life to their souls.

As James closes out his letter he gives three actions for those of true faith. True believers are to reach out to those without fruit of the Spirit and work to turn them from sin. Believers need to show the unbelievers within the church the result of

sin. Those of true faith need to help the unsaved within the church their need for repentance.

Turn From Sin

Reading from James, chapter 5, verses 19 to 20, “[My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,](#) ²⁰ [let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.](#)” There is no connecting link with the previous verses 13 to 18. James turns to a new and final thought in closing his letter.

James addresses “[My brothers](#)” referring to those in the church who are true believers. Already in his letter James has addressed the needs and concerns of true believers and believers who are being persecuted and have grown weary. James now uses the term “[anyone among you](#)” to address a third group, those in the church who are not true believers in Jesus. In verse 13 James uses the phrase “[anyone among you](#)” to address suffering Christians who need to pray. Verse 14 also uses “[anyone among you](#)” here James is referring to those who are spiritually weak and weary that need care given by the elders. But here in verse 19 James is identifying those who are professed Christians but need to give up the world and seek true salvation. The words “[Among you](#)” is showing that they are in the church; they be acting Christian, using Christian language, but they lack spiritual fruit and this shows there is a problem – theirs is faith shallow or false faith. I remember when I was new in fulltime ministry and had been asked to come to a church to teach and preach missions for most of a week. The pastor and I had gotten to know each other by spending time together. However, our time in prayer was a struggle. Finally he admitted he was not saved. His grandfather had been a pastor, his father had been a pastor and he was expected to be a pastor. Though he felt the Bible contained many good teachings, he just did not see the Bible as

God's absolute truth. His position as pastor was one of respect and he was financially doing well. I was shocked, for me all I knew is that I had to be all in or nothing. It did not compute in my brain that a pastor would not be saved. God's grace ever abounds because God had been placing an ever-growing burden on this pastor's heart until when I arrived he was at a crisis point. James' words from chapter 4 were before this man, ⁸ "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." As we talked and prayed he was reduced to tears and broke and gave his heart to Christ. His church was a large denominational church filled with people just like him and just like those James is addressing here at the end of his letter. Many in the flock had strayed from the truth because the truth was not being preached. Peter wrote, "Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray." (2 Peter 2:15) They followed a pastor who was not true in his faith and he led them astray. However, those of the congregation also had a responsibility as people who claimed faith in Christ. They needed to be in the Word of God to know God's truth from the world's half-truths. Jesus said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them." (Matthew 21:8) They blindly followed a pastor preaching something other than the truth of God's Word. My beloved, you have a responsibility to study the Bible to know if what I preach is God's truth or not. How are we doing in being able to identify truth as a church? How are you doing?

When one is not saved but is in the church, as my pastor friend, his errors or wandering from the truth causes others wander. Soon this becomes a pattern and way of life and this is the way of the sinner or unbeliever. This wandering from the truth varies from the person who thinks the Bible is not completely true and

wants to pick and choose what they will accept and live, to the person who is openly defiant and disregards God's laws and commandments because they do not suit them. I would rather face those who are openly defiant towards God and are therefore easy to identify as enemies of God than those who are as Jesus warned, ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15) These that Jesus and James are speaking of, act like the unseen cancer within that destroys quietly until it has consumed one. How are we to know who these wolves in sheep's clothing are? How are we to know these sly enemies? Jesus says it is not hard, ¹⁶ "You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?" ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit." (Matthew 7:15-18) So the questions before us this morning is as a pastor am I bearing good spiritual fruit in our community of Canyon Bible? As a husband and father are you and I bearing good spiritual fruit in our wives and children? As a wife and mother are you helping your husband to lead spiritually and working to raise your children in God's Word? Children are you showing respect and honor to God by being respectful to your parents? Are we willing, by God's power and loving grace, to pursue those who are struggling with God's truth or with letting go of the world? Are we, all of us, willing to lovingly confront those in our church who are wandering from God's truth in the living of their lives?

What is the result of using God's eternally true Word like a cafeteria plan; picking and choosing what we want for our life's standard? What is the result of pastors not preaching the Word of God? What is the result of denominations disregarding God's Word for some adulterated man-made half-truths? Jesus gave the answer, I quoted it early from Matthew chapter 7, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my

Father who is in heaven.” (v.21) Those who knowingly or even unknowingly live lives that are not consistent with the Bible are living in disobedience and disobedience is sin and sin separates one from God. Only through the saving grace of God, believing in Christ are one’s sins forgiven. **“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’”** (Matthew 7:22) Knowing who Jesus is – does not mean someone believes in Christ as their Lord and Savior. **“And then will I, *Jesus will* declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ ”** (Matthew 7:21-23) Their eternal destination is hell! Who in America can stand before God and use the excuse they did not know? No one! The Bible is available for the asking. If anyone who hears me this morning needs a Bible all they have to do is ask and they will receive.

Result of Sin

The result of living as a sinner unrepentant and without Christ is eternal death. I love for unbelievers to come to Canyon Bible. Here they are exposed to the true Word of God, who God is and who one is in Christ and who one is without Christ. My beloved, understanding that the destiny of people’s souls are at stake should we not pursue those who play at Christianity but do not know Jesus as their Savior. Who are they, you ask? Observe the fruit or lack of fruit in their lives. As Paul wrote, **“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”** (Galatians 5:22-26) It does not matter the label on the front of the church or if a person calls himself or herself Christian. What matters as James taught in chapter 2,¹⁴ **“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can**

that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

¹⁸ “But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”

(James 2:14-20) Apart from surrendering to Christ one cannot have true faith.

When one does indeed surrender then they produce works based in their faith.

Paul wrote and is often quoted, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Those who have chosen false faith have chosen their own way over the way of Christ, which is, the only way of salvation. Without Christ just one sin separates one from God and condemns them. No one commits one sin, so James uses the term at the end of verse 20, “multitude of sins.” James is emphasizing peoples sins are a multitude and they are completely hopeless without true faith in Christ.

For those in churches who are not true believers the writer of Hebrews has strong words, ²⁶ “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.” Those who sit in church and hear the Word of God preached and have chosen to continue in their heart in the way of the world can expect a fury of fire upon their death. This is the second death. I continue reading in verse 28 “Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he

was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?” What terrible truth for the unsaved. My brothers and sisters we need to pursue those without faith until God takes us home. Continuing in verse 30 “For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’”³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31) So, the result of living without true faith in Christ is one’s sin damns them to eternal hell. Point made – there is no more to say.

Need for Repentance

The only solution to hell is to be born again in Christ and live our lives under his protection. This is why James end his letter with¹⁹ “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” Only through repentance and believing in Jesus as the Christ are ones sins forgiven and spared eternal damnation. We need to make known to those who label themselves “Christian” and are among us in church and those who live in the world using the words of Peter,¹⁹ “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.” (Acts 2:19-21) Turning to God in repentance results in salvation. As the Apostle John recorded the word of Christ,¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:16-18) God has given the world hope and the hope

is found only in Christ.

If you are in church because of your husband or wife or because of your parents – let me be clear, their faith will not save you. Even if you have been baptized, this does save you. Baptism is an act of obedience once someone has been saved. If you take the Lord’s Supper this does not save for it is a sacrament for those who are saved. In addition, taking the Lord’s Supper when one is not saved and has not been baptized brings judgment upon one. “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:27) My beloved, do not wait one more minute for time is short, if you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior surrender yourself to him, repent your sins before him and he will heal your soul, forgive your sins, remember your sins no more and bring you into fellowship with the only Living God. When we submit to Christ he fills us with a love that is poured out in good works and the sharing of the “Good News” of salvation through Christ with anyone who does not know Christ, both in and outside the church. Amen!