

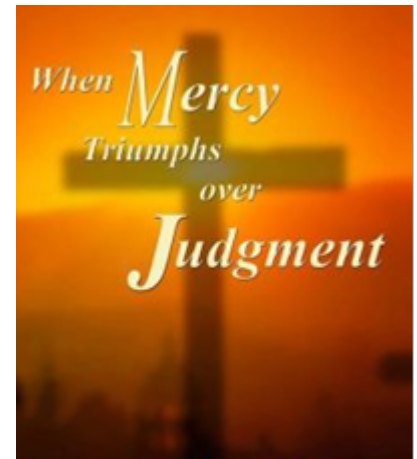
THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

Lesson: 16 Text: 2:10-17 Date: 6-4-23

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TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(10) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

(11) For **he who said**, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of **the law**.

(12) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under **the law of liberty**.

(13) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

(Ex 20:13,14; Dt 5:17,18; 27:26; 28:15;

Job 22:6-11; Ps 18:25,26; Prov 21:3,13; Ezek 25:11-14;

Mt 5:7,18,19; 6:14,15; 9:13; 12:7; 16:27; 18:21-35; 23:23;

Lk 6:37,38; Jn 5:24;

1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Gal 3:10; 5:3; Rev 22:12)

(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.

(Job 31:19; Mt 7:26; 23:1-6; 25:35; Lk 3:11; Gal 5:6; 1 Jn 3:17,18)

Commentary on James – "The Epistle of Faith" – Dr. David Scaer - CPH

Though an offense against one point of the Law is against Scripture in its entirety, James in citing the prohibitions against adultery and murder does not mention them as coming from Scripture—though of course they do—but as coming from the One who spoke these prohibitions. James is not quoting the Scriptures as much as he is referring to Jesus, who in the Sermon on the Mount set forth these commandments with expositions (Matt. 5:21-32). In the Sermon they are also the first two on which Jesus gives an extended exposition and the *only* two commandments He quotes directly from the Decalog (Ex. 20:13-14). Whatever the specific offenses addressed by James were, the offenders' real sin is not only against a written law but against Christ, who put forth the Sermon on the Mount as the descriptive constitution for His kingdom. Herein lies the real enormity of their offense.

While the Sermon prohibitions against adultery and murder follow the Septuagint's future indicative with the negative *ou*, "You will not commit adultery and murder," James substitutes the subjunctive with the negative *mē*, "You will not begin committing adultery and murder." These sins are not even to enter the Christians' thinking. With these slight grammatical changes, James combines into one prohibition the original, longer discourses of the Sermon forbidding the evil intentions as well as the acts (Matt. 5:21-30).

These first Christians were so taken up in impressing the rich that they not only despised the poor in their worship services (2:1-7) but neglected to provide them with even the most elementary needs (2:14-17). On the other hand the rich, whom the early Christians were trying to impress, were responsible for the miseries of the poor (5:1-6). The failure of these early Christians to recognize the elemental needs of the poor for food and clothing and their alliance with the rich made them coconspirators in the misery and possibly even the starvation of the poor. Luther, who had little enthusiasm for James, saw with him that failure to help the neighbor in his bodily needs was breaking the commandment forbidding murder. The rich Jews to whom the Christians were catering were also responsible for the martyrdom of Stephen and for the persecution of other Christians in Palestine and Syria. This was hardly a subtle form of murder!³

James assesses faith without works from an eschatological perspective. A faith without works will not stand the test on the Day of Judgment. The word “save” (*sōsai*) is in the future tense and does not speak directly to Paul’s concern of whether he is justified now. James, like Jesus, views man and his relationship to God from the perspective of the Last Day. In a sense there is a realized eschatology. The Kingdom’s coming involves not only death and resurrection but judgment. This makes the call to repentance in the preaching of John the Baptist so urgent (Matt. 3:7-10). The perspective of James is not so much present faith as final salvation, that is, whether the Christian will be acceptable to God on the Last Day. This helps in understanding the scene of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, a perspective introduced as early as the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus refuses salvation to the workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23). This eschatological dimension so characteristic of James and so prominent in the New Testament era, beginning with John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7), is the development of a prophetic theme of the Old Testament. Found in the Psalms (98:9), the world judgment becomes prominent in the preaching of the later prophets (Hag. 2:6; Mal. 4:1).

LIFE APPLICATION

1. LAW:

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails
in one point has become accountable for all of it.”

(Breaking of one commandment has a domino effect on all ten commandments)

2. GOSPEL:

“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

(Mercy is personified in our Lord Jesus Christ – the Merciful One)

3. JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION JOINED TOGETHER:

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

(A good tree will always bear good fruit)

How do we in preaching, teaching and living, properly then, distinguish these three crucial truths from the Bible, that show us how God carefully deals with each one of us?