

Scripture Reading:

James 4:11—5:11

“11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

5:1 “1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

The Mission of the Church

This morning we continue our short series of messages for young churches from the Book of James. Next month, Lord-willing, I will complete the series and my time in your pulpit with a message on prayer!

What we will wrestle with this morning is whether we are willing to acknowledge God's authority: Put another way, we will see that just as we demonstrate God's gift of faith by works of faith, we must truly acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty by being willing to go where He leads us!

- The central theme of our text this morning is understanding God's authority and being in submission to that authority: Then and only then will we rightly understand the Mission of the Church... The mission of Trinity Covenant!

As we study what James has to say, I want us to keep another New Testament figure in mind who had great faith: -Remember the E.F. Hutton commercials? Well when Jesus says He has found great faith, WE should listen!

We find the account of the Roman Centurion in Matthew chapter 5: His beloved servant is dying and he asks Jesus to heal him, Jesus agrees and starts toward his home... Matthew 5:8 "The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

- As we consider the mission of the Church, and what James teaches about God's authority in His Church, we must understand that the military example is both appropriate and instructive!

So, with the GREAT faith of this Roman Centurion in mind, let's dive into this morning's text:

James begins with a warning about judging other people, which goes right to this central question of authority:

James 4:11 "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

- **This is another reminder that we are not to be ‘masters of morals’ running around passing judgments as Calvin explained when we looked at James’ earlier admonition against having many ‘teachers.’**

James is NOT saying that there are to be no judgments in the Church, he is reminding us that all judgments must be made in humble submission to God’s Law: God’s Authority!

- **Listen carefully to Jesus in one of the most misunderstood passages in all the New Testament:**

Matthew 7:1 “Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

- **We are ALWAYS quick to see sin in the lives of others: Jesus says we must deal with our sin BEFORE we turn and help our brother!**
- **We are not to judge by our own standards, and we are not to be hypocritical in our judgments**

Perhaps the best example of this today is how the church has responded to the issue of homosexual marriage.

- **James rightly declares that there is “ONE Law-giver” and it certainly should remind us that HE is in charge!**

We must busy ourselves with obeying the words that we hear from Jesus and NOT spending all of our time checking up on others!

- **Next, James begins to confront the practical implications to acknowledging God’s control over all things:**

James 4:13 “Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

- **As ‘good Christians’ I am sure that we all often add “Lord-willing” with many of our pronouncements.**

This can be good or bad just as we see with obedience in children:

- You can see sweet obedience that is willingly under authority
- You can see a nasty OK, as they unwillingly submit to authority
- You can have a lack of obedience with the “I will do what I want” attitude.

Only ONE of these 3 is acceptable and James pointedly says that the other two are sin! [It reminds us of the importance of training our covenant children]

James here also reminds us that we are in no position to make plans because we do not know what will happen tomorrow!

We must acknowledge that God will establish the mission AND he will make sure we are prepared for how He might carry things out: I am sure you all have pondered some things you would like to see happen here at Trinity Covenant:

- **IF we pray for them rightly saying “Lord-willing:” Then we must also be ready to accept how God will accomplish the given task**

What if you as the members of Trinity Covenant were burdened to say “Lord-willing” we would like to double over the next year...

I mean in everything, church membership, children, money & possessions!

Or how about a burden to launch a new nation with several hundred million people who could faithfully spread the Gospel around the world?

These are both true accounts from history, but for the people of God who were involved in these victories, they came with a very heavy temporal cost: This is what James means by saying “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that”

- **It must be God who establishes the mission of the church... AND it will be His Spirit who gives us the strength and courage to accomplish that mission no matter what the cost**

As some of you may have guessed the first is the example of Job: Yes, at the end of the Book of Job Job does get DOUBLE for everything that he had:

- ⇒ **14,000 sheep to replace 7,000**
- ⇒ **6,000 camels to replace 3,000**
- ⇒ **1,000 oxen to replace 500**
- ⇒ **1,000 donkeys to replace 500**
- ⇒ **And ten new covenant children -- giving him twenty!**

- **This account is a blessed reminder that our children are eternal**
- **It is a great source of comfort when Covenant Children are lost at a young age**

The second example is the early pilgrims coming to the ‘New World’ They signed the Mayflower Compact probably never dreaming of how great God’s blessings would be!

- **However, in the short term they lost about half of their congregation in the first year:**

And it was after THAT when they held the great thanksgiving feast, a tradition we carry on to this day, usually not remembering much of the history behind it!

- **James is warning that we must not just add “Lord willing” to our usual “I will do this or that!” Often the “I” is still where we put the emphasis!**

The shift must be central and secure, not casual: We must bow humbly to the authority of the one true God: The one Law-giver! We must acknowledge who is in control and who has the authority to command us and ALL of creation.

- **This was the “great faith” that Jesus saw in the centurion.**

James now reminds his readers again about the vanity of trusting in riches so we will NOT be tempted to put our trust or confidence in the rich and powerful of this world:

James 5:1 “1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.”

- **This is a REAL temptation and James reminds us over and over again.**

It was even a problem for King David as he watched the apparent prosperity of the wicked, until he went into the temple and saw their end:[Psalm 73 is good homework!]

Jesus gave a similar warning in Matthew chapter six:

“19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- **Wealth itself is NOT the problem, remembering that Job was greatly blessed before AND after his time of testing.**

Jesus gave us two contrasting examples which instruct us about the proper and the wrong uses our accumulated wealth: Something we ALL have in the United States!

Luke 12:16 “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." [*his 401k plan was safe & sound!*] 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

- **This is the sad end of ALL those who put their trust in riches!**

This is also contrasted with the salvation of Zacchaeus in Luke 19... “8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- **In our materialistic western world, a critical part of our faithful obedience as Christians, our submission to God’s authority, MUST be what Dr. Francis Schaeffer referred to as “the compassionate use of accumulated wealth.”**
- **And finally James comes back to the issue of proper Biblical patience that we saw in Chapter one... *Trusting in the one in control!***

James 5:7 “7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

- **The Lord has a mission for Trinity Covenant Church: As his people we must learn to be patient and to look forward so we can better see the Lord’s perspective**
 - ⇒ **Like teaching young drivers how to make steady turns by looking further out**
 - ⇒ **Or reminding people that we smile in the midst of trials and tribulations because we have read the end of the book!**

We must learn to be patient:

- **The example of Job reminds us that we do not always see the entire picture**
- **The example of farming reminds us that we are NOT in control.**
- **We must learn to have confidence in God!**

There are many good Biblical examples here but let me close by reminding you of just two:

Daniels friends are the example of confidence in the midst of trials:

Daniel 3:16 "16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

As another example, we see how Joseph rightly understood all the trials of his life as he answers the last request by his brothers:

In Genesis 50, after his brothers tried to deceive him once more out of fear: "19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. 21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

- **Those brothers should have already learned the vanity of doing it their way!**
- **Joseph, in the flesh, could have been bitter and vengeful, but instead he had truly learned the lesson of Godly patience and mercy**

God is our true and ONLY Judge: He is our sole authority for all of life

You must strive to understand the Mission God has established for Trinity Covenant Church and you must be ready to follow His commands and leading, not trusting in your own wisdom, power or riches

- **Then, and only then, you will demonstrate that same great faith that Jesus saw in that Roman Centurion so long ago!**
- **God will do great and marvelous things here at Trinity Covenant if you are willing to say with that Centurion, "I am a man under authority," ready and willing to carry out the Lord's mission for His church!**