

Epistle of James III Making Judgments

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It's very unusual that if you survey the New Testament, you have in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the personal words of Jesus Christ and His personal ministry.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His **only** begotten Son, so that everyone..." That makes it a personal, individual thing. So, the whole perspective of the New Testament is

- a personal God
- a personal Savior
- a personal message

as well as for us in a group, that is true. But everything comes down to **personally** doing what God wants.

Outside of the book of Acts, which is a history of mostly Paul's ministry, what are all of the other books of the New Testament outside of Revelation called? *They are called epistles or letters.* They are written in a very different way than the Old Testament. There are individual instructions there, that is true, but the Old Testament is written not from a personal message point of view to you as an individual like the New Testament.

What we have is the personal letters from the apostles of Jesus Christ. Here in James we have the brother of Jesus Christ *to us, preserved for us!* That's unique. There is no other book, no other book outside the New Testament that has those letters, which are personal, that we can read for instruction that we can read for inspiration and all of the things that are there from God; same way with the instructions from Titus and Timothy concerning the ministry. *Those were personal instructions from God to the ministry!* Of course, whenever these things are not followed, *you have the difficulties involved!*

So, in going through the Epistle of James, let's look at it that particular way and let's see how that James is, in fact, doing this in writing to the brethren. Of course, all the way through the New Testament everyone is called 'brethren,' meaning that *family relationship with God and with Jesus Christ.* That has to be meaningful to us. Let's review just a few of these verses here. I want to emphasize something that didn't get recorded, because I think that it needs to be there and needs to be said.

James 1:17: "Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will..." (vs 17-18). That is *God having willed it.* That's a little awkward in translation, so I put it here *according to His own will.*

Let's see a little bit more about this *will of God.* When you stop and think about it, when you compare the calling of God, which is His own will:

- a personal calling
- a personal salvation
- with a personal Savior
- with a personal message
- with a personal relationship
- with personal prayers
- personally answered

Let's go to, speaking of a personal God and personal Savior and personally answering prayer, where Jesus said:

John 16:26: "In that day, you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I will beseech the Father for you." It's not a secondhand thing. It's not *he said/she said.* It is you directly to God. Isn't that something?

What does that do to the Catholic doctrine of intercessory saints? *It doesn't stand up!* It is not true. So what I want you to do, as we're going through this, is compare this personal relationship that we are to have with God and then with each other *vs* a 'religion,' which is a means of trying to make oneself feel good and appear good. That's the difference. I don't think it really quite solidified in my mind as clearly as it has until going through the book of James here.

Verse 27: "For the Father Himself..." *Personal! The Father Himself is loving you!* With that kind of confidence and with that kind of strength...

James 1:17: "Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will..." (vs 17-18—*having willed it*, because He is our Father and a *personal* God, with His only *personal* Son. We have to reciprocate in love.

John 16:27: “For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.”

This is something to really keep in mind, understand, treasure and thank God for. And realize this more as a minister, too: ***that the whole purpose of a minister is to keep pointing everyone to God in this personal relationship.***

Now, ***since God has willed it***—let’s think about that for a minute—and has called you and has given His Spirit, ***can any man*** take that away? ***No!*** As a minister keeping this in mind for a ministry, how then should we, as ministers, treat the brethren? ***Exactly the way the Apostle Paul said: that ‘you are God’s husbandry!’*** In other words, what is being done, the seed that is planted in you from God the Father, is from God. So we are like caretakers who oversee what’s going on. ***Caretakers don’t overrule, overlord what is going on.***

I’m just emphasizing that here, because I have talked to quite a few people on the phone recently who are still suffering from the throes of a tyrannical ministry. It’s very hard to recover from that, very difficult to recover from that, and so I just wanted to mention that and emphasize it.

Ephesians 1:4: “According as He has personally chosen us...”

- God chose us!
- God elected us!
- God has called us!

That’s what’s so fantastic, brethren.

“...for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world... [in other words, in His overall plan] ... in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love” (v 4). We’re going to see that that’s why this is so important when we come to the second chapter in the book of James, because ***God has called us in love.***

What does this do to ***judging?*** ***It changes it quite considerably!***

Verse 5: “Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of **His own will**”—God having ***willed it!***

That really is humbling, brethren, when you really let that sink in and just grasp your mind. It’s something that you grow in. It’s something you can’t run up and claim. It’s something that you can’t appropriate to yourself. No one appropriates Jesus Christ. That’s where the Protestants are wrong; they say that you ‘appropriate Jesus Christ.’ ***No!*** If there is any

appropriating, He appropriates you by calling, if you appropriate Christ, what do you do? ***You’re telling God what to do!*** And it doesn’t work that way. “...according to the good pleasure of His own will.”

Verse 6: to *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*... [accepted with all your faults, mistakes and difficulties] ...in Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence; having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself” (vs 6-9).

Those are tremendous, tremendous Scriptures there. I think in this world as miserable and as rotten as it is and as terrible as things are in the world, we need to turn here and really understand what God has done for us and ***thank God*** and ***praise God.*** That doesn’t mean we don’t have troubles; that doesn’t mean we don’t have difficulties. We may have a passel full of them, but nevertheless, we’re called ***according to God’s will*** and He’s going to see us through it, one way or the other.

James 1:18: “According to His own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings.” Obviously we’re greater than any of the animals, obviously we’re greater than anything that God has created in the inanimate world. Otherwise, why make us? Also, we’re the hardest to tame and we are the most difficult.

Now because of this—and I’ll tell you this is so true—the longer that you are in the Church of God, the longer that you have this personal relationship with God, the more you will see the validity of v 19. And I’ve made many, many mistakes just like it says in James 3, with the tongue we all sin constantly.

Verse 19: “For this reason, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear... [to hear the *Word of Truth*] ...slow to speak... [*speaking in judgments, comments* or things like that] ...slow to anger, because man’s wrath does not work out God’s righteousness” (vs 19-20).

And I’ve been thinking an awful lot on this. I never will forget that Bible study in Pasadena in 1972 where the leading minister got up there... You have to know this background: we were all supposed to begin fleeing to a place of safety in the first part of January 1972, to go to a place of safety in Petra. That didn’t happen. So, it was denied that that was ever said, but it was said.

It was denied that that was ever preached. I know that it was preached, because I myself preached it. When we saw the cities burning down in 1969, guess what we were all preaching? *Brethren, the end is near!*

With this also in the background: that Herbert Armstrong's son—for the umpteenth how many times—had to be disfellowshipped and relieved of all broadcasting duties because he was whore-mongering. They were trying to cover this up and not let anyone know, and yet, those who were in Pasadena knew what was going on. You just don't take someone off of radio and television and say that he's just under stress. It all came down on the Church leader that week:

- no Petra
- son got caught whore-mongering; taking advantage of young girls right there at the college
- kicked out of the Church
- the whole Church trying to know about it
- getting up there trying to deny it
- then trying to tell us that God substituted going to a place of safety by opening the door that we now had ads in *Readers Digest* magazine

With all of that as a caveat for the background, I want to show you that ***man's anger does not work the righteousness of God***. He got up there and as angry as could be, he said, 'Brethren, you are all a bunch of dumb sheep.' That whole auditorium was dead silent. Then he said, 'These rumors about my son are not true.' The whole congregation was beaten down. Now inside—I don't know what is going on inside someone else's mind—but I know what was going on inside my mind, which was: *we may be sheep, but we're not supposed to be dumb*. Are we not to grow in grace and knowledge? Which would get me in trouble with men, but not with God.

You can probably see many different examples of a man's anger not working out God's righteousness. You can cover this in marital relations and in childrearing. I can look back and see the mistakes that I made in childrearing. And many have made mistakes and it's almost today—you're dammed if you do and you're dammed if you don't—because the world is such that if you try and be nice they are spoiled, and if you try and discipline them it's too much. If you try and spank them, they can haul you off and put you in jail for child abuse. They are told at school that if your parents do that to you, you come and tell us, because we're the good bureaucrats and *we* will take care of your parents for you.

Plus then you've got television, rock music, all the peer pressure and all of this stuff going on, so it's very, very difficult for childrearing. If you have children, I can speak from experience, it is going to be tough. That doesn't necessarily mean that you have failed. That doesn't necessarily mean that I have failed, because we are also talking about the *will* of our own children. I know there have been times when I have been really angry and when I shout—I can shout really loudly.

Did it work out God's righteousness? *No, it didn't work out God's righteousness!* What happens? *Well, mostly it causes more problems!* Then you feel badly about it later and then what do you have to do? *You have to say you're sorry and 'you know I didn't mean to say that,'* and all that sort of stuff. I'm sure that is true and I know that's how I feel about it.

That's why it says, "...slow to speak, slow to anger" (v 19). So, you don't try and make your anger work God's righteousness. There is a time for righteous indignation! Obviously, yes that is true. Of course, we all learn it. We all say, 'If I had known these things as a child when I was growing up, I probably would have avoided a lot of these things.' Yes, Amen, true. We can stroke one there for it. Now, when our children are growing up and have grown up, then we say, 'Boy, if I would have known what I know now as a parent and used that back then, things would have been different.'

Let's hope that our children somewhere down the road, will learn and God will intervene in spite of our mistakes and call them and lead them to understanding and Truth so that they can recover themselves also.

Then the cycle starts all over again. *Yes, it does!* What generation has this not happened to? *Not a single generation!* That's why James is such a living epistle.

Verse 21: "Therefore... [before you try and work out the righteousness of God] ...having rid yourselves of all filthiness and all *the* abounding wickedness around you..." (v 21).

You get around people and their language and you start picking it up. I know the hardest thing in the world is if you get around people who swear—and you have no control over them and you don't want to hear it—all you can do except put your fingers in your ears or tell them to shut up and some people you can't tell them to shut up. If you do you might have a fist in your mouth. Then you go along and then what happens? *It*

plays back in your mind—right? *Yes!* I know it's happened. It's happened to you. It's happened to me. I don't think there is anything different that's happened to me that hasn't happened to you.

What do you do? *You pray and ask God to get it out of your mind!* And that is what James is saying here.

“...*the* abounding of wickedness around you... [the personalized salvation] ...then in meekness accept for yourselves the implanted Word, which *is* able to save your lives” (v 21). This implanted Word is going to cause us to do certain things that God wants us to do if we really act upon what we believe. He says once you have the implanted Word in your life and that you yourselves accept it and act upon it.

Verse 22: “Then be doers of *the* Word...”—yourselves. That is the verb in the Greek that is called *middle-voice*. It is something that you, yourself are doing. Unfortunately, that is missed so many times in the translations. They have virtually not translated a single middle-voice verb as *doing yourself*.

For example, v 13: “...and **He Himself**...” That's a middle-voice verb; *God Himself!* That makes it much more personal and much more powerful than saying, ‘and **He** is tempting no one with evil.’ But **He Himself**, originating from God personally, He's not doing it. So, that middle-voice is very important.

Verse 21: “...having rid yourselves...” That means don't try and go here and correct the whole world. You rid yourself. It has to start with you. It's the same way.

Verse 22: “...Be doers of *the* Word...”—yourself. It is meant to be very convicting. I find the book of James very convicting to me personally. I look and see all the things based in here that I ought to be doing. And I see the things that I am not doing.

Verse 22: “Then be doers of *the* Word, and not only hearers...” Not just liking to hear the Word of God. You know what it says in Ezek. 33, ‘As for My people, they come and sit before You as a people, come and sit before you and say, *let us hear the Word of the Lord.*’ So you tell them the Word of the Lord and they say, ‘My that's marvelous and wonderful’ and they go on their way, because You're like someone who is a fine tuned instrument speaking to them.’ But they won't do them. Unfortunately we all have that problem in one degree or other, because if you are only a hearer then you are just deceiving yourself.

Again, here is the middle-voice verb, “...**deceiving your own selves**” (v 22). Why is that the worst kind of deception? *Because you actually believe it!* That's worse than telling a lie to someone else, because you know you've told a lie to them. You can separate that out from Truth. When you lie to yourself constantly and you deceive yourself and you believe that lie, that's the worse kind, because it is so deeply ingrained in the individual.

It is so hard to admit it—isn't it? *That's the hardest one in the world to admit!* That's why I gave you the title of the book: *The Lies We Believe*—the #1 cause of our unhappiness—very good book. Very appropriate, because that's exactly what it says here in James.

I didn't get this book just because of this, but I happen to get it, because one day I was going into our big supermarket down there in Hollister. I walked by and that title jumped right out at me. I picked it up and started leafing through it. As you know I'm a book ‘phileo’—*a book lover*. So, I picked it up and said, ‘Oh! Look at that.’ And I started reading a little bit of it there. I said, ‘Boy, this ties right in with the series we did on *Satan's Ten Most Believable Lies*. I started going through this and said, ‘Oh man, this is really good.’

Verse 22: “...deceiving your own selves, because if anyone is a hearer of *the* Word and not a doer, this one is like a man considering his natural face in a mirror. Who, after looking at himself, went away and immediately **forgot** what he was like” (vs 22-24). That's the tense of the verb, *forgot*, which means he immediately, past tense, *put it out of his mind!* Isn't that what we do? Why do we put off until the last minute whatever we do? It's the same kind of thing; we avoid it. **We avoid confronting ourselves in the mirror of God's Word!** And that's the whole thing that is here, that's the whole thing that is what we're being taught.

Verse 25: “But the one who has looked into *the* perfect law of freedom and **has continued in it**... [tie that right back to vs 22-23 *being a doer*] ... this one **himself**... [the personal, individual, initiative and responsibility] ...has not become a forgetful hearer, **but is a doer** of *the* work. This one shall be blessed in his actions. If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue...” (vs 25-26).

Now what does this mean? *You go back to man's anger!* It's not working out the righteousness of God. So if a person seems to be ‘religious’ or considers himself ‘religious’ and is

not controlling his tongue through:

- bragging about his religion, which could be
- bragging about how good he is, which could be
- bragging about how he loves the Lord, which could be

Have you ever wondered when you get around people who *seem* to be religious and they say, ‘Praise the Lord, hallelujah, bless the Lord.’ How that it—even though you know God—when it’s said in such a way as this, what does it do? *It’s just like taking fingernails on a chalkboard!*

Look at all these ‘religious’ people that have been exposed. I think they were set up for it, too, as well as their own faults and vanities. 20/20 took three Protestant TV preachers—this is in addition to Jimmy Swaggart—you talk about empty and vain and self-deceiving; it is incredible! One man in particular, and he just preaches on faith and he is just really right in there. His house burned down and ‘Oh brethren, I appreciate all the offerings. We were without clothes and had no place...’ He had three other mansions. *Mansions!* Sound like something we knew of? *Yes!* These were mansions, replete with Mercedes Benz, swimming pools, custom decorating inside, 6000 sq ft, servants, and yet, on his TV show he shows the house that was burned down and now he’s begging for money.

Then it shows them how that they go to Haiti, if you want an orphanage go to Haiti. You have unscrupulous people down there in Haiti who will put up a sign outside their orphanage, your sign. You take a video picture of it. You run back on your little video show and you tell them, ‘Brethren, send money for these poor...’ If you look at these things they show the same children over and over again. It’s all a rip-off. They send anywhere from 5% to 15%, maybe 20% of it to the one who runs the orphanage and he takes most of that for himself. And he’s propositioned many of the ‘religious’ leaders to come down to Haiti and ‘we will set you up with bona fide pictures and you can run this on your television show and you can use this to raise funds.’

I want you to read this, again, v 26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue...”

- but is bragging about it
- but is saying how good he is
- how many people he’s reaching
- how many are converted
- how many magazines

Have we heard this before?

- how many ministers
- how many are attending
- how much is the offering
- how great we are

What does the Bible say? *Mercy triumphs over judgment!* We need mercy, not that kind of stupidity and nonsense. When I talk to people that I haven’t talked to for a long time, and maybe they’re attending another church. What is the first question they ask you? How many are attending? Does that equal righteousness? *No! It doesn’t equal righteousness!* How many were with Elijah? *None!*

Now for those ministers who were caught, 1-Corinthians 10:12: “Therefore, let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.” What does the Scripture say? *Oh, how the mighty have fallen!* We don’t gloat in that either. God says, ‘Don’t rejoice in the day that your enemy falls, lest the same thing happen to you.’ Even God Himself is not desirous that the wicked should die, but that they should repent. Those are powerful words, brethren. *Those are powerful words!* Those are really meaningful words. While I’m sitting here going through this with you, I’m preaching to myself. There is a very important thing that all of us ministers have to do.

Paul said that he had to bring himself into captivity lest after he preached to others he himself might be a castaway. I want you to substitute the word *Christian* for *Jew*, because that is applicable. He says that a Jew:

Romans 2:29: “Rather he *is* a Jew who *is* one inwardly, and circumcision *is* of the heart.”

Verse 17: “Behold, you are called a Jew, [Christian] and you yourself rest in the law, and boast in God... [not controlling the tongue] ... and know *His* will, and approve of the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and are persuaded *that* you yourself are **a guide of the blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of the foolish**, a teacher of babes, having the form of the knowledge and of the Truth *contained* in the law. You then... [this is what it has to be for every one of us, especially ministers] ...who are teaching another, do you not teach yourself also?...” (vs 17-21). The *King James* says, ‘*teachest thou not thyself?*’ Which means *are you not teaching yourself?*

“...You who preach, ‘Do not steal,’ are you stealing? You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ are you committing adultery? You who abhor idols, are you committing sacrilege? You who boast in law, are you dishonoring God through your

transgression of the Law? For through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, exactly as it is written” (vs 21-24).

I submit that those ministers who do these kinds of things—as I just related and the things we have been personally through in our own experience:

- Does it not blaspheme the name of God?
- Does it not discourage people?
- Does it not cause people to fall by the wayside, because of those kinds of things?
- *Yes, absolutely it does!*

That’s why it’s there. We are to learn from God’s Word, too.

James 1:26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, **this ones religion is vain!**”

Now here’s the test. If you think your heart is so good and if you think you are so righteous, he gives the test. What would the Bible call those people of v 26? Let’s see what Jesus called them.

It’s amazing how much of James fits right in with the Sermon on the Mount, absolutely amazing! We’re talking about religious people—right? *Yes!*

Matthew 6:1: “Beware *that* you do not bestow your alms in the sight of men in order to be seen by them... [that you appear to be religious] ...otherwise you have no reward with your Father Who *is* in heaven. Therefore, when you give *your* alms, do not sound the trumpet before you, as the **hypocrites...**” (vs 1-2).

Now in *A Harmony of the Gospels* you will see that I translated that *sanctimonious pretenders*, which is the most accurate translation of this, because they appear religious. They are pretending, *sanctimonious pretenders!*

The next time you watch the religious channel, see if you can pick out the authentic from the non-authentic. I think Zola Levitt is pretty authentic. I would have to say I like Zola Levitt even though he talks about going to heaven and hell—it’s strange. He is a converted Jew, who keeps the Holy Days, but doesn’t preach that other people should keep them. Now, that’s a strange one. I wouldn’t put him in a hypocritical category. I think he is pretty well down to earth and pretty honest and there ought to be many more preachers like him.

I think Dr. [Charles] Stanley, He’s pretty good, he’s a tall guy with glasses. He’s pretty

good. Those are the only ones I watch. I don’t watch them all that often, but you know sometimes the programming Sunday from 5-8 is so bad, especially when there is not football. So I watch it a little bit.

Then there is the one guy who comes on, his name is Hayden. He cries just about all the time; everything is a downer. Then there was this one woman I saw on the Los Angeles channel when I was down there on a trip down to L.A.; all she did was cry, cry, cry, just crying. So, I did my favorite thing, flicked from channel to channel to see if there is anything there and I came back twenty minutes later and guess what? *She’s still crying!* So I said, “This is incredible!” I went through the channels again and came back in about another five minutes and there she is crying. She cried for the whole half hour. Now, it’s going to be awfully hard for her to convince me that there’s joy in the Lord. ***Hypocrites, sanctimonious pretenders!***

“...as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets... [Remember this was written to Jews—who were what? *In the synagogues!*] ...so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But *when* you give your alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall Himself reward you openly.... [personal relationship with God.] ...And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, in order *that* they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward” (vs 2-5). That they were ***seen of men as religious***. You can take this on and on. You can apply this wherever. This is living Word of God.

We saw something—what was it on television concerning the pope? Here he all dressed up in this thing. Those tremendous pillars that are enthroned over the middle of St. Peter’s Basilica, get a good look at them next time, they are serpentine. It’s amazing! Absolutely amazing! And there are flies on it. Who is the lord of flies, but Beelzebub? *Who appear to be ‘religious’!*

Verse 16: “And when you fast, do not be as the hypocrites, dejected in countenance; for they disfigure their faces in order that they may appear to men to fast. Truly I say to you, they have their reward.”

(go to the next track)

Verse 17: “But *when* you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to men to fast, but to your Father Who *is* in secret;

and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly” (vs 17-18). Read all of Matt. 23 about the hypocrites causing people to be proselytes and more double the child of hell than they themselves:

- making broad their phylacteries
- long prayers
- oppressing widows
- taking their money
- making silly little rules

‘He who swears by the temple it is nothing at all, but he who swears by the gold that’s on the temple is a debtor.’ Jesus said, ‘Hypocrite, which sanctifies the temple? The gold, the building or God?’ Then He says, ‘You are like whited sepulchers outside, but inside you are like dead men’s bones, full of filth and all that sort of thing.’ Considers himself to be religious.

I want to cover one thing in Matt. 24, because we have experienced this; people are continuing to experience it. I think when we get into the section there about helping people who are in need—I hope that what we do here, brethren, in being able to help the people on the mailing list—that we can help those who have been spiritually naked and spiritually without food, because of the different things that have happened to them, which we find here:

Matthew 24:42: “Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have been watching, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready. For the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think. Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season? **Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing**” (vs 42-46). It ties right in with: *be doers of the Word*.

Verse 47: “Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his property. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart... [because he appears ‘religious,’ deceiving himself, his religion is worthless] ...shall say in his heart, ‘My lord delays *his* coming,’ and shall begin to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken” (vs 47-49). You can tie that in physically and spiritually.

- *Physically* they get all involved in alcoholism
- *Spiritually* they get involved in the doctrines of Babylon

Drinking from the cup of Rev. 17. Do we not see that going on today? *Yes, it’s there!*

Verse 50: “The lord of that servant will come in a day that he does not expect, and in an hour that he does not know. And he shall cut him asunder and shall appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vs 50-51).

Last night I was watching television, it’s not wrong to watch some television on the Sabbath. It’s a very good lesson. It was called, I entitled it in my mind, *The Fires of Hell*. I don’t think that was the title of it, but that’s what I entitled it in my mind. It showed the operation of those who put out all the oil-well fires in Kuwait. Those were some awesome fires, 700-plus wells burning, all at the same time. Around a lot of these wells were lakes of oil on fire. It showed one of them that was two miles long and eight feet deep of oil burning. You talk about *men*—whew! They went in and put out these fires, risked their lives and the temperatures got up to be 4,000 degrees. I mean, beyond our comprehension.

It showed a close-up of the fires—that’s why I entitled it in my mind *The Fires of Hell*, and here—whoooh! Just blasting out like the roaring of a jet and I thought: What is it like down under the earth, with the things going on in the earth. Thinking about this thing here, *‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’* and the Lake of Fire and all that. And I thought, ‘Oh man, look at that!’ That is awesome, and the courage of those men to get out and do that, unbelievable! They got them all out. They got everyone of them out.

Then it showed the bomb squad. Before they could go in and start putting out the fires they had to have the bomb squad come in and make sure there were no mines, make sure that unexploded explosives from allied bombs and everything were not going to destroy anyone. It showed that the whole desert was covered with the thick film of oil.

I don’t see how they’d spot these things, but they would ride along on the top of the fenders of a jeep. It was a British team. They would look just straight ahead, and that’s the only area that they would work. Then when they were done with a section, they came back and went straight ahead again, came back and went straight ahead again. So you can always see their tracks to the left, because in this particular case they were working to the right.

They would go along and they would spot those mines and I would look at that picture on the TV. I couldn’t see what they were seeing. They would get down there and with a little tiny

hand shovel, you know like a little tiny hand spade for a garden, they would move some of that oil film on top. It was just like asphalt, about an inch to two inches thick, just from the splatter of the oil. It was incredible!

Then it showed how they would go ahead and make up the plastic explosives and then they would take a whole area and then they would blow the whole thing up all at once. And I thought, if that was not living hell in the desert, I don't know! Something, I tell you! You think about it, and I think about it. Think about all the difficulties that we have, they're nothing! It's amazing they could even breathe. They said that they would work 28 days and take 28 days off. They would make upwards between \$1-2,000 a day, while they were working and while they weren't working. It showed some of the methods they used to put these things out. *Awesome!*

But I couldn't help but thinking of 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' and hellfire and brimstone. I know when you look at some of these volcanoes, too, and you see that lava running down! That's what the Lake of Fire is. If you need a little sort of kick in the pants, as it were, to get right with God, look at some of those. That'll help you. Here's the kick in the pants that we are to have:

James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, **and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**" That's quite something!

We can apply this many ways, the orphans that are truly orphans, the widows that are truly widows. And I know in our Church we have quite a few widows. I think one of the things that we try and do is to help them in any way that we can. And they do have afflictions. One of the things that we can do is that we can help them with the Word of God, because I think that widows have been oppressed and taken advantage of more than anyone else. There are many other different aspects of it.

"...and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (v 27). And we are not of the world, not to go out and get involved in the world in such a way that we are *partakers of their sins*. What does it say to the people of God concerning Babylon? '*Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins and partaker of her plagues*' (Rev. 18).

One other thing I forgot to mention about these fires of hell in the Kuwait oil fires. At 50 yards, if you had your lips exposed they would

blister instantly! They had to keep themselves doused with water continuously. They had to wear heavy clothes where the temperature was 125-degrees without the fires. They had to wear heavy clothes because if any skin were exposed it would **blister instantly**. You could be fried to a crisp in nothing flat.

JAMES 2

James 2:1 "My brethren..." Notice that everything is *brethren*. He didn't say *my dumb sheep*. *No! he said, "My brethren..."* Now we're going to see that this includes all status. We'll go back and cover it.

Verse 1: "My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. Now then, if a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings *and dressed* in splendid apparel, and *there* comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel, and you give preference to the one who is wearing the splendid apparel, and say to him, 'Seat yourself here in the best place'; and you say to the poor man, 'Stand over there,' or, 'Sit here under my footstool'; then have you not passed judgment among yourselves, and have made yourselves judges *with evil opinions?*" (vs 1-4).

Let's go back and analyze this. And we will see that, yes indeed, we have all been guilty of these things one way or the other.

"My brethren..." We're talking about rich and poor. What is the one thing that we have in common? Not status, not money. *We have a common salvation of redemption*, whether a person is rich or whether a person is poor. But the human, natural, carnal mind and tendency is that

"...if a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings *and dressed* in splendid apparel..."—it could even have the implication of loud, gaudy, expensive clothing.

"...and *there* comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel." Why was this a particularly Jewish problem? Not just necessarily the rich and poor is the problem, but the problem of *discriminating against people*, or *respecting people*, because if you respect persons then you also have to *discriminate*. That doesn't mean you let a thief in your house.

Let's see where it talks about 'respector of persons,' **that God Himself is no 'respector of persons.'** That becomes a very profound and important thing, because the Jews by 'the religion of Judaism,' by the nature of their religion... We just got done with 'if anyone seem to be religious.' Now we're talking about people having

‘respect of persons.’ The Jews, by the nature of their religion, discriminated against anyone who was not a Jew in social discourse and activity with one another, as well as the ‘synagogal’ relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

Now we have a profound thing that takes place in Acts 10. We have a man who was a Gentile. His name was Cornelius. He was a captain of a band of Italian soldiers, because of the Roman occupation. He himself loved God and he himself at the time of the hour of prayer would worship God and all of a sudden an angel said to him, ‘Send and go to Peter, who is staying at one Simon the Tanner in the city of Joppa.’ So, he sent three men. Peter had this vision; remember the vision of all the animals that were unclean? Why did God use all of these unclean animals? *Because that’s how the Jews picture the rest of the human race in their religion of Judaism!* That’s why. It has nothing whatsoever to do whether to eat clean or unclean foods.

I have here this article about a parasitical infection, which is attacking people in the United States now because they are eating half-cooked pork. God says it’s unclean in the first place, not fit to be eaten. No question about it. So then, he got hold of Peter and Peter and his group went on down to Cornelius:

Acts 10:25: “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him *and* fell at *his* feet, worshiping *him*.” Peter said, ‘You are a smart man. I am the first pope. You better kiss my ring and my feet’ **Not there**—is it? So much for appearing ‘religious.’ So much for haughtiness of Catholicism.

Verse 26: “But Peter raised him up, saying, ‘Stand up, for I myself am also a man.’.... [you don’t worship human beings] ...And as he was talking with him, he went in and found many gathered together. And he said to them, ‘You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to associate with or come near to anyone of another race....’” (vs 25- 28).

Now, I want to tell you right here that was **not** a Law of God. But that was a law of Judaism. That’s why God supernaturally did this to *break down that barrier*. It says that through Christ *He has broken the enmity of the barrier that was between us, making of Jews and Gentiles one body in the Church, in Christ* (Eph. 2). Here’s the beginning of the breaking of that by destroying a religious law, which was contrary to the will of God.

Verse 28: “And he said to them, ‘You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to

associate with or come near to anyone of another race. But **God has shown me that no man should be called common or unclean**” (v 28).

There is a respect of persons when the Jews did it that way and it was an inherent problem with Judaism. Then if you have that toward other people, what do you have *within* the congregation of the synagogue? *Those who discriminated between the rich and the poor!*

Verse 34: “Then Peter opened *his* mouth... [after Cornelius was saying to him what happened with the angel and everything] ...*and* said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that **God is not a respecter of persons.**’”

Did He not make everyone? *Yes!* Keep that in mind every time you come across some blanket indictment against people in general. It’s okay to say, ‘we all have evil carnal hearts.’ But you stop and think about it, every human species, of every kind, of every race, of every nation, of every— whatever ilk you want to have—

- *all* are created by God, one way or the other
- *all* have sins and evils
- *all* have difficulties and problems

—some of them more singularly difficult than others—

- some more sneaky
- others more base
- some hidden
- some open

—but that’s the way humanity is.

So Peter says, v 34: “...Of a truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation the one who fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. The word that He sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you have knowledge of; which declaration came throughout the whole of Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed *concerning* Jesus, Who was from Nazareth: how God anointed Him with *the* Holy Spirit and with power, *and* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him” (vs 34-38).

And then he finishes the sermon and instantly the Holy Spirit *descends right upon these Gentiles, uncircumcised!*

We’re going to see when we get into some other things with the Passover, **that was a tremendous problem**, because it says clearly that you should be circumcised before you take the Passover. And Paul’s greatest sin was having uncircumcised Gentiles keep the Passover. **We**

cannot comprehend the absolute grating of the religious nerves in standing of Judaism that that would do. But here God is knocking down *all* of those barriers, gave them the Holy Spirit, the gift of God and he said how can I withstand God.

Verse 47: “‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they besought him to remain *for* a number of days.” (vs 47-48). Guess what happens when he comes back to Jerusalem?

Acts 11:1: “Now, the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God; and when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of *the* circumcision disputed with him, saying, ‘You went in to men who were uncircumcised and did eat with them.’” (vs 1-3)—which we see also presented a great problem—*couldn’t even eat with them!* (Gal. 2). You talk about segregation in the United States down south where they had the black/white:

- black bathrooms
- black fountains
- black restaurants
- sit in the back of the bus

—and all this sort of thing. This society was:

- far more rigid
- far more discriminating
- far more aloof
- far more rigidly controlled by law

Then he rehearsed the whole thing for them and then they understood and they finally said:

Verse 15: “And when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came upon them, even as *it* also came upon us in *the* beginning.” If they smoked pipes, I imagine Peter would have said, ‘Put that in your pipe and smoke it.’ But they don’t.

Verse 16: “Then I remembered the word of *the* Lord, how He had said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with *the* Holy Spirit.’ Therefore, if God also gave them the same gift ...” (vs 16-17)

I want you to understand what a tremendous thing this was, absolutely unprecedented. You talk about a *blow to Judaism*, because they thought Christianity was theirs alone. What a *blow to Judaism* this was, because remember up to that point it only went to the Jews. I don’t know exactly the timeframe of Acts 11, but I think that the Epistle of James was written sometime after Acts 11, but before the problems of Acts 13-15 about the controversy of circumcision, because it’s not mentioned here in

the epistle.

Verse 17: “Therefore, if God also gave them the same gift that *was given* to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I *to dissent*? Do I have the power to forbid God?”

He had to talk to them that way; otherwise they may have put Peter out of the Church. Now you know why it had to be Peter that did it? *Because at that time he was the leading apostle!* That’s not the doctrine of ‘petrine theology,’ to canonize a pope by any means, but that’s just the way it was.

Verse 18: “And after hearing these things, they were silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also has God indeed granted repentance unto life.’ Now, those who had been scattered by the persecution that arose concerning Stephen went through Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, **speaking the Word to no one except Jews only**” (vs 18-19). That’s why when he writing, he’s writing to those in the synagogue.

James 2:2: “Now then, if a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings *and dressed* in splendid apparel, and *there* comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel.” There are churches that say, ‘you cannot come in the door unless you meet our dress code.’

- What does this say? *Make no distinction concerning clothing!*
- What if he’s wearing all that he has to wear?
- You going to turn him away from God because of that?

The natural tendency is to *be sycophants to the rich!* ‘A rich man comes to the synagogue; maybe he will leave a good offering. Give him the best seat.’ And the synagogues, even to this day, sell the seats. Did you know that? *The closest one to the pulpit to the highest bidder, especially on the Holy Days!* The important people in the society of the Jews get the main ones, because they give more. James says you are not to do that here. This is not how it’s run.

Who do you suppose of the Jews were the wealthiest, the most religious, and would be accorded the most honor in the synagogue? Since we’re still talking about the Jews? *The Sadducees! The priests!* So they would come in, ‘Oh, yes, oh yes, Rabbi, come right up here and sit in this seat.’ James is saying, ‘Now that you have Christ, you are all rich and poor.’ And as Paul said, ‘free and bond,’ *you are all together in Christ*, not to respect persons.

Verse 3: “And you give preference to the

one who is wearing the splendid apparel, and say to him, 'Seat yourself here in the best place'; and you say to the poor man, 'Stand over there,' or, 'Sit here under my footstool'" (v 3). There are also areas in the synagogue where they do not have any pews or seats at all and that's where the poor people generally stand.

Remember the parable that Jesus said about those who *love the best seats* at the Feasts, 'When you go to a Feast don't take the last seat, because lest you go up and take the first seat and then someone else is going to come and take your seat and you be embarrassed and told to sit down here at the end.' Those are the ones who put themselves forward. Then you have the ones who take and place others forward that way. So, you have preferences. You can call this snobbery.

I do these things every once in a while; I walked up to a bank teller. This was a thing after Anita Hill and men can't be men and women can't be women and even if you look at a woman it's sexual harassment and all this sort of thing. So, I walked up and then there was a big controversy about the woman who leads the NOW gang, she's a lesbian, cheated on her husband because she's lesbian, all this sort of thing. I mentioned a little bit about it and she said, 'Well, why can't men just be men and women be women?' And I said, 'Now, please be honest with me, isn't it true that every woman whenever she meets another woman; the first thing that she normally would do in her mind is to look at the woman, see how she's dressed, see what makeup she has, see everything about her instantly and make a judgment.' She said, 'Yes.'

And I said, 'Isn't it true that many times women think that they know what's on other people's minds?' Now men do that, too. Men can do the same thing, too, but women just happen to be that way a little more than men, not to put women down or whatever. And she said, 'Yes.' And we just looked at each other and laughed and said, 'Well, let's just be what we are.'

I see her quite often when I go into that bank and joke about it a little bit. Men tend, on the other hand, to put women down and put them in their places and call them stupid and all this sort of thing. Then they do something exactly that their wives or some woman told them that they shouldn't be doing and then it is, 'I told you so. So, it comes both ways.

Now, if you have preference then, v 4: "Then have you not passed judgment among yourselves, and have made yourselves judges *with evil opinions*?" Isn't that true? *Yes, it is true!*

I heard of a terrible case, some white kids against some black kids back in New York. Four white kids chased down two black kids, a boy and a girl, cut off their hair, painted them with white shoe polish, robbed them, took their money, all of \$3, beat them up, let them go and said, after they painted them with the white shoe polish, 'You'll be white one day.'

Evil runs with everyone: white, black, yellow, brown, tall, short, skinny, fat, male, female. When we come across these things and make blanket statements or things in our mind such as, 'This rich person must be good; they have money. This poor person must be bad, after all they are suffering.'

How do you know? Don't we do that with people in our own minds? Whenever you're stuck in traffic and the other person doesn't move like they should, don't you make an evil judgment in your mind concerning that person? *Sure you do!* I have. That's why James cuts to the quick because it's day-to-day Christian living and the things we ought to do and ought not do. "...made yourselves judges *with evil opinions*."

John 7:11—here they were judging Jesus: "As a result, the Jews were seeking Him at the Feast, and said, 'Where is He?' Now there was much debating about Him among the people. Some said, 'He is a good Man.' But others said, 'No, but He is deceiving the people.'.... [judging with evil opinions] However, no one spoke publicly about Him for fear of the Jews.... [that is the Jewish leaders] ...But then, about the middle of the Feast, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching. And the Jews were amazed, saying, 'How does this Man know letters...'" (vs 11-15). In other words, understand the Scriptures.

He didn't have a traditional rabbinic Jewish education. I will take anyone on and argue that He did not have that kind of education, because they said, 'How did He know letters?' It was well known that He didn't study at any of the rabbinic schools. Yet, He knew more than they did. Remember when He was twelve, went up to the temple, was asking questions and talking to the priest and everything?

"...having never been schooled?' Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His Who sent Me. If anyone desires to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is from God, or *whether* I speak from My own self. The one who speaks of himself is seeking his own glory...' (vs 15-18). So, there's even this own glory, vanity kind of thing that human beings

have. We've seen that, too.

“...but He Who seeks the glory of Him [God the Father] Who sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Did not Moses give you the Law, and not one of you is practicing the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?’ The people answered and said, ‘You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?’” (vs 18-20).

All of this judging going on! And what were they doing? *Judging! Making evil discernment!* We'll read some of the Law of Moses here in just a little bit.

Verse 21: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I did one work, and you were all amazed. Now then, Moses gave you circumcision—not that it was from Moses, but from the fathers—and on *the Sabbath* you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on *the Sabbath*, so that the Law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with Me...” (vs 21-23). ***The anger of man does not fulfill the righteousness of God!*** It's just leaps off the page!

“...because I made a man entirely whole on *the Sabbath*? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (vs 21-24).

That's the whole thing. In any judging it has to be righteous judging. Don't make yourself a judge with evil opinions {note ‘judge not lest you be judged’ *and* you've got a plank in your eye and you're trying to get a splinter out of your brother's eye (Matt. 7)} ***We're to judge righteous judgment!*** Who is the righteous Judge? ***Jesus is!***

Let me give you these following Scriptures that you can write in your margin or your notes and go back and study concerning judgment:

- 2-Tim. 4:1, 8—righteous judge who is God
- Isa. 11:3—that it's prophesied of Jesus that He wouldn't judge after the seeing of His eyes, not appearance
- Why?
- How do we come before God?
So much for religious attire!
- Does He not know all the thoughts of any human being He ever wants to know at any time? *Yes!*

This tells us how we come before God, Hebrews 4:12: “For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the joints* and *the marrow*, and *is* able to ***discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.***”

- not what you wear
- not what you don't wear
- not how rich you are
- not how poor you are
- not how much money you give
- not how much money you don't give

—not any of those things. But “...***the thoughts and intents of the heart.***” That's why we have, as people, the proclivity to have evil opinions about people.

Here's how we come before God, v 13: And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but ***all things are naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him*** to Whom we must give account.

This is not saying, brethren, that we aren't to dress as decently as we can when we have the opportunity, but this doesn't mean not to put any stock in it. That's why it says, when you look into the *perfect law of liberty*, that spiritual mirror, don't forget what human nature is like.

Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion... [that is in heaven above when you pray unto God] ... and to *the city of the living God*, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; *to the joyous festival gathering*; and to ***the Church of the Firstborn...***” (vs 22-23). That ties right in with James 1:18, *the firstfruits of all His created beings*.

“...registered in the *Book of Life* in heaven; and to God, ***the Judge of all...*** [*everyone!*] ...and to *the spirits of the just* who have been perfected; and to Jesus, *the Mediator of the New Covenant*; and to sprinkling of *the blood of ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of Abel*” (vs 23-24).

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 3:16
- 2) James 1:17-18
- 3) John 16:26-27
- 4) James 1:17-18
- 5) John 16:27
- 6) Ephesians 1:4-9
- 7) James 1:18-22, 13, 21-26
- 8) 1 Corinthians 10:12
- 9) Romans 2:29, 17-24
- 10) James 1:26
- 11) Matthew 6:1-5, 16-18
- 12) Matthew 24:42-51
- 13) James 1:27
- 14) James 2:1-4, 1

- 15) Acts 10:25-28, 34-38, 47-48
- 16) Acts 11:1-3, 15-19
- 17) James 2:2-4
- 18) John 7:11-24
- 19) Hebrews 4:12-13
- 20) Hebrews 12:22-24

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- James 3
- Ezekiel 33
- Matthew 23
- Revelation 17; 18
- Galatians 2
- Acts 13-15
- Matthew 7
- 2 Timothy 4:1, 8
- Isaiah 11:3

Also referenced:

Books:

- *The Lies We Believe* by Chris Thurman
- *A Harmony of The Gospels* by Fred R. Coulter

Sermon Series: *Satan's Ten Most Believable Lies*

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