

Christ Reformation Church

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A Faith that Works The Epistle of James

***You see that a person is
justified by works and not by
faith alone. (2:24)***

***“The Wisdom of the Lord Gives
us Confidence in the Face of the
Enemy”***

September 13, 2015

Sermon Text: James 4:1-10

Scripture Reading: John 15

Introduction-

James 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven

and tossed by the wind. (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

We have been learning in our study of James that:

Wisdom from the Lord is the ability to discern good from evil, righteousness from unrighteousness, the Holy Spirit from a demonic spirit. To sort out good from evil. Righteousness from unrighteousness. Godliness from wickedness.

And we said that in this sense James is much like Proverbs in its purpose – to make us wise in this discernment:

Proverbs 1:1-3 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: (2) To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, (3) to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity;

Look at those terms carefully.
Instruction in what?

- Wise *dealing*
- Righteousness
- Justice
- Equity

God's wisdom is what enables the believer to *deal* with life and circumstances and people in *righteousness, to effect justice, and to do so with equity* (without partiality). This wisdom is sorely and grievously lacking in the visible church today. Where there is no godly wisdom, there necessarily will be UN-righteousness, IN-justice, and IN-equity.

Our Lord evidenced this wisdom at the very outset of His earthly ministry as He met the deceptions and evil of the devil:

Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (3) And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (4) But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and set

him on the pinnacle of the temple (6) and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (9) And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (10) Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" (11) Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

One of the characteristics of God's wisdom is that it gives us *confidence* to stand for truth in the face of the subtle and wickedly ingenious deceptions of the enemy, as Christ did here. This confidence is vital. Let me explain.

Evil is Never Wrong

Satan lies whenever he speaks. He calls light darkness and darkness light, falsehood truth and truth falsehood. The wisdom of the Lord enables us to

sort these lies out with confidence and to stand against him and his agents.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The Christian, by God's Spirit and Word *can* do this. But we must pray for that wisdom and then receive it and believe it when the Lord gives it.

When confronted, Satan then will NEVER acknowledge guilt or wrong. Neither will his servants. They will offer deceptively strong arguments to cause us to doubt ourselves and believe their lies and before your encounter with them is done, YOU will stand convicted and guilty when in fact you are not guilty. Wisdom is able to effect real justice by seeing clearly where the guilt really lies.

I will give you an example.

In years past as we in this church had to deal with evil, we were often to some degree hampered by a lack of the confidence that God's wisdom brings. I have told you before that I found myself apologizing to the wicked when they accused us of being too harsh or when they insisted I should have listened to them and done things differently and so on. By these kinds

of evil deceptions the wicked man will keep us in confusion and work to exonerate himself and place guilt and blame on others.

We have seen the very same thing in our dealings with ARBCA. Many churches that have resigned from that association saw the problems and even the evil quest for power and control that we did, *but they would not speak out openly against them*. When they resigned as members, they simply wrote a letter directly to the administrative council and those letters have been kept under wraps.

When we resigned, we sent out letter of resignation (which listed our reasons for resigning, identifying the evils that now exist in that association) to all the churches. The result? We were hammered by the culprits and, here is the point I want to emphasize for our purposes this morning: *we were told directly by the new leadership that if we did not apologize for speaking evil about brothers in the Lord, the Lord would remove His blessing from our church and ministry here*.

Now, it is at these kinds of junctures that we must have the wisdom of the Lord or we will falter. We must have Christ's confidence so that we can stand firm and say in the face of such accusations, "no, this is right and that is wrong. This is truth and that is

falsehood.” You must be enabled by the wisdom of the Lord to recognize evil and to sort it out from what is righteousness.

Here is an example of what evil will do to you if you lack this wisdom—

Recently another church resigned from ARBCA, and they sent their letter out to all the churches as well. They listed some of the evils that we saw too. They said that there is in fact an “oligarchy” that has been formed by a few men who are lording it over the churches. And they properly exposed the fact that this group has been refusing to provide a list of all the churches and missionaries who have resigned and refusing to provide copies of their letters of and reasons for resignation.

Now, what happened? Immediately they were assailed (in oh so “nice” language from “brothers” in the Lord) with letters that said they had misunderstood the leadership, that those letters and lists were surely going to be made public at some future time and so on. What did that church do? They wrote back again to all the churches and “confessed” that oh yes, their wording should have been different and they could see how they may have caused misunderstanding and they are sorry and we are all

brothers in Christ and this is just an honest difference between us and....

I am not fundamentally talking to you this morning about ARBCA politics and that particular situation. What I am trying to show is that the wisdom of the Lord, that wisdom of which James is speaking and which can only be given us by the Lord *is what gives us the bold confidence to stand in the Lord’s truth in the face of the deceptions of the enemy.*

Let me give another example. When we were in the very early stages of the A Cry for Justice ministry (way back in 2010), it became evident that the Lord was opening our eyes to the schemes of the devil commonly operating in the churches today. Those schemes of course involved placing people who crave power and control for themselves, who use wicked and evil tactics to gain that power and control – even and especially in their marriages and homes – among the people of God, parading as fine saints. And we knew that we needed to expose this and learn more about it. And so what happened? Right off the bat there was *intense* opposition and effort to stop it before it ever started. Myself and our present elders sat in a meeting and heard a ringleader of the opposition loudly saying “NO! NO! NO!” and making all kinds of accusations against us.

But the Lord granted His wisdom and we stood against that darkness and pressed on, able to say “No, you are wrong. We are going to do this.” And in months and years later there were many other attacks as well. The same man told me and Craig and Mack “This sermon series (on abuse) has been like sitting through hell for me and my family. If you had only listened to me and done what I said, there would be more people in this church today.” In the face of these things YOU must be able to say, “No, this is the wisdom of the Lord. This is truth. You are telling lies.”

Jeremiah 23:9-11 Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words. (10) For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. (11) "Both prophet and priest are ungodly; **even in my house I have found their evil,** declares the LORD.

Why do we think this could not be happening in our day?

But here is my point in telling you all of this –

It is only the Lord's wisdom, given by Him, that enables you to stand with His confidence in those situations when you are dealing with evil.

And EVERY single one of you must face the lies of evil and be able to sort them out, you see. Or you won't be able to stand firm in the truth of Christ. You will be swept away by lies and kept enslaved. This is the nature of the thing we are up against:

Matthew 24:21-25 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (22) And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (23) Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. (24) For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, **so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.** (25) See, I have told you beforehand.

How many of you are carrying and wearing guilt that really isn't yours simply because the enemy has thrown his deceiving lies at you and used people who claim to “love” you to do it? The result? You see a truth in Scripture you haven't seen before and

it is liberating and you are excited, and then one of these “trusted liars” in your life shoots you down when you share what you have learned. So you go backwards again. You must learn, all of us must, to listen to that still, small voice that speaks to us in Scripture as the Spirit of God takes His Word and applies it to our minds and hearts and stop quenching that work of the Spirit in us. Particularly when we have been warned by Christ about these things:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. (2) For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, (4) treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **(5) having the appearance of godliness**, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Do you believe this? A doubting, double-minded person does not believe these things.

Did you all read the example we sent you this week by Katie who wrote the foreword to the new book *Unholy Charade*? That is a perfect example of what I am talking about:

Three years ago I found myself consumed with the realization that not only were my kids and I in real danger, but we were alone. Completely alone.

Ten years prior my husband had been arrested for domestic abuse. We had just moved to a new state where I knew no one. Over the years I reached out several times to my church for help, but each time I was told that I needed to submit more and improve my relationship with God.

The years passed, and the religious guilt increased.

I began to doubt that God even loved me. More babies came as the abuse amplified. Every time that I reached out for help from my church, I was led to believe that I was the problem. People even began to feel bad for my abuser, though I was the one coming to church hardly able to walk and weighing a total of 72 pounds.

I fell into darkness as I gave into the restraints my church and abuser had laid upon me. A vicious cycle of abuse, guilt, shame, and submission controlled me, until one day God brought some old friends back into my life. They came to stay with us in our home for a week. It was so nice to have

friends around, mainly because my husband was on his best behavior. That didn't fool my friends though. God used them to confirm that I was indeed being abused.

One day I took my five young children up to the church to play on the playground. We were alone there, and I took the sweet moments of solitude while the kids played to search the internet for help. I knew the pain that my children and I were feeling was not right, but I all could hear was my pastor's voice ringing out that God hates divorce.

I came across a sermon series on Sermon Audio about domestic abuse. It was as if God led me right to it. I looked at the title of the first sermon: *Sin of Abuse Exposed by the Light of Christ*. Sin? Surely I must not be in an abusive marriage? After all, my pastor knew what was going on—he wouldn't allow sin in my marriage! Would he?

The pastor on the audio sermon opened with a prayer, asking God to allow us to see sin for what it is, to be stronger and able to withstand false teaching. Immediately I felt like God was telling me that what I was experiencing was indeed abuse. It

was indeed sin. And I was indeed a victim of false teaching.

I eagerly listened to all the audio sermons whenever it was safe to do so. Over the next few months God used the comforting voice of this pastor to lead me through God's Word. I began to find hope in the Scriptures, something I had not felt in well over a decade.

And all the while, as we here in this little church at the edge of the world were going through our trials, dealing with much of the very same evil, the Lord was working to put His truth out there where Katie could be set free by it. AND at the same time agents of evil present here were doing all they could to stop it. Christ truly is amazing, isn't He? But that evil would have deceived us and had us believe that to teach such things was wrong and that the only problems in this church were that WE were too harsh with people (the wicked always claim that) and that teaching on this evil of abuse was not a right thing to do in a church. *God's wisdom gives you the confidence to stand against those lies, to know the Lord's truth, and to see the wiles of the devil parading as an angel of light.*

THIS is what James is about. This is what the Word of God is about because it tells us that Christ has set us free from slavery to the devil-

Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

A Fiery Sermon Introduced

Let's continue on then and at least introduce more from this fiery preacher of truth. Remember, James is preaching to a "mixed company" of professing Christians, some of whom are counterfeits.

James 4:1-10 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? (2) You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

(4) You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?

(6) But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (7) Submit yourselves 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 wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Let me propose that what we have here is the Lord's description of "life" in a typical, visible, local church today. Apparently this is nothing new – James was writing 2000 years ago! If this proposal sounds too harsh to you, let me assure you that it isn't. Many of you have seen these very things in action among people who claim to be Christians. I have sat through numbers of annual church business meetings where the primary business was doing battle!

- Quarrels among you
- Fights among you
- Wicked passions
- Lustful desire
- Murder
- Coveting
- So the fights and quarrels rage even hotter

- Prayer directed by the flesh
- Spiritual adultery evidenced by friendship with the world
- “Christians” who in fact are worldlings and thus enemies of God
- Pride to which the Lord is opposed
- The Activity of Satan
- Double-mindedness (the mindset that will not believe and receive the wisdom of God)
- A party atmosphere with laughter and a false joy

particularly want to take a good look at what James means when he quotes this Scripture:

"He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"

And the grievous thing is that through the deceptions of the enemy, many if not most professing Christians think that THIS is Christianity, that THIS is the church of Jesus Christ! It is not.

And this is good news! We do not have to settle for that kind of “church.” If we will truly plead with the Lord for His wisdom, and if we will step up and do battle when the enemy comes our way and call evil out for what it is, James has another promise for us –

“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

And the result will be peace and a true joy among people who truly know Christ.

Next time we will plan to examine these verses more closely. And I