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The House of James

Reflections

21 Topics

THE HOUSE OF JAMES
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Covenant Publisher
Corpus Christi, Texas

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(Revised 3/10/16)

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THE HOUSE OF JAMES

I went to visit James today. While there, I had the opportunity to interact with God. I learned a great deal. God led the conference. Listed are the topics under discussion.

The **first topic** of discussion dealt with temptation. I was informed that I was going to encounter various types of trial. I was encouraged to welcome those trials with joy because they manifest themselves with a specific purpose in mind. Father told me that trials produce patience which in turn make me perfect and entire. If I allow trials to perfect their work in me, I will lack nothing. (1:2-4)

[I am not sure what “lack nothing” means, but I welcome the experience. I was blessed to see that trials are not meaningless. Trials are tests that come into our lives in order to make us better. I hope that the trials I face will produce in me patience so I can become perfect and entire. What does it mean to become perfect and entire? I am not sure, but again, I welcome the experience.]

The **second topic** of discussion is about asking for wisdom. I asked, what should I do when I fail to understand the purpose of the trial that comes into my life? Father informed me that if I lack wisdom, I should ask Him. He is known for His dispensation of wisdom to all. He promised that He would not scold me for asking, but instead promised to grant my request for understanding. (1:5)

[I don't know about you, but when I face trials, I am often cast into a state of confusion. I was happy to hear that I could ask for wisdom. It was also comforting to know that Father does not become angry when I ask Him about the meaning of tests that I am undergoing. Father wants us to approach Him with our lack of understanding.]

The **third topic** of discussion is related to the manner in which I should ask God for wisdom. I was informed that my petition for wisdom should be in faith and without doubting. Father told me that if I doubt while asking for wisdom, I would be like a wave of the sea that is driven with the wind and tossed. He assured me that if my request for wisdom was submitted in doubt, I should not expect anything from Him. I was informed that anyone who makes a request to God while in the state of distrust is like a double-minded man that is unstable in all his ways. (1:6-8)

[This may explain why many of my prayers have gone unanswered. I am praying that Father will stamp out all doubt from my life. The writer of another letter told me that when I approach Father, I must believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Doubt makes me like a wave driven by

the wind. I do not want to be double-minded. I do not want to be unstable in all my ways. Lord, strengthen my faith. Father, cause me to become rich in faith.]

The **fourth topic** of discussion dealt with two types of individual. The first individual is the believer. The believer of low degree should rejoice because God will exalt him. The second individual discussed is the one who is rich in material things. They should not boast in their wealth. Those who do so will be brought low. I heard an example given about the temporary nature of those who hoard earthly goods. Father said, they will pass away as the flower of the grass when the sun is risen with its heat. Just like the sun fades the grass and the flower so that they lose their grace and fashion, so shall the rich man fade away in all his ways. (1: 9-11)

[Without a doubt, many of us would like to be the believer that is exalted as opposed to the believer of low degree. The believer of low degree is at rest with God's sovereign will and understands that God is not only aware of his situation, but is intimately concerned for all the details of his/her life. It is so easy to make security our resting place. If we have abundance, we feel safe. God is our portion and wealth. Contentment is only found in Him. Lord, help me to release my grip on my wealth. Help me to be generous to those in need.]

The **fifth topic** of discussion again dealt with temptation and the rewards granted to those who overcome it. A promise of blessing was made to those who endure temptation. The overcomer who loves the Lord will receive a crown of life. There was also a misunderstanding addressed. There were some in the house who assumed that God tempted the believer with evil. Father made clear that He is above being tempted with evil and does not use evil to tempt us. Father pointed out that we are tempted with evil when we are drawn away and seduced by our own desires. When we give in to our desires, they then bring forth sin and sin then produces death. We should not err in regard to the source of evil that entangles us. (1:12-16)

[A trial not only changes us for the better. Father is aware of its presence. He walks with us throughout the ordeal. He knows when the temptation begins and when it comes to an end. When we endure the trial sent into our lives, Father is ready to reward our success. He offers a crown of life. I was surprised to discover that there were some present who blamed God for their sin. I was reminded again of the fact that Father cannot be touched by evil. Evil springs from the heart that yields to sin.]

The **sixth topic** of discussion dealt with God's generous distribution of blessing. Every good and perfect gift is from above. Every gift comes to us from the Father of lights. There is no variableness or shadow of turning in Him. Of His

own will, He has given birth to us by the word of truth. We have become a new specimen of His new creation. (1:17-18)

[I was reminded of the fact that Father is the source of every good and perfect gift. All the blessing that comes into my life, flows from a personal God who is not about to change His ways. What a joy! He has given birth to us. We have become a new specimen of His creation.]

The **seventh topic** of discussion dealt with the new behavior of the believer who is a new specimen of God's creation.

We were admonished to:

- 1) **BE** swift to hear
- 2) **BE** slow to speak
- 3) **BE** slow to wrath.

Apparently, there were some present who tried to produce righteousness by using wrath as a tool. We were reminded that wrath does not produce righteousness.

We were also admonished to:

- 1) **Lay aside** filthiness
- 2) **Lay aside** superfluity of naughtiness

We were admonished to:

- 1) **Receive** with meekness the engrafted word - It saves the soul
- 2) **Be** a doer of the word.
- 3) **Avoid** self-deception by being only hearers of the word (1:19-22)

[As I heard about being swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath, I couldn't help but think that I might improve my relationship with 7.2 billion others if I practice these three things. By nature, I am slow to listen and quick to babble. I sometimes become irritated if I am not allowed to speak. Lord, save me from my self-love. Help me to lay aside all those things that rob me of Your best. I want to receive Your engrafted Word with meekness. I am not sure what that means, but it is important because receiving the engrafted Word with meekness will save my soul. Father, save me from self-deception. Help me to become a doer of Your word.]

The **eighth topic** deals with God's idea of true religion and revisits the importance of being a doer of both the word and work. Those who only hear the Word are like someone who beholds his natural face in a glass and forgets what

manner of man he was. I was informed that I should look into the perfect law of liberty and continue in it. I was admonished to avoid being a forgetful hearer of the word. I was told that if I become a doer of the WORK, I would then be blessed in my deed. A connection was made between hearing the word and doing the work. What is the work we are to do? I was admonished to bridle my tongue and avoid the pretense of being religious. Talking without walking makes man's religion empty. Father defined the meaning of pure religion versus empty religion. Pure religion was defined by activity in three directions.

- 1) Visit the fatherless in their affliction
- 2) Visit the widows in their affliction
- 3) Keep oneself unspotted from the world (1:23-27)

[I thought it was interesting to see that the word and the work are used together in this passage. I understood that being a doer of the word is the same as being a doer of the work. The work and pure religion seem to be used synonymously. I like the practicality of this passage. I want to practice pure religion. I commit myself to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. I commit myself to keep myself unspotted from the world.]

The **ninth topic** dealt with the issue of respecting persons based upon their social standing. Some believers had become judges of evil thoughts and were despising the poor. There was a question as to whether or not those who measure the value of a human being based upon the social status possessed the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. Unfortunately, there were some who gave better treatment to those with a gold ring and goodly apparel than to the poor man in vile raiment. Their respect of persons was based upon the way individuals dressed. Those with a better garment would acquire a better seat in the assembly than those who could not afford to purchase better clothing. The rich would be given preference. The rich would be given a good seat in the house whereas the poor was made to stand or sit under a footstool.

God informed those present that He had chosen the poor of the world who were both rich in faith and loved Him. It was these who become heirs of the kingdom. Those believers who despised the poor had forgotten that the rich had oppressed them and had dragged them before the judgment seat. The brethren had forgotten that it was the rich that blasphemed the worthy name by which they were called. Those responsible for this sin were told that they would do well to fulfill the royal law by loving their neighbor as themselves. Having respect of persons based on social standing was constituted a sin. Those who practiced this were convinced of the law as transgressors. They were guilty of breaking all the law because they offended it at one point. It is against the law to commit adultery, kill as well as to be a respecter of persons. Those who respect human

being on the basis of social standing are transgressors of the law. The law of liberty has established this truth. We were all warned that if we show no mercy to those of low status, we would be shown no mercy either. If we do the right thing, then mercy will rejoice against judgment. (2:1-13)

[I wonder if we have this problem today. Do we divide churches based upon race, color, social standing, or purity of creed? Do we think less of those who are struggling with their faith or who have not embraced the truth that has been clearly unveiled to us? We must receive others solely on the basis of the fact that Christ has received them. Lord, give us your love for all. It is a sobering thought that we will be shown mercy according to the mercy we dispense to others.]

The **tenth topic** dealt with faith and works. A question was posed about the benefit of declaring faith without the presence of action. Can faith save? Apparently, there were some in the assembly who had seen some brethren naked, and destitute of daily food. Instead of expressing their faith by putting it into action, they sent them away empty-handed. Instead of providing food and clothing to those in need, they sent them away with empty words by declaring, “Depart in peace. Be warmed and filled.” These words are worthless. Faith without works (providing the needy with food and clothing) is dead. We cannot demonstrate our faith unless it is accompanied by works (meeting the practical need). Faith is best expressed when it is accompanied with actions that correspond to it.

We were admonished and told that a declaration of faith alone is dead. The devils believe and tremble. We heard the thundering voice stating, “Do not practice empty faith.” We were informed that faith must be accompanied with corresponding deeds when there is a need in the assembly. (2:14-20)

Three examples of faith in action were discussed.

Example One: Abraham believed, but also offered Isaac his son upon the altar. His faith was made perfect by his corresponding action. He was justified by works that were accompanied by his faith. Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. He was called the Friend of God. This example was used to point out that by works man is justified, and not by faith alone.

Example Two: Rahab was justified by works. She believed God's word and was moved to action by receiving godly messengers and hiding them. Here faith and works moved hand in hand.

Example Three: The physical body was given as an example. The body without the spirit is dead, so is faith without works. (2:21-26)

[A declaration of our inward faith must be accompanied by an outward expression of it, especially when it deals with those in need. There should be outward evidence of our faith. Our faith should affect our conduct, thinking and outlook. The context of this passage deals with meeting the need of the saints.]

The **eleventh topic** under discussion dealt with our conduct. We were warned to avoid the desire to be masters. Those who lead in terms of ministry carry responsibilities that make them more susceptible to condemnation. The discussion turned to offenses due to the misuse of the tongue. We offend in many ways, but we are to seek to avoid those offenses that involve our speech. If we can accomplish this, we should be able to bridle the whole body. (3:1-2)

Examples were provided:

Horses: We put bits in their mouth so they may obey us by turning their body in the direction we desire.

Ships: They are large and are often driven by fierce winds, yet we can turn in any direction we desire through a very small helm.

We were admonished regarding the danger of the tongue. We were told that it is a little member like the bridle and the helm, but possesses destructive power. The tongue is capable of boasting great things. It is amazing to see how much damage a little fire can do. We were warned about the tongue because it can be a fire and a world of iniquity among our members. It can defile our whole body. It can set on fire the course of nature and is itself often set on fire of hell.

It was noted that every kind of beasts, birds, serpents and things in the sea have been tamed of mankind.

However, the tongue cannot be tamed. It is an unruly evil. It is full of deadly poison. We were reprimanded because we use our tongue to bless Father and then curse men created after His similitude. Out of our mouth proceeds both blessing and cursing. This should not be the case. We were asked a series of questions.

Does a fountain send forth both sweet water and bitter?
Can a fig tree bear olive berries?
Can a vine bear figs?
A fountain cannot yield both salt and fresh water.

We were asked another question. Are there any wise men present among you who are also endued with knowledge? Show out of a good conversation your works with meekness of wisdom.

Caution was issued because there were some present who were struggling with sin. If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. (3:1-14)

[After hearing this, I understood why we were admonished to be slow to speak. Lord, help us to guard our tongue. Death and life are truly in its power. May our lips utter blessing and bring a smile. May our tongue utter wisdom from above and avoid the wisdom that is earthly, sensual and devilish.]

The **twelfth topic** dealt with two types of wisdom. The first type descends from above. It is pure, peaceable, gentle and easy to entreat. It is full of mercy and good fruits. It is without partiality and hypocrisy. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

The second type of wisdom is earthly, sensual and devilish. It genders envy and strife and creates confusion as well as every evil work. It is partial. Hypocrisy flows from this fountain. (3:15-18)

[There are two fountains that flow. We must tap into the one that is pure. The words that we utter should flow from the fountain of that wisdom that descends from above. Wow! It is full of mercy and good fruits.]

The **thirteenth topic** of discussion dealt with prayer. This session opened with several questions. What is the source of war and fighting among you?

Do they come from the lusts that war within your members? Apparently there were some problems between members in the assembly. They were full of desires, but could not acquire that thing for which they lusted. We were reminded that there were some that might willingly kill in order to acquire desires. They fight and war, yet they have not, because they ask not. When they ask for the thing, they do not receive because they ask amiss that they may consumed them upon their own lusts (4:1-3). We were admonished because there were some present who had adopted the ways of the world. We were warned about our friendship with the world. Anyone who would be a friend of the world was constituted an adulterer. Friendship with the world makes men enemies of God. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. The scripture makes clear that the Holy Spirit that dwells in us opposes our sin and friendship with the world. (4:1-5)

[As human beings, we are full of desires. We often struggle to acquire things we think we need. Our desires become the source of strife among us. We become a walking civil war caused by our own confusion. This the way of the world. We often ask for things that have nothing to do with God's plan and purpose. Help us to ask for those things that are according to Your will. Rescue us from ungodly friendship with the world. Like Abraham, we trust You for all our needs. We want to be Your Friend.]

The **fourteenth topic** dealt with the actions we are called to take. Father gives more grace. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. We were admonished to do the following:

- 1) Submit yourselves to God
- 2) Resist the devil. (The devil will flee)
- 3) Draw near to God (He will draw near to you)
- 4) Cleanse your hands of sin
- 5) Purify your heart and avoid being double-minded
- 6) Be afflicted, mourn, and weep
- 7) Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness
- 8) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord (He will lift you up) (4:6-10)

[Father, teach us to submit and draw near to you. Teach us to cleanse our hands and purify our heart. Rescue us from being double-minded. We humble ourselves in Your sight. Grant us the ability to obey.]

The **fifteenth topic** dealt with judging one another. We were admonished to ensure that we do not speak evil of or judge one another. When we do so, we speak evil of and judge the law. If we judge the law, we are failing to obey it. I was asked, “Who are you to judge another?” There is one lawgiver. He is able to save and to destroy. (4:11-12)

[It is so easy to judge others when we use ourselves as the measure of all things. We are finite beings who do not understand the actions and intents of the heart. Only Father knows us thoroughly. I am going to let God do His job and I will pray for those who I think do not measure up.]

The **sixteenth topic** was related to boasting. When we make plans, we should consider the will of God. Some say, I will do this, that or the other today and tomorrow. I will go into such a city and will be there for a year. I will buy and sell and profit. We make so many plans, but how do we know if we will be here tomorrow? We were reminded that life is like a vapor. It appears for a little time and then vanishes. We ought to say, If the Lord will, we will live or do this or that. Stop pretending like you are in control of the future. We were told that this type of boasting is evil. If you know to do good and fail to do it, this is sin. (4:13-17)

[Too often, I forget that I am a finite being. I leave God out of the equation of life. I fail to remember that Father is in charge of the future. God makes all things possible. Father, help me to remember that I am to live within the parameters of Your will. Rescue me from my path, way and will. Forgive me for boasting.]

The **seventeenth topic** under consideration dealt with those who horde wealth. The rich will weep, and howl for the miseries that will come upon them. Their riches are corrupted and their garments will be moth eaten. Their gold and silver will be cankered and their rust will be a witness against those who horde wealth. Their wealth will eat their flesh as fire. They have heaped treasure for the last days. Father issued a stern warning to those landowners who defrauded their laborers. Father informed the rich that as Lord of the Sabbath, He heard the prayer of the laborer and would intervene. Those who horde wealth live in pleasure, nourish their heart, but are kept like the animal that will be slaughtered. Those who horde wealth were reprimanded. They were responsible for condemning and killing the just. The just did not resist them, but the Lord will judge. (5:1-6)

[Lord, rescue me from the love of money. Rescue me from hoarding what you have provided that is to be shared with those in need. Help me to imitate Your generosity. Save us from violating the rights of others because of our mistaken belief that we are somehow above the law because of our possessions.]

The **eighteenth topic** dealt with divine intervention. We were encouraged to be patient unto the coming of the Lord. Just like the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and later rain, we were admonished to be patient. We are to establish our heart because the coming of the Lord draws near. We are not to grudge against one another lest we be condemned. The judge who will secure justice stands before the door. We were provided with examples of patience. The prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, suffered affliction and were patient. Like them, we are called to endure. Job, whose end we have seen, also suffered. The Lord was very pitiful and of tender mercy toward him. (5:7-8)

[When we face injustice, we are to allow God to make things right. We are patient unto the coming of the Lord not only in the sense of His second coming, but in the sense of His immediate intervention in the affairs of men. We are not to seek for scape goats, but to allow the judge to make things right. Evidence is provided of God's intervention in the prophets and Job. God will do the same for us.]

The **nineteenth topic** dealt with swearing. We were cautioned to avoid swearing by heaven, earth or by any other oath. We are to provide others with a clear yes or no when asked to do something. If we move outside the parameters of a simple answer, we may fall into condemnation. (5:9-12)

[We often make promises and swear by God that we will accomplish the thing we have committed to do. This passage suggests that we are to abstain from such promises. A response of yes or no may refers to taking action without any elaborate explanation. I am not satisfied with my understanding of this passage.]

The **twentieth topic** dealt with prayer. We were invited to reach out and in. If we are afflicted, we should reach out to God by praying. If we are merry, we should reach in and sing a psalm. If we are sick, we should reach out to the elders of the church. The elders are to pray over us and anoint us with

oil in the name of the Lord. Their prayer of faith will save the sick. The Lord will raise up the sick. If we have committed sins, they will be forgiven (5:13-18). We were exhorted to confess our faults and pray for each other. An example of the power of prayer was provided.

Elias, the righteous prophet, offered an effectual fervent prayer and availed. He was subject to like passions as we are and prayed earnestly that it not rain. The rain did not come for a space of three years and six months. When Elias prayed again, the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit.

[We are encouraged to reach out and in. Whether, we are afflicted, merry, or sick, we are never alone. We are called to believe in the power of prayer. History provides ample evidence that it works. God is willing to work and act through the pray of His people.]

The **twenty-first** topic discussed was related to restoring the sinner. Apparently, there were some brethren that had fallen into error. They had abandoned the truth. We were all encouraged to focus on their restoration, not on their error. We were admonished to convert them. When we convert the sinner from the error of his way, we save a soul from death and hid a multitude of sins. (5:19-20)

[What a wonderful truth. Our objective is to restore and recover. We are called to bless, not focus on the failure of others. Our goal is to save souls from death and hide a multitude of sins.]

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey

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