

HOPE WHEN LIFE HURTS

TUESDAY: August 4, 2020

Read: James 3:1-8

Scripture Verse: *“My brothers and sisters, most of you shouldn’t want to be teachers. You know that those of us who teach will be held more accountable.”* ^[6] James 3:1

Today’s Thought:

The people to whom James was writing were very concerned about the persecution they would face due to their newly found faith. Likewise, James was concerned about the genuineness of their faith. Our faith must be more important to us than the possible suffering we may endure because of it. But how do we know if we have “real” faith? Back in chapter one (1:26-27) James laid out for us three markers for genuine faith: controlling our tongue, caring for the needy, and avoiding worldliness. Here in chapter three he gives us more detailed instruction on how we are to do this. As James lays out these markers for us in their expanded form, we notice three things. A note of caution, a note of realism, and a note of hope. Let’s examine them.

1. Caution of teaching with wrong motives.

Of all the things James could have expounded on here, he chooses to caution those of us who chose to teach God’s Word. It is hard enough to find teachers to teach in the church without the added pressure of stricter judgment on those who do. But James warns those who teach will be held to stricter judgment due to teaching false doctrine or with wrong motives. Back in the first century teachers were held in high esteem, with dignity and high acclaim. This high regard for teachers created a temptation for many to take up the task just for the sake and chance that they might receive such celebrated praise from the public. All James was saying here was if you are going to take up this task of teaching make sure you do it with the right heart and for the right reason. I was taught this very principle at the outset of my call into the ministry. My pastors and mentors would tell me to make sure this is what God wants you to do and that you are doing it for the right reasons. James warning is spot on and should be taken seriously by all.

2. The realism that we all stumble.

As much as James wants to warn us of the consequences of teaching God’s Word with wrong motives, he also is careful to remind us that we all stumble in many ways and are not perfect. As serious as the work of teaching God’s Word is, he doesn’t want us to not do the work of the Lord because of our imperfection in this world. We all fall short of the glory of God according to Paul. Although we strive for perfection in Christ, in our humanness we still fall short this side of eternity. The plea is not for perfect people to go about the work of teaching, it is rather for imperfect people to go about the work in a serious and diligent way, praying, as they do so, that the Lord will be pleased to use them in their weakness.^[7]

3. The hope of spiritual maturity.

James is about to go into some detail about the importance of controlling the tongue. We will find what he has to say to be very challenging and distressing. But before he goes further, he holds out some hope for us: ‘If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body’ (v. 2). Take note that the word ‘perfect’ here refers to our spiritual maturity. Through the implanted word of God within us when we are able to control our tongue (speech) we are well on the way to spiritual maturity.^[8] We should all be interested in growing toward spiritual maturity. We cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ and not be longing to grow in the things of the Lord. James gives us guidance on how we are to achieve this. Remember from chapter one, James instructed us in this spiritual principle when he said be “swift to listen, slow anger, and slow to speak.” We have to focus on our listening skills and on what we say. If we can get this under control the rest will be pretty easy in comparison. As hard as it sounds to do, it can be done. James isn’t saying that spiritual maturity is impossible to achieve but it will not be easy. It will take focused, hard work. This is our note of hope that the way we achieve spiritual maturity is by giving special attention to what we say and how we say it! May God bless you as you place your focus on growing in the way of His word.

- **Why is it such a big responsibility to be a teacher of God’s Word?**
- **What can you do to encourage faithful teachers in their work?**
- **How can we tell if the teaching we are receiving is good and sound?**

Further Reading: 2 Timothy 2 and 4:1-5

Spend some time in prayer:

A=adoration

C=confession

T=thanksgiving

S=supplication

Accountable to Christ,

Pastor Randy