

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part XLI: James - Overcoming Dead Religiosity In Our Backgrounds"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

- (1) When I candidated for the pastorate here at Nepaug Church, and when Bob Bouffard first brought me into the sanctuary, I noticed something that was very different about this church than what I knew in my **Baptist** background! **There was no baptismal tank!**
- (2) Others of us from Roman Catholic backgrounds notice the absence of pictures or figurines about Jesus on the walls.
- (3) We have an interesting cultural faux pas that we encounter every time a discussion comes up about giving ovations in the church meetings. Some of us come from backgrounds where hand-clapping is seen as secular, giving praise to man and not to God, and that it is not to be done in Church. Others of us feel we are "quenching the Holy Spirit" by not giving an ovation to the glory of God.
- (4) When I first came to Nepaug, I suggested that we have a Sunday School party in the fall, and call it a "Halloween Party." I innocently gave it no thought that some might be offended at the word, as I had come from a background where Christians all got involved in sending their children out "trick-or-treating". We even had a haunted house on the mission field for recreation amongst the missionaries! However, it offended some, so now we have "Fall Parties", etc.!
- (5) My wife and I don't dance, drink alcoholic beverages, smoke, play with "gambling" cards, go to the theater to watch movies or bet at the Off Track Betting center or the Connecticut lottery. On the other hand we watch "good" television movies and will play with "rook" cards, and I know others who will do just the **opposite** of this!
- (6) A man my father knows makes a living at the horse track by betting, and he gives many thousands of dollars a year to missions as he claims his knowledge of horses makes betting on horses for him no more of a gamble than anyone else going into his own business!

With our varied backgrounds and religious heritages, complete with all of their differences, how can we be united as a Church body?!

(We turn to the "Need" section of the sermon notes . . .)

Need: "Believers in our church have come from a WIDE variety of Church backgrounds where we feel deeply about certain practices or beliefs held in those backgrounds! With such differences come strains in relationships! How do we go about resolving these so as to promote the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ep. 4:3)?!"

- I. **Israel's apostasy followed by God's postponing her Kingdom's installation for the CHURCH age left HEBREW Christians with a dead religious heritage creating problems in the CHURCH!**
 - A. Though God created the world and set up man as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
 - E. Yet, the Old Testament records not only that nation, Israel's repeated failure to curb Nimrod's error, but her tendency to be corrupted by it in spite of God's discipline to the contrary, Gn. 12:4-Malachi.
 - F. When God sent Jesus, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, Israel rejected Him, so God postponed the Kingdom's installation and carried on its recruitment program through the Church, The Gospels and Acts.
 - G. Yet, as **Jewish** converts came to Christ, their **bent** toward Pharisaic **artificiality** (Edersheim, The L. & Times of Jes. the Mes., i, p. 528) from their **apostate heritage** marred their walk and hurt relationships, and needed **correction**, Acts 15:1-19 with **James'** input re: Judaizers!
- II. **God thus used JAMES to write to early JEWISH Christians to REPLACE their Pharisaic artificiality with TRUE GODLINESS:**
 - A. James was written to **Jewish** believers of the "twelve tribes," Jas. 1:1.
 - B. It was written to **Early Church** believers **scattered** after Stephen's death when most of the Christians were **still Jewish**, Acts 1:1; 11:19.
 - C. James used the Greek *diatribe* format for his epistle; this is a terse, ethical address of argument-styled admonitions used to **impress** others about an important concern, Guthrie, New Bib. Com.: Rev., p. 1222.
 - D. We know James intended to correct Jewish converts from **selfishness** and **externalism** under Judaism, for he alludes to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount at least 15 times (Ryr. St. Bib., KJV, p. 1749), and that sermon addressed the **false spirituality** of **Phariseeism**, Ibid., Edersheim.
 1. James countered their error in how they viewed trials, 1:2-25:

- a. When these converts from Judaism faced life's trials, being used to tying **blessing** with **uprightness** under the Law (Dt. 28) led to their thinking **trials** meant they were **out** of God's **favor** , 1:1f.
 - b. James addressed this error with its solution in James 1:3-25: (a) they were to learn that **God USED** their trials to **mature** them in the **Church** age, 1:3-4; (b) they were thus to **ask** God for **wisdom** to use this truth, 1:5; (c) they were to ask in **faith** or risk failing to trust God and become defeated in their trials, 1:6-12, 13-18,19-21. (d) They were to edify their faith in God by applying **Scripture** while under trial, Jas. 1:22-25 (Rom. 10:17).
2. He addressed their many **heartless** errors in relating to one another:
- a. James named their several relationship blunders: (a) they used intolerant **speech** that **hurt** one another, 1:26; (b) they formed **cliques** within the body, 2:1; (c) they became **calloused** toward the **needs** of others as were the Pharisees, 2:15-16; (d) typical of their heritage, they turned **competitive** and **self-sufficient** , James 4:1ff with Harold L. Fickett's com. on James, p. 132-133.
 - b. James **corrected** these relationship errors: (a) Hebrew believers were to note the **damage** unbridled speech produced in the Church and become **humble** in speaking, Jas. 1:26-27; 3:1-18; (b) They were to see cliques as **opposing** God's **grace** that **evened** human relations, and treat each other as **equals** , 2:1-13. (c) Insensitivity to others' needs arose from a **false** spirituality (2:14-26) and believers were thus to practice sensitivity to one another in **true** spiritual living, Jas. 5:13-20. (d) A competitive spirit arose from **lusts** (4:1-12), **self-sufficiency** (4:13-17) and **selfishness** (5:1-17) which was to be replaced by **humility** .
- III. **James adds to the "thread of redemption" by noting that though salvation is by faith, a true faith EXPRESSES ITSELF with THOUGHTFUL deeds reflecting GOD'S GRACE, James 2:18.**

***Lesson Application:** Regardless of our religious heritage, to gain eternal life, (1) believe on Christ as Savior from sin to be saved, Eph. 2:8-9. (2) Once saved, realize that ANY religious heritage WITHOUT God, like Phariseism, is deeply FLAWED. (3) Thus informed, (a) SUBMIT ALL of our BELIEFS to SCRIPTURE'S input to CORRECT inevitable errant "blind spots" of our heritage (James 1:1-25) and (b) live by GRACE before others: this means relying on the Spirit to speak and relate to others with humility, to view other believers as equals in Christ and to be sensitive to their needs, Jas. 1:26-5:20; Ga. 5:15-23! Unity will follow!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In the first Church I pastored in O'Neill, Nebraska, the Berean Fundamental Church, we taught the people about "eternal security". That doctrine holds that once one is justified by God through faith in Christ, he is always saved, and cannot lose his salvation, John 5:24.

Years after I left that church, a new pastor came to the Methodist Church in O'Neill who denied the virgin birth of Christ, and there was a split where many believers left that Church. Since the Berean Fundamental Church I had pastored had saved up \$80,000 for a new and much-needed, larger church building, this group exiting the Methodist Church considered uniting with these "Bereans".

However, there was a stumbling stone. The former Methodists did not like the **words eternal security** in the Bereans' statement of faith. Oh, **unlike** their former church's teaching that a Christian could lose his salvation, **they agreed** with the Bereans that **once** one was saved, he would unconditionally **never lose** his salvation! But since childhood, they had learned to shun **eternal security** as **bad WORDS!**

Paul Harder, the pastor of the Berean Church after my tenure, asked for help from Dallas Seminary on solving the barrier between the groups. Bob Salstrom, the seminary's Alumni Secretary traveled to O'Neill and had a meeting with the Bereans and the former Methodists. Concerned about removing heritage blocks to effective unity, Bob suggested that the groups form a **new "Bible" church** , combining the Berean and former Methodist groups, and put in their doctrinal statement different **wording** in **place** of the "eternal security" statement, re-phrasing the belief to read **something** like: "We believe what the **Bible** teaches on God's unconditional security of the believer's salvation." To that, both groups fully agreed, and they formed a new church, the Faith Community Church of O'Neill, Nebraska.

It is now a thriving, united, 200-member **sound** church that reaches out into several towns in addition to O'Neill. They built a new church and now have an expanded Christian Education wing!

As Bob Salstrom led these people to do, we must submit our heritage to God's Word, correct it where necessary, and view one another with sensitivity, humility and an awareness of real human needs and take considerate action accordingly. God will bless and unify us around the TRUTH this way!