



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Living with Sinners

James 5:16-20

Message #13 of 13 – S675

Sermon given on February 7, 2016



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Living with Sinners

James 5:16-20

Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 5**
- Today, we conclude our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- There was a man who lived in a large city – call him Herbert
- He was an ordinary guy that was just trying to get by in life
- He was trying to do what was good and right
- And the harder Herbert tried, the more frustrated he became about the people around him
- They were rude, unfair, mean-spirited, and deceitful
- People would take advantage of him, others would betray him
- Finally Herbert decided he needed to get away from that kind of people so he moved out into the suburbs
- Hoping he would find other people who were trying to do what was good and right like he was
- Before long, he realized that people here weren't much better than the ones in the city
- They were gossiping about one another, people were being unfaithful, and people seemed to be consumed with self and stuff
- So Herbert moved out of the suburbs into a little farming community
- Here he imagined he would be with people who were down to earth
- Even here he found people who were annoying
- They judged him because he was an outsider, a stranger and he discovered that their idea of what was good and right was different from his own
- In frustration and desperation he bought a little cabin far out in the woods away from all the people who annoyed him
- And after a while in the stillness of the cabin Herbert looked into the mirror and realized that the person looking back annoyed him
- The Bible says something very unflattering about all of us **Romans 3:23**

...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

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How to Live the Christian Life!
James 5:16-20– Living with Sinners

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- And if we have all sinned, that makes all of us Herberts - sinners
- No matter where you go in this world there will be Herberts around you
- Even when you are alone, there is still one sinner there
- So if we can't get away from sinners, then we need to learn how to live with sinners
- And not just live with them, live with them in a way that glorifies God, blesses them, and grows our faith
- If you are able and willing to do so, please stand as we read today's text as a sign of reverence for God's Word
- Read **James 5:16-20**
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Living with Sinners**
- You know what they call a church that doesn't have any sinners in it? Vacant!
- As James prepares to close this amazing letter he wrote to a small group of Christians he reminds them that their troubles are not a good reason not to do what is right toward other Christians
- It is always harder to do the right thing when things are not going the way you want them
- It is harder to be generous when you are struggling financially
- It is harder to love someone when they are not loving you back
- It is harder to be a godly husband or wife when your spouse is not doing the right things
- It is harder because the flesh, our natural human nature, our non-spiritual part seems to be stronger when life is harder
- Your natural man or woman doesn't want to do what is right
- It wants to do what pleases our selfish nature, it wants to do what falsely promises to take away our pain or troubles
- It wants revenge, wants to take matters into its own hands
- There is a Scripture that most of you are very familiar with
- When I name the reference you will call it to mind immediately
Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- When Paul says ‘all things’, not saying anything that my flesh wants me to do, or what will make me feel better, or what will make me happy, or what makes my life easier
- When Paul, in a Roman prison, says ‘all things’ he means all the right things that God would have me to do
- Paul was a man who understood what it meant to struggle – He says you can do anything God wants you to do through Christ Jesus, no matter what your circumstances or your natural tendencies tell you
- One of the realities of this life is that if you put a group of people together who all have the sin nature within them, they are going to sin against one another
- And here as we close this letter, James is going to give us three things to help us to live with sinners
- This is meant to improve or enhance the overall well-being of the church
- But the same principles apply wherever believers gather – marriages, families, neighborhood, ministries, Bible studies
- The first thing we need to do to live with sinners is **Reconcile**
- Because we are all sinners, we sin against God and one another
- And that causes a problem that we must address if we want to be spiritually healthy **Isaiah 59:1-2**

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

- When we sin, we create a spiritual separation from God
- Doesn't mean we are lost and going to Hell – means we have moved away from God's grace and mercy in this life
- He wants us to come back to Him – gave us a way through Christ **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- This is the first step to spiritual health – if our sin was against a person
- **James 5:16a – “Confess your Trespasses”**
- James gives them two things to do to be healed

- That may apply to physical healing – we are more than just physical beings, more likely to spiritual, relational, emotional, and physical healing
- James uses the word ‘trespasses’ here = sin
- When we sin against a person, we are creating a separation between them and us
- The word ‘confess’ = to admit to a punishable sin or deed
- Notice he says to ‘one another’ – not to a priest or to a pastor
- Here are some quick guidelines for confession
- Should be to a person – if possible to the person the sin was against
- If not, to a spiritually mature person who can handle the burden of knowing your sin
- And it should be concrete – leave out all the lurid details
- This is what I did, it was wrong, please forgive me
- Without real heart-felt confession there can be no healing’
- Sin separates – confession and repentance reconciles
- If we want to be happy and healthy – need to be reconciled through confession
- The second thing we need to live with sinners - **Prayer**
- **James 5:16b**
- Part of the role of the church is to pray for one another
- But for us to be effective at that we need to be sharing what needs to be prayed for – prayer after service – prayer card – prayer@calvaryfv.com
- As a pastor, and Kelly as my wife, we are exposed to an incredible amount of pain in the lives of the people of the church
- God in His grace doesn’t allow it to crush us, but sometimes it hurts so much to see the pain that others are going through
- Especially because we know there is healing available, but we can’t make people do the right things to be healed
- I would ask that you pray for Kelly and Debbie, Tia and the other women who so faithfully minister to the ladies of the church
- A healthy church, marriage, or family is one that is confessing to and praying for one another

- James then describes prayer that gets something done
- **James 5:16c**
- There is a way to pray that gets things done
- You have probably heard sermons on this verse that focus on ‘effective, fervent prayer’
- The key to having your prayers work is in the phrase ‘a righteous man’
- God doesn’t answer prayers based on the passion in someone’s prayers, or the words that they use
- He responds to the heart of the person praying – the righteous person

Proverbs 15:29

The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

- But what is a righteous person? **R. Kent Hughes**
- A Christian who has the imputed righteousness of Christ and lives an ethically righteous life.**
- Let me break that definition down into three basic ideas
- First – a righteous person is saved – have confessed sins to God, received Christ’s sacrifice = forgiveness of sins
- Bible says once you do that God credits Christ’s righteousness to you
- Second – a righteous person is cleansed of sin regularly
- Even though Christ forgave us of all our sins when we were saved, we need to repent and confess the sins we continue to commit – then God cleanses us of the unrighteousness
- Third – A righteous person intends to obey God and His Word
- We don’t always – which is why we need the second step
- If I am saved, and I am not aware of any sins that I have not repented of, and I am striving to do what God and His Word says – I am a righteous man – not perfect – still a sinner – but a sinner walking in the fullness of God’s grace
- Then when we pray, things happen – the prayers of a righteous person gets things done – God hears and responds
- James gives us an example of a righteous man and his prayer
- **James 5:17-18**
- When Elijah prayed – radical things happened

- The key for us in this is the phrase ‘Elijah was a man with a nature like ours’
- That means there wasn’t something so different about Elijah that we can’t relate to him regarding prayer
- Three things all effective prayer needs
- First – **Faith** – Must believe God and believe that He is able to do what you pray for
- Elijah believed that God controlled the weather
- Second – **God’s Will** – Must know what God wants to do
- Elijah knew that God wanted to stop the rain, and so he prayed for no rain – then he knew God wanted the drought to end – prayed for rain
- Third – **Specific** – Ask God to do what you believe His will is to do
- Elijah didn’t just pray some general prayer for God’s will – he prayed about rain
- And he kept praying until what he believed God could do and wanted to do happened
- The prayers that change things are prayed by righteous people who believe God, who know what God wants, and pray specifically for what God wants
- To live with sinners – we seek to reconcile through confession – and we pray for one another in ethical righteousness
- One last thought from James as he closes this letter
- It is an instruction to believers on how to relate to Christians who are backsliding
- The third thing we need to live with sinners - **Restore**
- **James 5:19-20**
- Some ask, ‘Is this person saved?’ – wrong question
- That person is a sinner, just like you – they are in trouble
- The better question is, what are you going to do about it?
- One of the things that God has told me is that I do not have the right to end any relationship in my life
- If God allowed a relationship to be established in my life, then it is up to Him to decide when that relationship ends, not me

- And that means I have to put up with some relationships which are uncomfortable, unpleasant, and some even cause pain in my life
 - And if God isn't going to end the relationship, I need to learn how to live in it
 - And since I am so perfect, I know the problem is not with me – Right?
 - First, I have to deal with my own sins – what am I adding to this relationship to make it what it is **Romans 12:18**
- If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**
- Second – ask God to give me His love for that person
 - Third – pray for them and pray for God's will in the relationship
 - Fourth – when you sense the Holy Spirit telling you to – confront the person with the truth – as Paul says 'speaking the truth in love'
 - But don't do that before the Holy Spirit tells you to – they won't hear it
 - Fifth and last – if appropriate and led by the Holy Spirit – apply discipline
 - But in all these things remembering the goal is to restore the person back into fellowship with God, with you , and with the church
 - God saved us, but then left us sinners to live with other sinners
 - But if we do it God's way, we will get healthier and happier in our relationships and those relationships will glorify God more, bless others, and grow your faith
 - James' letter ends abruptly – as if he is saying, 'Okay, I told you what to do, now go and do it.'
 - So let's pray and ask God to help us to do just that!
 - Amen
 - **Pray**