

## Chapter XII

### LIE NOT AGAINST THE TRUTH

In our studies thus far James has established the fact that the wisdom of God (which is salvation) was available to the Jews if they would ask for it in faith, without wavering. He has established the vanity of the Jews' faith, with its say-so and do-nothing philosophy. He has shown the folly of the Jews' relationship to the law. They believed that their observances of the traditions of the elders satisfied the righteous demands of the law. So James used the common practice of the Jews, to have respect to persons, to strip away their facade of righteousness when he wrote:

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:8-10, emphasis mine)

Therefore James challenged the Jews to compare their faith, with its condemnation before the law (because they certainly did not perform the works of the law), with his faith with its works. He illustrated what a faith with works is. He used the faith of Rahab and Abraham (who acted upon the promises of God by faith) to show the Jews that a genuine faith produces actions

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in accordance with the promises of God. The Jews' faith did not produce this kind of works. Thus the works produced by faith are not sham moral platitudes (as was the faith of the Jews), but they are works produced by the belief that what God has promised, He is able also to perform (Romans 4:21). This is best illustrated in the matter of salvation. The believer has his trust in the fact that Christ died for his sins, according to the Scriptures, was buried and arose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. The believer is at rest in the completed work of Christ, knowing that he is eternally secure in Christ. So everything that he does by faith is predicated upon his faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, our Lord said: *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent* (John 6:29). In contrast to this, James has shown his Jewish brethren that their practice of accusing others and excusing themselves (Romans 2:15) was enigmatical. He compared this practice of blessing God and cursing man to the inability of a fountain to bring forth both sweet and salt water:

Who is a wise [saved] man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good [manner of life] his works with meekness of wisdom [salvation]. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. (James 3:13-14, emphasis mine)

There is a genuine humility which goes with a right relationship with the Lord. It is not the false humility of the world, but a humility which is born out of seeing things as they really are. All genuine believers in Jesus Christ know they are sinners. They know the only way they can be justified before a holy and righteous God is by faith in Jesus Christ. They know there is absolutely nothing of which they can boast in their relationship with God. They know they have been saved by the grace of God. Therefore they know there is no merit in their relationship with God. This is the *meekness of wisdom* of which James wrote.

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Consequently the manner of life of the redeemed is a manifestation of wisdom (i.e., salvation) and humility (i.e., a true view that one's relationship with the Lord is entirely of grace). Such a person should not be full of vain glory, bitterness and envy. They certainly should not lie against the truth of God's Word, because it is the truth that has set them free. Thus the bitterness and envy that was often manifested by the Jews against the Gentiles was a lie against the truth, for it violated the Jews' covenant responsibility: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. Thus, during the public ministry of our Lord:

... a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted [Jesus], saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:25-29, emphasis mine)

Questions like these of our Lord have confused many people about the law. Confusion comes because they think the Lord has implied that eternal life can be obtained by the observance of the law. They are ignorant of or they have forgotten that the purpose of the law was to act as a schoolmaster to bring the Jews unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith and not by the deeds of the law; because by the deeds of the law, no flesh is justified in God's sight (Galatians 3:11-12). Therefore they have missed the point, or they have forgotten, that the Lord spoke these words to a Jewish lawyer. Thus, as a Jew, the lawyer had a responsibility to the covenant of the law; so the Lord dealt with him as a Jew under the covenant of the law.

Apparently the lawyer did not know that the law's ministry was a ministry of death (II Corinthians 3:7). Apparently he did not understand that the schoolmaster role of the law was to

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condemn him (Galatians 3:10), so that it could bring him by faith to his need of salvation in Jesus Christ. Thus if he was to come to faith, he would have to understand that even though he was condemned by the law, Christ fulfilled the law in his behalf, and He died in his stead to ransom him from the penalty of sin. This understanding could only come to him by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God.

An examination of the lawyer's answer shows us he knew he had a covenant responsibility to love the Lord with all of his heart, soul, strength, and mind and to love his neighbor as himself; but he had a definite bias as to who his neighbor might be. Thus he asked, *Who is my neighbor?*

... Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (Luke 10:30-37, emphasis mine)

In this parable Jesus answered the Jewish attitudes toward the royal law: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. He did so by speaking a parable to a lawyer in which there was a threefold philosophy of life. The philosophy of the thieves was: What is yours is ours, we will take it. The philosophy of the Priest and the Levite was: What is mine is mine, I will keep it. And the philosophy of the good Samaritan was: What is mine is yours, we will share it.

Thus, according to our Lord's parable, a man was wounded by thieves and left half dead.

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The first to come his way, who could love him and care for his needs, was a priest. He represents the high leadership in organized religion. Certainly, if anyone could love his neighbor as himself, you would expect a priest to be able to do it, but he did not. Rather he passed to the other side of the way where the man was lying. The priest ignored the man. It was beneath his dignity as a priest to care for such trivial matters. No one would expect a man in his position to perform such a menial task.

The second person to come the way of the injured man was a Levite. He was also a minister in organized religion, but of a lesser position. He, unlike the priest, at least took the time to look at the man, but then he also went his way, passing to the other side. Thus, as represented by the priest and the Levite, there was no help for the man in organized religion. Our Lord's parable revealed that Judaism had lived up to the way it was practiced. It claimed to love God with all of its heart and soul and its neighbor as itself; but it did nothing to aid the injured man (who represents the lost of this world), other than manifesting an indifferent curiosity towards him.

The third person to come the injured man's way was a Samaritan. The Jews despised the Samaritans from the time that the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. Our Lord was also *despised and rejected of* the nation of Israel. Therefore the good Samaritan, by a proper interpretation of the parable, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. He, only, has fulfilled the royal law: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. He, like the Samaritan in the parable, could and would meet the needs of the whole world, represented in the injured man. The philosophy of the Samaritan was: what is mine is yours, we will share it. This is the truth of imputed righteousness,

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which is the believer's in Jesus Christ. While this was a truth that should have been known to the lawyer, it was not known to him nor to the majority of the nation of Israel.

The Jews saw themselves superior and wiser in the things of God than the Gentiles. God had made them the custodians of the Word of God for fifteen hundred years. Thus Paul wrote to the Romans that there was an advantage in being a Jew, because ... *unto them were committed the oracles of God*. Despite being the custodians of the truth, the Jews as a whole were ignorant of the truth of the Word of God, because they had substituted the commandments and doctrines of men for the truth. Thus their sense of superiority was born of ignorance and arrogance, and these precipitated their *lies against the truth*.

Judaism was based upon the concept of establishing one's own righteousness before God, by the works of one's own hands, through a set of interpretations and traditions provided by the elders. Since the Jews were incapable of keeping the precepts of the law as given to Moses, they, as well as all other self-righteous systems, accused others and excused themselves to gain a sense of being holy.

Virtually every system based upon self-righteousness has an ecclesiastical strata. Those who are at the lower echelons are always envious of those in the higher strata. Consequently there is envy and strife and every evil work in an attempt to climb the ecclesiastical ladder. Thus James described the Jewish ecclesiastical system by stating: *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work* (James 3:15-16).

From this statement we understand that the Jews referred to Judaism as the wisdom of God.

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Thus their wisdom was synonymous with their faith. This is another plausible reason why James used wisdom (in the first chapter of his epistle) to represent salvation and the faith, but the Jews' wisdom did not have its source in God. Their wisdom in spiritual matters had its source in the world, the flesh and the Devil. Thus their wisdom was earthly, natural and demonic. Therefore it produced strife and confusion. Paul told the Corinthians, *God is not the author of confusion*. Paul also told the Corinthians that whatever spiritual gift or gifts we have (as Christians) they are to be exercised in love. Thus the love of Christ, not law, is the motivating factor for Christian service. It was the love of Christ which constrained Paul to preach. Any motivation, other than the love of Christ, counts for nothing. Thus Paul wrote:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [Greek: *agape*, love: more specifically the love of Christ as seen in I John 4:10], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [the love of Christ], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [the love of Christ], it profiteth me nothing. [The love of Christ] suffereth long, and is kind; [the love of Christ] envieth not; [the love of Christ] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [The love of Christ] never faileth. (I Corinthians 13:1-8a, emphasis mine)

Just as James compared the faith of the Jews with his faith in the second chapter of his epistle, at this point James compared the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the Jews. Their wisdom was born in strife. It was full of envy. There was no peace in it. However, in the love of Christ, which is a manifestation of the wisdom that comes from above, we find that the love of Christ is not easily provoked. It does not think in the terms of the evil one. The love of Christ does not rejoice in iniquity, which is false worship, it rejoices in the truth of the saving grace of

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Jesus Christ.

Therefore the Jews to whom James wrote were not Christians. They were Jews of the *diaspora*, who were steeped in a religious system which was full of envy, strife, and confusion. They were steeped in a system that had its roots in the evil works of the evil one (who deceived Eve in the garden of Eden). Thus the Jews had come to think according to a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12).