



# James

Living Right in a Wrong World!

**Living Right with Sinners!**

**James 5:16-20**

Message #14 of 14 – S980

**Sermon given on January 16, 2022**



Sunday Morning Service

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# Living Right with Sinners!

*James 5:16-20*

## Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 5**
- Today, we conclude the series: **James - Living Right in a Wrong World!**
- What do you call a church that doesn't have any sinners in it?  
Vacant!
- There is no such thing as a perfect church
- Because the minute you let people in, you are letting imperfect people in **Romans 3:23**

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

- As imperfect as the church is, if you find one that stands on the truth of God's Word – doing its best to love God and people, it will be about as close to heaven as you can find
- What is true of the church is also true of marriages, families, communities, and nations
- The better each of those things does at standing on the truth, and loving God and other people, the better they become
- A marriage becomes more perfect the better the husband-and-wife love God and each other as God's Word tells them to
- The Founding Fathers of this nation knew that was the basis for a 'more perfect union'
- The more you take God and His Word out of the 'union' the less perfect it becomes
- And you end up with what we see in this nation today
- Our hope and prayer for this nation is revival - people repenting of their sins and returning to God
- James has been talking to us about faith
- Real faith is faith that is doing something
- And that something faith is doing is not done in a vacuum
- Real faith is working in relationship with other people
- And because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, real faith is working in relationship with sinners

- James is going to give us some direction on how to live right with sinners
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to humble our hearts
- **Pray**

## Teaching

- **Living Right with Sinners!**
- While the church is far from perfect – it is where we gather to worship the perfection of who God is
- The church should be a place where the perfection of God's Word is studied and applied to our lives
- And the church is a place where God's people are being perfected into the image of Christ as the Holy Spirit works to grow faith
- One of the realities of this life is that if you put any group of people together who all have the sin nature within them, they are going to sin against one another – it is inevitable – even in the church
- 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, even nations
- The first thing we need to do to live with sinners is **Reconciliation**
- 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.**

- Reconciliation – seeks to repair the relationship
- This is the first step to spiritual health
- **James 5:16a**
- Sin separates – first from God and then from the ‘others’ who are around us
- Especially if our sin is against someone directly
- Confess = admit – we cannot be reconciled to God or others if we will not admit that we have made a mistake
- Without real heart-felt confession there can be no healing
- Sin separates – confession and repentance reconcile
- If we want to be happy and healthy, growing in faith toward the perfection of Christ – we need to be reconciled through confession
- The second thing we need to live with sinners - **Prayer**
- **James 5:16b**
- It can be very challenging living around sinners
- James doesn’t tell us to move away from them or reject them or rebuke them – He says ‘pray for them’
- Praying for other people is an act of faith and if it is done in faith it is an act of love
- 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 believe you 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
  - A backsliding Christian is someone who was walking with Christ and isn't actively walking with Him anymore
  - The third thing we need to live with sinners - **Restoration**
  - **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 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!
- **Pray**