

The Great American Pastime...Nothing

February 28, 2007

James 4:17

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Well, that's about as simple as it gets, but I never can leave well enough alone, so let's talk about these 15 words for an hour...

- The first word, *anyone*, gives us the scope of application—you're included...
- The second word, *then*, gives us the context—the immediate and previous topic of discussion.
 - Self-centeredness regarding interpersonal relationships (vv 1-3).
 - Spiritually indifferent mindset in decision making (vv. 4-6).
 - Resistance in dealing with our own sins responsibly (vv. 7-10).
 - Usurping God's authority to judge others (vv. 11-12).
 - Presuming on God's grace as a license to sin (vv. 13-16).

I. We Know The Good That We Ought To Be Doing.

QUOTE

Mark Twain had a great answer when people asked him if he was bothered about some of the things that were in the Bible that he didn't understand...*What bothers me are the things that I do understand...*

1. Most of us know how to avoid most of the problems we get into...
2. Most of us know more than enough about the biblical demands/expectations of Christian discipleship within the first year of our life as a Christ-follower to qualify us to serve anywhere in the world as a first-class volunteer, or as a vocational or bi-vocational staff member, in an unbelievable variety of missionary or ministry positions.
 - a. We know we're not supposed to be self-centered...
 - b. We know that all of our decisions, even the ones that no one else is aware of, are supposed to reflect the spiritual values of our Lord and Savior...
 - c. We know that we aren't supposed to sin, and if we do, we know that we're supposed to admit it, confess it, make restitution for it, and not repeat it...
 - d. We know that it's not our place to assume the role of judge over other people in regard to spiritual matters—that's God's place alone...

e. And we know that we aren't supposed to allow ourselves latitude to do things that we shouldn't just because we know we can be forgiven...

3. Our problem isn't information...it's insubordination.

DISCUSSION

Take ten or fifteen minutes to discuss what you already know about the five issues listed in the fourth chapter of James: self-centeredness, spiritual unfaithfulness to God, taking responsibility for our own sin, judging others, presuming on God's grace as well as on the goodness of others as an excuse to sin.

List any Bible verses (by reference or words) that come to mind relating to the topics...

II. It's Not a Matter of Skill—It's a Matter of Will.

1. Sometimes it's very tempting to pretend that we don't know rather than admit we won't do.
 - a. It's true regarding our health, our family, our friends, our work.
 - b. And it's true regarding our progress as Christ-followers.
2. The truth is, you can...if you will.

Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

- a. I know how to be an effective representative of Jesus Christ...regardless of where I am or who I'm with...
- b. So do you...

The Triumphal Life

2 Corinthians 2:12-16

Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, ¹³I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. ¹⁵For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

- Triumph only occurs following complete surrender...
 - It belongs to Christ, but it includes me.

- It only includes me following my unconditional surrender.
- Jesus is the victor, I am the vanquished...
 - He's leading the way—I'm following.
 - He's in the chariot—I'm chained behind it.
- It's always, and it's everywhere...
 - It has no limits...
 - Combine time and space and nothing's left out...
 - If I'm chained to his chariot, then the only explanation for me being where I am is that he's led me there.
 - If he led me there, then every step I take I'm walking on conquered ground.
- It's pervasive and it's persuasive.
 - Sue and the cologne.
 - J. Harrel and Mrs. Smith's perfume—it's conspicuous by its presence and its absence.

DISCUSSION

You've heard the saying, "Where there's a will there's a way."

There's another saying that's equally true: "Where there's a will there's a won't."

Let's spend some time comparing the two decisions that we make every day, because truly life boils down to my decision of whether I will or I won't do what I know to do.

1. Does any issue of obedience come to mind? You know you should "do" something but you are not yet willing to do it? Yes ____ No ____
2. If so, what does your next step need to be? _____

3. Will you take it? Yes ____ No ____