

**James - Gospel Motivated Love**  
**Grace Controls Us**  
**Passage: James 4:11-17**

What is the first instinct answer to the following question: Why must we obey the bible as Christians?

Do we see God as a being to fear and obey because of what could happen, or trust and obey because of what has already happened? One is based on a potential future outcome; the other is looking to a past fulfilled promise that cannot change. See the difference? We say we love the gospel but embrace the law in our relationship with God. We don't walk by faith trusting in his grace but walk by fear believing we have the capacity to stay in step with all that God demands of us.

**QUESTION: What do you think is the difference between fear verses faith-based obedience?**

When we read the following verse that leads up to 4:11-17, what is James presenting to the reader, a God to be served out of dread or a God to be trusted and loved?

*James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, James 1:3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

*James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

*James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

*James 1:18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

*James 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.*

*James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

*James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

*James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*

These verses are peppered throughout the letter reminding the reader of what? How they should be afraid if they don't repent and obey? When we read these verses, we see over and over again God's unconditional love for his children:

- He promises to protect and strengthen our faith in the worst of our trial (1:2-3).
- When we lack the right attitude and actions, he gives them to us as gracious gifts (1:5).
- Our salvation, sanctification, heavenly inheritance was given to us by his will, not out of a response to our obedience (1:18-19).

- We seek to obey as one who has been set free from the obligations of the law. We are no longer condemned by it (2:12).
- After three full chapters of pointing out how they are sinning against each other in thought, in their words, and in their actions, he reminds them, “But he gives more grace” (4:6).  
*After calling us adulterers and his enemy, James tells the church not to run and hide awaiting God’s punishment, but because of the grace they have received, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (4:8).*
- When we come to God empty-handed, not seeing any value within our spiritual lives, James promises, “he will exalt you” (4:10).

**QUESTION: Why do we struggle to see grace as our motivation for obedience?**

**QUESTION: Where does grace force us to look when we are struggling to obey?**

*James 4:11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.*

*James 4:12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?*

When we revert to our old ways of using our words to protect our passions, we are claiming the same authority as God and changing the meaning and purpose of the law. James is giving more grace and then showing that grace helps us walk away from sin, not toward it. As we are running back into the Father’s presence to receive more grace, what are we walking away from, our sin. We agree with God about our sin. We need help. And we can’t do it.

God has control of our desires, thoughts, and words. We are not free to speak our minds to cut someone down. That is not the way of grace for a believer. We don’t have the right to change God’s law. That means we as Christians must protect each other within this church. We must never allow conversations to happen where we are purposefully having conversations that tear down another believer.

*James 4:13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”–*

*James 4:14, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

*James 4:15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”*

*James 4:16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

This passage, if not understood in the context of God’s grace, could be hard to stomach, but in the midst of God’s grace, it can be comforting. James is addressing those who live their lives as if they are in control of what happens as if they can control their own destiny. Their

plans are based upon their desires and wants, without ever stopping to consider, “what does God’s will mean in this decision?”

Our life in the timeline of history, a mist that is blown away with the wind. We should consider this when we decide what is best for our lives and the decisions we make. God created this world made a promise to save sinners. He accomplished this by moving millions of people, over thousands of years, in perfect harmony to complete his promise of redeeming sinners through the death of his son on the cross. Every event happened just as he prophesied it would, and His son ended up on a cross to pay for our sins, just as he said it would happen in Genesis 3:15.

**QUESTION: Do you think our desires can blind us from the reality of what God is doing? How does what James write help us correct our perspective of our decisions?**

**QUESTION: How does the grace of God help us trust as life doesn’t go as we thought it would?**

**PRAISE, PRAYER, AND CONFESSION:**

- What can you offer to the Father in praise?
- What is a sin you need to confess?
- What is a burden we can carry?
- What can we take to our Father in prayer?

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