

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

*James 2:1-4  
Lesson #8  
Priorities  
04/18/2021*

**Is this something that Jesus  
and his Apostles would have said?**



**Are external circumstances the root  
of personal / social peace or a sign of it?**



**We live in a world with two  
conflicted "world and life views"**

The world seems to  
demand that every  
ethical principle is  
deemed relevant only  
when reduced to  
**political action.**

The Word and Way of  
the Cross addresses  
the human dilemma  
**personally** before it  
can be applied  
politically.

**This is critical to a proper  
understanding of the Gospel.**

3

*John 16:33*

"These things I have  
spoken to you, that **in Me**  
**you may have peace.**  
**In the world you have**  
**tribulation**, but take  
courage; I have overcome  
the world."

4

*James* **Developing a Witness  
in a Broken World**

**Don't let a broken world:**

chapter 1

**destroy our joy (vs.2-8).**  
**define our glory (vs.9-11).**  
**distort our expectations (vs.12-18).**  
**defile our ministry (vs.19-27).**

chapter 2

**determine our values (vs.1-13).**  
**Priorities (vs.1-4).**

5

### Context

"<sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to **keep oneself unstained by the world.**"

*James 4:4*

"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**"

*Romans 12:2*

"And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

6

### James 2

"<sup>1</sup> My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an *attitude of* **personal favoritism.**"

"<sup>2</sup> For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, <sup>3</sup> and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

<sup>4</sup> have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become **judges with evil motives?**"

7

### 1. The issue is "worldliness" as a path to peace and security.

Worldliness is revealed in:

**Who we pass over**

"the have nots"

**Who we prefer**

"the have lots"

**in our search for peace and security.**

8

### 2. Discrimination can be good or bad depending on the context.

**It is essential in some contexts**

- religious and civic roles,
- boundaries of the faith & behavior,

*1 Corinthians 11:19*

"For **there must also be factions among you**, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you."

**It can be evil in other situations.**

- common human dignity,
- ethnicity & economic status,
- cultural popularity,

9

## The church in Corinth

Not engaged in      Too engaged in

**Culture Wars**

**Civil Wars**



(Worldly attachments)



(Kingdom detachments)

10

### 3. The eyes of God's kingdom differ from the eyes of the world.

*2 Corinthians 5:16*

"Therefore from now on **we recognize no man according to the flesh**; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer."

**The way of the World**  
- political /  
economic / legal  
(outward)

**The Way of the Cross**  
- spiritual /  
personal  
(inward)

11



**4. The Way of the Cross  
may seem foolish in the world's eyes.**

*1 Corinthians 1*

"23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a **stumbling block**, and to Gentiles **foolishness**, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power of God and the wisdom of God.**"

**The way  
of the World**  
- sees the Way  
of the Cross  
as foolishness

**The Way  
of the Cross**  
- is wisdom  
and power for  
true change

12

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."



Martin Luther King Jr.

13

**5. Expectations within the faith community  
differ from those outside it.**

*1 Corinthians 5*

"9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world,... 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person,... 12 **For what have I to do with judging outsiders?** Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges."

**The way  
of the World**  
- calls for tolerance  
with and witness to  
a superficial hope.

**The Way  
of the Cross**  
- calls for a higher  
standard within  
the church.

14

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."



Martin Luther King Jr.

15

**6. Social reform by the church in the state  
is a sign, not a solution to injustice.**

*1 Peter 3:9*

"not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but **giving a blessing instead**; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

**The world has  
kingdom  
expectations**  
but before its time  
without its king and  
by physical force.

**The Way  
of the Cross**  
is a goal  
and a path.

16

"Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal."



Martin Luther King, Jr.

17



**Peter - social activist  
before Pentecost**

**Angry, Anxious, Aggressive**

**Matt.14:30**

"But seeing the wind, he became **afraid**,"

**16:22**

"And Peter took him (Jesus) aside and began to **rebuke** Him,"

**Jn.18:10**

"Simon Peter then, having a **sword**, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear;"

**Matt.19:27**

"we have left everything and followed you; what then will there be **for us**?"

**26:33**

"Even though all may fall away because of You, **I will never** fall away." **Vs.74** "Then he began to **curse** and swear, 'I do not know the man!'"

**Peter - Christ like  
after Pentecost**

**Thankful, Trusting, Temperate**

**1 Pet.1:14**

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your **ignorance**."

**2:13**

"**Submit** yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution,"

**3:15**

"make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with **gentleness** and **reverence**;"

**4:13**

"but to the degree that you share the **sufferings** of Christ, keep on **rejoicing**;"

18

A capitalist society

A socialist society

is willing to sacrifice material and social equality for individual liberty and material productivity.

is willing to sacrifice individual liberty and material productivity for material and social equality.

**A Christian society**

views liberty and productivity as responsibilities more than rights - and competition as inseparable from compassion, and cooperation.

**Christians can "do good" in  
"off road" political environments.**

(Consider "Caesar, Nero")

Both Peter & James were martyred.

19



President Trump

**Evangelicals are  
"one election  
away from losing  
everything."**

"Many of us sound like we've staked everything not only on **constitutional freedoms** but also on **social respect, acceptance, and even power**.

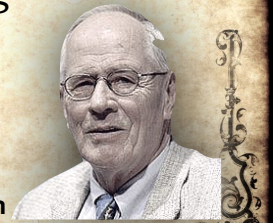
But that comes at the cost of confusing the gospel with Christian nationalism."

Michael Horton  
Christianity Today Aug.31, 2018

20

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear."

James Neil Hollingworth  
(writer)



21

4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become **judges with evil motives?**"

The issue is

**what motivates our behavior?  
(insecurity / fear or sacrificial love)**



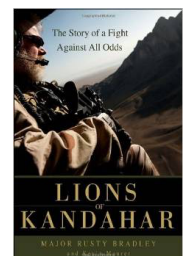
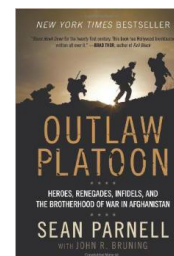
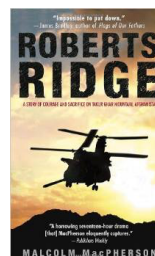
Hate is not the first enemy of love, **FEAR** is. It destroys our ability to trust.

22

**What do these books  
have in common?**

Stories of love  
that is greater than

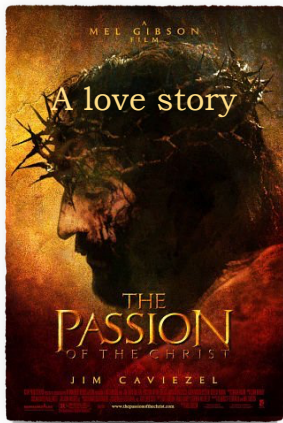
**FEAR**



23



The Gospel ~ Love that is greater  
than fear



Greater love has no  
one than this, that he  
lay down his life for  
his friends. John 15:13

i always  
thought love  
was shaped  
like a  
heart  
but it's  
actu-  
ally  
like a

24

When we love all  
fear disappears,  
& when we are  
afraid all love  
disappears.

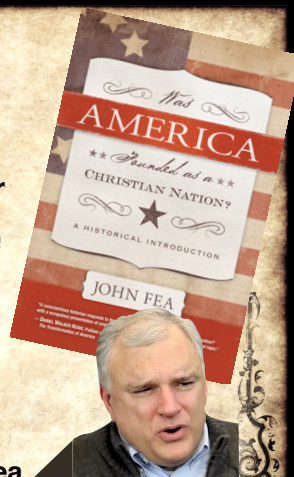
25

Anxiety (fear)  
is a dis-ease of soul  
that comes when the  
pressure of a fallen  
world meets the  
**posture of an  
insecure life.**

26

"Despite the biblical  
passages exhorting  
followers of Christ to "fear  
not," it is possible to write  
an entire history of  
American evangelicalism  
as the story of Christians  
who have failed to  
overcome fear."

John Fea  
(historian)



27

Up until the Civil War, America's  
identity with Christianity was  
generally accepted as a fact.

Christian Nation

Secular state

1776

1865

2021

"The United States  
is a nation with the  
soul of a church."

G.K. Chesterton  
1874-1936

Why the change?



28

What forces brought about this shift?

Christian Nation

Secular state

1776

1865

2021

Immigration  
(different cultures)

Diversification  
(racial & religious)

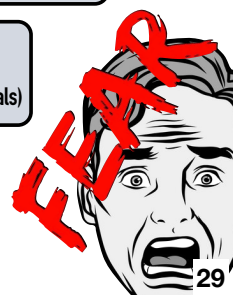
Industrialization  
(machine power)

Urbanization  
(growth of cities)

Destabilization  
(political disfunction  
and distrust)

Tribalization  
(loss of common  
ground, good, & goals)

Secularization  
(court decisions)



29

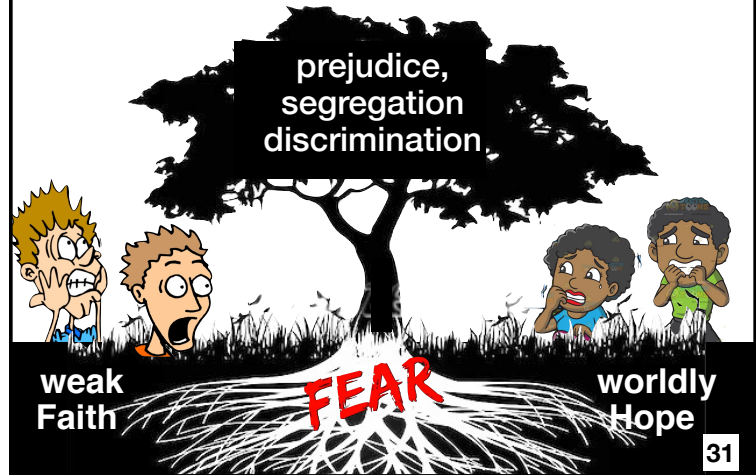
“We’re tired of the national conversation centering on “What should we fear?” and “Who should we blame?”.”

Brene Brown



30

The exacerbation of social:

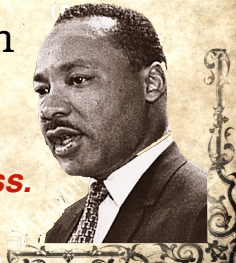


31

“The Negro needs the white man to free him from his fears. The white man needs the Negro to free him from his guilt.”

*They both need the Word & Way of the Cross.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.



32

The conflict is not with circumstances **but rather with the challenge of the Way of the Cross** in an insecure world.

“In the end, dear friend, **it is always between us and God**, not between us and them.”



Mother Teresa

33

*John 14:27*

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; **not as the world gives, do I give to you.** Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

**The world says:**

“No justice, no peace”

**The Kingdom says:**

“No peace, no justice”

34

**Jesus**

**Revealed** himself as one with the poor  
**Recruited** disciples from among the poor  
But he made no one rich or powerful **in a worldly sense.**

His ministry to material needs **was a sign, not a solution.**

*Matthew 9*

“6 But **in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority** on earth to forgive sins” – then He said to the paralytic – “Rise, take up your bed, and go home.” 7 And he rose, and went home.”

35



**One of God's principle tools in bringing people to faith in Christ is in how his disciples respond to the circumstances of life.**

*Matthew 5:16*

**"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."**

36

**Don't let a broken world determine our values (2:1-13).**

1. Address the root issues - **between us and God not us and them (vs.1-4)**
2. Trust the Way of the Cross - **What would Jesus do - give dignity to the "have nots".**
3. Social justice starts in the church - **We give the world a sign of a coming Kingdom.**
4. Have realistic expectations - **We do not expect the Kingdom before its time and without its King.**

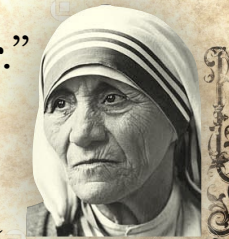
34

**When asked what she had done to reduce poverty she said,**

**"I have spent most of my life trying to be one with the poor."**

**like Jesus**

Mother Teresa



38