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# JUBILEE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS

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By Jim Jordal

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to the captives, Recovering of sight to the blind, To deliver those who are crushed, And to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Jesus describes his earthly mission in his first sermon, Luke 4:18 -19, WEB

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you tells them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled;" and yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. Yes, a man will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe, and shudder."

James 2:14-19, WEB

I haven't written much on biblical Jubilee recently, but the continuing economic disasters experienced by the U.S. illustrate once again the desperate need we have for the institution of Jubilee principles in our society. We are right now experiencing continued high unemployment, virtual corporate control of a paralyzed Congress, massive and still rising mortgage repossessions, and an inability of local governments to fund adequate education and social services. Add to these woes recent threats to Social Security and Medicare, endless war, disenchantment of the public with its leaders and political institutions, and a giant decline in public faith in the future, and it seems to me that we've created an imperative for Jubilee.

Jubilee principles are found throughout Scripture, but especially in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, Isaiah 58 and 61, and in the teachings of Jesus. Jesus in his first sermon entailing what he was about reiterated Old Testament principles

of Jubilee. My contention is that these principles of deliverance, release, healing, recovering and delivering are at the heart of the good news, or gospel as preached by Jesus and his followers. As such they constitute, or are righteousness, not only at the individual level of personal interaction, but at the societal level of law and justice.

Unfortunately, most Christians miss this point because we have compartmentalized the Bible and our belief systems into New and Old Testament portions, separated by what we perceive as the great gulf between law and grace. We immediately label anything looking like it might expect us to do something, especially if it comes from the Old Testament, as law and therefore superceded by grace. We also have a tendency to spiritualize certain literal biblical teachings. For example, in the quotation above from the words of Jesus we could say that Jesus's promise to "deliver those who are crushed" means, not those unfortunates literally crushed by economic and political oppression, but those crushed in spirit by the ravages of sin. It's not that this view is wrong, Jesus did this too. It's just incomplete.

It's as if righteousness is somehow detached from behavior. Righteousness is viewed as a spiritual thing having little to do with behavior. Believing thusly, we become able to compartmentalize or separate our spiritual life from our actual life in the flesh. That's how you find Christians claiming to know God on a spiritual level, yet denying him in their behavior toward others, or political figures claiming to be for the people while they promote policies having the effect of crushing all but the very top of the income pyramid.

Some Christians don't like the Book of James because it says clearly that faith cannot be separated from behavior. They are both parts of the same thing—a complete package of love, respect, trust, belief, and obedience to Christ that we call Christianity. Parts of this package are not enough, for paraphrasing what James said, "You may believe in one God and stake your claim to faith on that basis, but what good is that single profession? After all, even the devils believe in one God and tremble before his power."

That's the trouble with basing your Christian faith solely on your assent to the various creeds. Mere believing something is not enough—you must also act on what you believe. Then it becomes saving faith. If you don't act on what you claim to believe, you are practicing something less than what pleases the Father.

Jubilee is action based upon love, faith and obedience. It's time we had more of it.