

## IS HARMLESSNESS HOLINESS?

1. Text: James 4:13-17
2. Notice especially verse 17: "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."  
This says we are responsible to do what we know to do.
3. This passage forces us to face a very critical evaluation of our religion.

### I. **Explanation**

1. Is a person good simply because he does not do bad things?
2. Is positive goodness simply an absence of badness?
3. Do we have a claim on righteousness by obeying the "thy shalt not's" and overlooking the "thy shalt's"? There is a negative and positive righteousness.
4. We can't neglect either.
5. There really are sins of commission and omission.
6. Excusing question: "What have I done wrong?" Response: "What have you failed to do that is right?"
7. Never minimize obeying the prohibitions. But they are not enough.

### II. **Examples**

1. Every judgment parable in the New Testament centered in punishment for what someone failed to do, rather than doing something wrong.
2. The man with one talent (Matthew 25:24-26) Probably much good about him.
3. The rich man (Luke 16:19-21) Probably much negatively could be said of him.
4. The barren fig tree (Matthew 21:18-20) Did not produce fruit.
5. Matthew 25:34-46. When did we see you hungry?
6. Wife who never cooked, or ever broke a dish.
7. Older brother (in Luke 15:29) "I never transgressed your commandment at any time."
8. The Pharisee's prayer was mostly negative (Luke 18:11).

### III. **Evidence**

1. There is obvious evidence around us that many in the church today believe they are assured of eternal bliss because they have abstained from gross indulgence in sin.
2. This leads to smug indifference; fatal self-delusion; destructive spiritual pride; judgmentalism; false security.
3. Amos 6:1 "Woe to you who are at ease in Zion."
4. Man upset by a simple question.

### IV. **Exhortations**

1. Matthew 7:12 "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them."
2. Matthew 5:47 "What do you do more than others?"
3. Ephesians 4:28 Work in what is good so you can give to those in need.
4. Acts 26:20 Do works befitting repentance.
5. Galatians 6:10 Do good to all men.
6. Confusion: Bad people doing good things. Answer: Those abstaining from evil ought to be active in service.
7. Application:

Conclusion: Is harmless holiness?

A Sermon preached by Monte Ginnings  
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