

“Drawing Near to God” – James 4:7-10 1.15.2020

Turn in your Bible tonight to James Chapter 4 and we will look primarily at verse 7 through 10 but I am going to go back and read verses 5 and 6 also. As you are turning, I want to remind you that James has written a letter that is a circular letter that is being delivered from church to church. As we learned from the beginning in verse 1 it is going out to the Jews that are being dispersed because of the great persecution that is coming against all those that have professed faith in Christ.

What James is proposing and proclaiming in this letter are tests for people to do an introspection, to look at their lives, and see if that profession is real. James has detailed out these tests to show that a faith in the Lord Jesus that does not produce real life changes is a faith that is worthless.

Look at James 2:17:

James 2:17

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Now we know that we are not saved by works. But if we say that Jesus Christ is our Lord, then there should be evidences in our lives that should clearly show that. There are do's and do not's that reflect we have a great desire to be obedient to the Lord Jesus and his word and to live holy before a lost and dying world. Again, just to be reminded let's look at a couple of these tests that James, lead by the Holy Spirit of God put before us.

- 1. Verses 2 to 4, 12: Do you show faith in Jesus under trials and persecution?***
- 2. Verses 5 to 8: Do you doubt in a way that shows a lack of trust in Jesus, showing a lack of Godly Wisdom.***
- 3. Verses 13-18: Do we blame God when we succumb to temptation and sin? Or do we own up to it and repent and turn from our sin?***
- 4. Verses 19-21: Are we quick to anger?***
- 5. Verses 22-25: Are you just a hearer of God's Word or are you obedient to God's word and it is shown through your life?***
- 6. Chapter 2:1-13: Do you show partiality?***
- 7. Verses 14-26: Does your faith in Jesus exhibit a life that is lived out that brings glory to God?***
- 8. Chapter 3:1-12: Speech? Are you constantly gossiping, slandering people? Constantly critical?***
- 9. Verses 13-18, Chapter 4:1-5: Does your life show a true Godly wisdom that shows a life that would reflect the fruit of the spirit? Does your life show a false wisdom directed by Satan by showing partiality, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition? Which reveals a critical spirit because you don't have complete control over everything. At the same time creating division and animosity between people.***

Let's read our Scripture for tonight. As I said, I am going to read verses 5 and 6 as well as 7 through 10 of Chapter 4.

James 4:5-10

⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

I wanted to include verses 5 and 6 because what I believe we see in verses 7 through 10 is a cry or a plea for salvation. James has made it very clear up to this point through contrasting what a life that is surrendered to Jesus Christ looks like and a life that is not surrendered to Jesus Christ. We also see in verse 6 that if we are failing these tests in our life it shows a life of pride and shows the separation from God that this being proud puts us in.

Think about it! If you are showing partiality, if you are slanderous with your mouth, if you are relying on your own wisdom that creates a critical spirit and a spirit of pride that makes you think you are so much smarter and better than everyone else. What does it say? God opposes you! But, what does it say after that? Grace is available for you! What is Grace? In simple terms it is receiving something from God that you do not deserve.

What is that something? It is salvation and forgiveness from our sins!!! But this grace is not just automatically bestowed upon us. It comes through someone. Turn to Titus Chapter 2 and let's look at verses 11-14. I have used these verses and referred to them numerous times, but I again believe this is one portion of Scripture that best describes God's Grace.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

How did God's grace appear? Look at the picture!



But that's not the end! Can I show you something else?



We deserve that cross! We deserve that death! But God poured his wrath upon Jesus so there could be that payment of sin that is needed to show God's justice and then he raised him the third day to show the payment was complete. So that God could extend his grace to us!

But how do we receive this grace?

Look at verse 6 again?

James 4:6

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

We are to humble ourselves! We are to show humility! That now begs the question on, "How do we humble ourselves?" How do we humble ourselves to the point of receiving saving grace? That brings us to verse 7.

James 4:7

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit!! What? We don't like that word do we! What does it mean to submit? The Greek word for submit is:

Hypotasso: ***to obey, be subject to.***

This is the definition from the Merriam-Webster dictionary of the word submit: ***to yield oneself to the authority or will of another.***

God is full of Grace! But who receives this Grace? Those who submit!! The first step of humbling yourself to receive the saving grace of God is to willingly submit to the sovereign authority of God. What does that mean? If God speaks, you obey! How has he spoken to us? Through his Word, the Bible! What God calls sin according to his Word, we say yes that is sin, and we obey, and we repent to the fact that he has given us his commandments. We are willing to deny ourselves; we are willing to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus' authority.

Submission shows our love for God. In 1 John 5:3 – *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

If we find submitting to the truth of God's word a burden, then there is an issue. Now, I do not mean about those times where there is a slip up. We all have those moments! What do we do with them? We nip it, nip it, nip it! We 1 John 1:9 this thing!

1 John 1:9

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That is a product of submission. But, if we say, you know what! I am going to act anyway I want; I am going to talk anyway I want; I am going to treat people with partiality and have my own little click. I'm not going to God's word for any direction. That is showing a proud spirit and what did we just learn? God opposes the proud! That is why I believe this to be a call to salvation!

If you are in opposition to the Word that God gave us, you are an enemy to God. In Psalm 34:16 it is even referred to in this way, ***The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.***

In God's Holiness, he opposes all that is evil, and PRIDE is the beginning of all of it. God's grace is available for the proud. The lost sinner. But his grace is not given to us without response. We receive his Grace through submission to his sovereign authority. But how does submission look? Look at verse 7 again!

James 4:7

⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Through submission we first say yes to God! Then we say no to the Devil! There is no middle ground here people! You either are serving the Lord Jesus or you are serving the devil! We see, to resist, in terms of an action. This is not something that is done passively. We are to RESIST the devil! Now this is not something where we try to go toe to toe with devil. Nowhere in Scripture are we to be rebuking the devil, satan, or to have some sort of discussion with him.

Turn to 1 Peter Chapter 5:8-9

1 Peter 5:8-9

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The word resist actually means to take a stand! To withstand! To oppose! It's kind of like this!



You are a stone wall! You are standing firm. Most everyone should be very familiar with Ephesians Chapter 6. But turn there. And we are not going to look at all of it, but this portion of Scripture nails the fact we are to stand.

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Again, this is not a passive word here. We can only take the blows for so long! How do we stand? How do we withstand? With the Word! (Hold Bible to Chest)! But, you can not fight with what you don't know. It goes back to saying yes to God and saying no to the devil! Saying no to Satan's lies and deceptions. Where we were once an enemy to God, we are now an enemy to Satan.

But how do we resist? Turn back to James and look at verse 8.

James 4:8

⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Once again, we see a word or in the English a couple of words that is not passive it is active! May I repeat again? How do we become humble? ***Submit to God, Resist the Devil and Draw Near to God!***

We must remember again that his letter is written to a lot of Jews that have professed to have repented of their sins and surrendered their life to Jesus Christ. This term of, “Drawing Near”, would be something that would resonate with them. We read in the Old Testament, that as a Priest would bring the sacrifices it was termed that the Priest was drawing near to God.

As the Priest would come into the Holy place to offer sacrifices it was considered he was coming into the presence of the Lord. Also, that one time of the year during the Day of Atonement, the High Priest, would enter the Holy of Holy’s where the presence of the Lord resided. He would offer sacrifice for himself, to purify himself and then offer sacrifice for the people.

As the people were bringing sacrifices what they were entering into was a mode of worship. When we humble ourselves before God, we don’t just submit ourselves under his authority, we don’t just say no to ourselves and no to Satan and his demonic forces. But we desire, we long for an intimate constant relationship with the Lord Jesus.

We are coming to worship him! But how do we draw near to him? Again, we go to his Word. We can’t know Jesus intimately without knowing his Word. It is his Word that God has given us to know him! Also, Worship is not an event! Worship is a lifestyle!

When Jesus was talking with the woman at the well in John Chapter 4 he spoke of worship and he said, ***“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”***

Worship is not about us! Worship isn’t us putting on a good show! Worship is definitely not just showing up here on Sunday and Wednesday. Now we want you to! This is a huge part of worshipping the Lord. To sharpen each other, to fellowship and as a congregation go out and use these words in our evangelism. How can you know the Lord? Submit to God, Resist the Devil, Draw Near to God!

But we also see something so wonderful! If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us! But as we think about drawing near to God, we must recognize there is some criteria. Remember, God is Holy! Look at the rest of verse 8 again and verses 9 and 10.

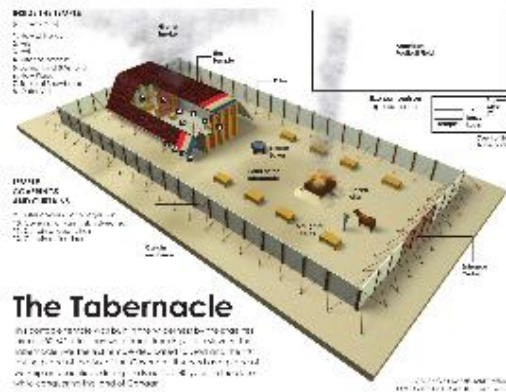
James 4:8-10

⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

I want to focus on this for a few minutes. I truly believe in a lot of instances we have become very shallow in our evangelism and in our call to people to repentance of their sins and to submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus. Look at these words that are being used here.

Cleanse your hands! What does the cleaning of your hands have to do with any of this? We again go back to the Old Testament and that washing was an important part of coming near to God. The hands were considered the symbols of behavior of actions done.

To give you an example of this. Look at this picture.



EXAMPLE: Exodus 30:17-21

In Psalm 24 the question is asked, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Referring to coming into the presence of the Lord.

The answer! He who has clean hand and a pure heart! Exactly what we read here. This is a reflection of who will draw near to God. Those that seek righteousness. In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 verse 6 it Jesus says.

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

That is drawing near to God. So again, and I want to put this on the screen this time. To show humility!

To Humble Yourself Before God

- 1. Submit to God!***
- 2. Resist the Devil!***
- 3. Draw Near to God!***

But there are several aspects to “Drawing Near to God!” Seek righteousness, seek holiness! Now look at verse 9.

James 4:9

⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

This is where I had to take a step back. Let’s link these three words together. Wretched, mourn and weep! This is talking about being so distraught about our sins that we are lamenting. In our spirit we are so broken that we are literally in mourning about our sin. We feel the shame, we feel the guilt of what our sin has done in putting Jesus on the cross! Remember when Peter was in the courtyard at Caiaphas’ house after betraying Jesus. Jesus turned and looked at Peter. It says that Peter went out and wept bitterly!

This is where we are missing it! We are trying not to hurt someone’s feelings and not make them feel bad about themselves that we have made the Gospel quite shallow. I am not saying that there has to be tears when a person surrendered their life to Christ, but they experience any shame and guilt, any brokenness. I would say yes.

This is a call to repentance. What is Repentance? Repentance is coming before God and saying, “Yes! I am a sinner! Yes, I want to submit to you! Yes! I desire to be under your authority! Do we that profess to already

being followers of Jesus Christ, do we mourn, lament, feel shame, guilt or brokenness over our sin? What this is teaching us tonight is that you cannot separate true faith and a holy life!

Or are we like the rest of this verse! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. What is that saying? It's we make excuses for our sin! We are just kind of, "Whatever?" Grace covers it all! Jesus doesn't care what I say or do! Ladies and Gentlemen that is pride and what did we learn at the beginning! God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble!

Speaking of humility, look at verse 10.

James 4:10

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Isn't that beautiful! Humble yourself before the Lord! Which means!

To Humble Yourself Before God

- 1. Submit to God and his sovereign authority!***
- 2. Resist the Devil! Saying yes to God, no to self and no to the devil!***
- 3. Draw Near to God! Which consists of, repentance, holiness and a brokenness over our sin!***

God will exalt you! Where? To saving faith, holy living and eventually eternity with him in Heaven!