

The War Within, Part 3: Finding Peace by Surrendering to God

Text: James 4:7–10

Series: The War Within

Peace does not come from managing life better, but from surrendering ourselves more fully to God.

Introduction

Church, if you are ready for the next four verses in James 4, say yes.

Have you ever felt like life is one big tug-of-war?

On one side, God is pulling you toward the peace you know you need. On the other side, your fears, your desires, your pride, your distractions, and the pressure of daily life are pulling just as hard in the opposite direction.

No wonder so many people feel stretched thin. No wonder there is guilt, restlessness, and exhaustion. Everybody seems tired.

For some, the war within looks like guilt in parenting. You look at your children and wonder, what am I forming in them? Do they look more like Jesus, or more like me?

For others, it looks like tension in marriage. You love each other, but there is friction, distance, misunderstanding, and silence where there should be tenderness and grace.

For others, it is anxiety about money. You run out of finances before you run out of the month. You think, if I just had a little more, I could breathe again.

For others, it is pressure at work. Pressure from a boss, pressure from deadlines, pressure from uncertainty, pressure from not knowing what the future holds.

And for many, it is that quiet fear that life is just one phone call, one diagnosis, one conflict, one loss away from spinning out of control.

But here is the good news today: James does not hand us a complicated religious system. He gives us four clear commands that unlock peace.

They are simple but not soft.

Submit.

Draw near.

Mourn.

Humble yourself.

And the promise hidden inside these commands is this: **when we surrender to God, God meets us with grace.**

Let's stand under the mirror of Scripture today and read James 4:7-10:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

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

1. **Peace begins when I submit to God**

Verse 7: **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

The first question this text asks us is this:

Am I submissive, or just religious?

James begins with the word submit.

In Greek, this word is hypotassō, and it means to **place yourself under rightful authority**. It is a military word. It means to line up under the command of another.

And let’s be honest: submission is not a popular word. Our culture celebrates self-rule, self-expression, self-definition, and self-exaltation. But the kingdom of God begins where self ends.

James is not telling us merely to:

- attend church,
- agree with truth,
- admire spiritual things,
- or wear a Christian label.

He is telling us to submit to God.

You can sing and still not be submitted.

You can serve and still not be submitted.

You can know doctrine and still not be submitted.

Submission is deeper than religious activity. Submission says:

“God, Your will is better than mine.

Your way is wiser than mine.

Your authority is final.

I belong under You.”

Notice the order of the verse:

First, submit to God. Then, resist the devil.

That order matters.

Some people are trying to resist the devil while they are still resisting God. That is a losing battle. You cannot win a spiritual war while living in quiet rebellion.

Submission is not surrendering in defeat. It is choosing the winning side.

So how do you resist the devil? Sometimes it starts with a simple prayer like this:

“In Jesus’ name, I resist this. Father, I choose Your way.”

When lust comes:

“In Jesus’ name, I resist this. Father, I choose Your way.”

When anger rises:

“In Jesus’ name, I resist this. Father, I choose Your way.”

When bitterness whispers:

“In Jesus’ name, I resist this. Father, I choose Your way.”

When fear tries to take over:

“In Jesus’ name, I resist this. Father, I choose Your way.”

And here is the promise: “He will flee from you.”

Not because you are strong in yourself, but because you are standing under God’s authority.

Charles Spurgeon said, **“We are never safer than when we lie passive in His hands and know no will but His.”**

Exodus 14:14 says,

“The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

When God fights for you, you do not need to fight for control.

Peace begins where submission begins.

2. Peace grows when I draw near to God

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

The second question is:

Am I drawing near, or just showing up?

This is one of the most tender invitations in all of Scripture.

James says, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

The Greek word for “draw near” is *engizō*, which means to **come close, to approach intentionally.**

This is not drifting. This is a deliberate movement toward God.

You do not drift toward God.

You drift toward distraction.

You drift toward compromise.

You drift toward spiritual coldness.

You drift toward distance.

But nearness is intentional.

God is not backing away from His people. He is leaning forward with grace. The issue is not His reluctance. The issue is our response.

James goes deeper:

“Cleanse your hands” — that speaks of our actions.

“Purify your hearts” — that speaks of our motives.

God is not after cosmetic Christianity. He does not only want outward behavior cleaned up. He wants inward allegiance made whole.

That phrase “double-minded” comes from the Greek word dipsychos, literally two-souled. It describes a divided person, a split person, someone trying to live in two worlds at once.

One foot toward God.
One foot toward self.
One foot in surrender.
One foot in control.
One foot in worship.
One foot in compromise.

James says peace will never come to a divided heart.

There is a difference between attending church and approaching God.

You can sit in the room and still stay at a distance.
You can hear the sermon and never open your heart.
You can sing the songs and never come near.

A.W. Tozer asked, **“When God seems distant, who moved?”**

That question cuts deep.

Let me make this practical. Turn ordinary moments into holy moments. The next time you wash your hands at the sink, remember James 4:8 and pray David’s prayer from Psalm 51:10:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

That is how you draw near. Not with performance. With honesty. With repentance. With intention.

And here is the promise again:
If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.

3. **Peace deepens when I mourn over sin instead of managing it**

Verse 9: **“Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.”**

The third question is:

Am I mourning sin, or managing it?

This verse sounds severe because James is trying to wake up sleepy consciences.

He is not calling us to live miserable lives. He is calling us to stop being casual about the very thing that nailed Jesus to the cross.

There are seasons for joy. There are seasons for celebration. But there must also be moments when sin stops being theoretical and starts being personal.

James is saying, “Do not laugh your way around what should break your heart.”

So often we do not mourn sin. We manage it.

We rename it.

We excuse it.

We soften it.

We justify it.

The Bible calls it pride; we call it personality.

The Bible calls it gossip; we call it concern.

The Bible calls it greed; we call it ambition.

The Bible calls it lust; we call it struggle.

The Bible calls it rebellion; we call it independence.

The Bible calls it unforgiveness; we call it boundaries.

The Bible calls it compromise; we call it relevance.

But changing the label does not change the reality.

Sin does not lose its poison because we renamed the bottle.

Joel 2:12 says,

“Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

Psalms 51:17 says,

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Here is the truth: what you excuse, you empower. What you mourn, you bring into the light.

There is healing for confessed sin.

There is cleansing for repented sin.

There is mercy for brokenhearted sinners.

But there is no freedom for sin you are still babysitting.

And let me say this pastorally: time does not forgive sin. Jesus does. The passing of years is not repentance. Silence is not repentance. Avoidance is not repentance.

If the Holy Spirit is pressing on something in your heart today, do not manage it. Bring it to God. Name it. Forsake it. Lay it down.

Because managed sin grows, but mourned sin dies.

4. **Peace is restored when I humble myself before the Lord**

Verse 10: **“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”**

The fourth question is:

Am I humble before God, or quietly indifferent to Him?

James closes where real peace always lands: humility.

The Greek word here, tapeinoō, means **to make low, to bring low, to take the lower place.** In the kingdom, the way up is down.

Humility is not pretending you are worthless.

Humility is seeing God as glorious and yourself as dependent.

C.S. Lewis said, **“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”**

That is beautiful because pride makes me the center. Humility puts God back at the center.

And here is the danger James exposes: you can look fine outwardly and still be inwardly indifferent.

You can be present in church and absent in heart.

You can bow your head and still resist God’s authority.

You can pray with your mouth and live independently in your soul.

Spiritual indifference is dangerous because it is so quiet.

It reminds me of the Challenger disaster in 1986. Before the launch, engineers warned about the cold and the possible failure of the O-rings. The warnings were real. **(SHOW PIC)**

But over time, people had become used to risk. They normalized what should have alarmed them. They grew comfortable with danger. And disaster followed.

That is how spiritual indifference works.

When you keep ignoring conviction, you normalize distance.

When you keep delaying obedience, you normalize rebellion.

When you keep resisting surrender, you normalize hardness.

And everything can look fine right up until collapse.

So James says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord.”

Not before people.
Not for image.
Not for applause.

Before the Lord.

And here is the promise:
“He will exalt you.”

Notice who does the lifting.
Not you.
Not your platform.
Not your effort to prove yourself.
Not your self-promotion.

He will lift you up.

Psalm 40:1–2 says:

“I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.”

That is what God does for the humble. He lifts what bows.

Conclusion: The Path to Peace

Let me give you the whole text in one sentence:

Every command in James 4:7–10 is humility applied.

- Resist the devil — that is humility in battle.
- Draw near to God — that is humility in worship.
- Cleanse your hands — that is humility in conduct.
- Purify your hearts — that is humility in motive.
- Mourn and weep — that is humility in repentance.
- Humble yourselves before the Lord — that is humility in full surrender.

And wrapped around it all is the truth of James 4:6:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

That means if I cling to pride, I put myself against God.
But if I humble myself, I place myself where grace flows.

So here is the invitation today:

Are you tired of the war within?
Are you tired of trying to hold everything together?
Are you tired of showing up while staying distant?
Are you tired of managing what God is calling you to surrender?

Then stop fighting the hand that is reaching for you.

Submit to God.
Draw near to God.
Mourn over sin.
Humble yourself before the Lord.

And the God of all grace will meet you there.