

**July 15, 2007**

James 4:6-10

Good morning. Grab your Bibles and let's continue what we've been looking at in James for 3 weeks now. We're in James chapter 4 – we'll back up to verse 6 again this morning and go through verse 10.

- 6 *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*
- 7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
- 8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
- 9 *Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.*
- 10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

Verse 6 begins with a very encouraging “but” – James has described a very grim situation. He asks us why we quarrel and fight – why we get involved in conflict that dishonors God and harms one another – and the answer had nothing to do with what anyone else did – it was all about ourselves. There is a problem in me – my desire for my pleasure wages war in me. There is a problem in my prayer life – either I'm not praying about my desires or I'm praying selfishly. There is a problem in my relationship with God – I'm committing spiritual adultery by seeking to be satisfied with things or people other than God and seeking to exalt myself in what I do & say. In case you can't tell – that's not a good situation to be in. No wonder there is conflict everywhere.

And then verse 6. “but” – all that is true – “but God gives us more grace.” The fact that James begins this turnaround by pointing us towards God's grace reminds us of an important biblical truth. **You can't change APART from God's grace; you can change BECAUSE of God's grace.**

This morning if you are looking at yourself and saying, “I just can't change. Pastor you don't know me – you don't know the way I am.” Let me remind you – He gives more grace.

If you are looking at your relationships and saying there's no way this family can heal, this friendship can be restored – let me remind you, He gives more grace.

But here's the key – the next principle – if you are going to receive God's help, you must humble yourself. **You can't change apart from God's help and God won't help you unless you HUMBLE yourself.**

Look at what he says. The **warning is “God opposes the proud.”**

The word for "proud" here is an interesting thing. It has the word for “above” and the word to “show off.” It's somebody who sort of shows himself as if he were above everybody else. He's **EXALTED in his own mind.** Sound familiar?

That's the agenda of the world we talked about last week. The exaltation of self. They may be attached to the church but the truth is their affections are toward the world. This does not have to be pompous external pride; it is **pitting your will against the WILL of God.**

And God who says “I will not share my glory with another” says he opposes the proud. Now we could spend a lot of time defining and digging into that but I don't want to. I want you just to hear that. God opposes the proud. Hear it and tremble at the simplicity of its warning.

But here's the **promise** and it's given twice in this passage like a pair of bookends. God gives grace to the humble and in verse 10, humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up. That's how James begins verse 6 and ends verse 10. **If you will humble yourself before God He will**

**give you GRACE – if you will humble yourself before God, He will LIFT YOU UP.** And what more could you want? God helping you and God honoring you. And it's a promise. If you are humble.

And everything in between them explains them. The last 2 weeks James showed us that **if you want to get your relationships with OTHERS right, to be a person of peace, you have to get your relationship with GOD right.** Well here's how.

And the how he gives in verses 7-9 are not in some specific order. But all of them are necessary – all of them should be a continuing reality in our lives. James begins verse 7 with “**Submit yourselves to God.**”

What does that mean? Very simple. It means you **place yourself under – you align yourself with – the AUTHORITY of God.** It is not pledging my allegiance as an equal who will choose to follow. It is saying “you are the God of the universe. I am here to do your will – to do your bidding – I am your servant. I'm not about what I want or what I think – I'm about what you want and what you think.”

The proud man lives his life according to his agenda, for his control, and for his glory. The submissive or **submitted man lives his life according to God's plan, RESTS in God's control, and seeks God's glory.** It's the same thing Jesus said when he said if you're not willing to lay down your life, you're not worthy to be my disciple. If you're not willing to take up your cross, if you're not willing to do my will, if you have to go do your own thing, you're not worthy to be my disciple.

We saw an example of this in Philippians chapter 1. Paul is in jail for preaching the gospel. He's poured himself out in preaching the news of Jesus and given his life for the church. And now here is in prison waiting for what could be a death sentence and the churches ought to be reaching out to him. And instead there are these jokers out there who are trying to use Paul's imprisonment to advance their own case, their own egos. Imagine how you'd react. You're writing a letter to your friends and you start complaining – what are those guys thinking? Don't they know what I've been through? How can this happen?

How does Paul respond? We saw it in Philippians 1:15-18.

- 15 *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.*  
17 *The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.*  
18 *But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,*

Folks this is not a submit to God while it feels good deal. It's a submission to God even as he deals with us in His providence. And James has already shown us back in chapter 1 that there are times when God sends a host of trials into our lives. **Our submission to God is not dependant on having our QUESTIONS answered, but on the fact that He is Almighty God.**

The next thing James says really isn't another command; it is the flipside of this first one. If you're going to humble yourself, you must resist the devil.

I want you to turn to **2 Timothy 2:24-26** with me & read this very carefully. Paul is talking about conflict and he reveals the heart of it here. Look at it.

- 24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*  
25 *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,*

26 *and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Those that oppose the truth. Those that stir up ungodly conflict are doing the will of the devil. One commentator explains that "As God's enemy, Satan is constantly engaged in seeking to subvert the allegiance of God's people by leading them to self-centered and world-centered attitudes & activities." The exaltation of self is the agenda of Satan.

So how do you resist him? How do you take your stand against him? Let me make this simple & show you why this is the flipside of the submit yourselves to God. Resisting the devil is not about seeking out spiritual warfare – casting out demons – rebuking the devil with carefully memorized verses – or praying for angels to do their jobs. **You resist the devil by making much of CHRIST.** You serve the resistance best by speaking much and often of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

James told us in chapter 1 that temptation starts in our own evil desires, so to resist it you focus your desires not on not doing wrong but on Jesus. For you to live is Christ. What thrills your soul is Jesus. And that is why James adds a promise to this command. He says resist him and "he will flee from you." Submit to God – make much of Jesus in your life – **MAGNIFY Him who is the Way the Truth and the Life and Satan the deceiver & father of lies will run from CHRIST in you.**

Humble yourself by submitting to God and by resisting the one who would have you exalt yourself.

Then James says "**draw near to God and he will draw near to you.**" Another command with a promise.

We saw earlier in James that when we are having fights & quarrels with others, we know something is not right in our relationship with God. Our relationships with others are a test of our relationship with God. So when I have problems in those relationships, I have a worship problem. That's what James is saying needs to change for you to humble yourself before God.

James is pulling a term out of the Old Testament that was used to describe the way a priest would approach God in worship. And what he is saying here is if you are going to be humble and if you are going to live at peace you've got to **seek God with ALL YOUR HEART.** You've got to pursue Him with all you've got.

Because you see God for who He really is, you draw close to Him, and that automatically is going to destroy all your pride. In Scriptures, what happens when someone gets close to God? They fall flat on their face - all the pride is knocked right out of them.

You need to come to the Scripture and say, "God show me who you are. God give me a proper view of yourself." You need to get on your knees and cry out, and keep crying out what we sang this morning – I want to know you – I want to hear your voice – I want to touch you – I want to see your face – I want to know you more. "God I need to know you. I need to understand who you are. I need to draw near to you."

You've got to stir yourself up to worship and adore God for who He is. You need to say with the Psalmist, "As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you O God." If you don't feel that, you need to keep coming to God, begging Him to make it true of you. You need to pursue God with your whole heart. None of this half-hearted, weak, lazy pursuit of God will do. He needs to become your consuming desire, your everything, your life. You need to be able to say with David, "Whom have I in heaven, and on earth there's nothing I desire besides you."

And when you do, when you draw near to God in worship, you know what happens? Here's the great promise. "He'll draw near to you." God's like the father of the prodigal son. When his son repented

and returned, he went running. You run to God, He'll run to you. What a gracious God we serve.

The final set of phrases in this explanation of becoming humble is really an outflow of what we've seen already. The first part says "**wash your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded.**" In other words – you've got to repent. **REPENTANCE is where true change begins.**

When James says "Wash your hands" – that's not literal. It's a picture. Throughout Scripture, dirty hands represent a wicked life and clean hands a morally pure and holy life. So washing your hands means repenting of your sinful actions.

But James goes deeper. **Not only does your behavior need to change, your VALUES needs to change as well.** He says "purify your hearts, you double-minded." If you are stirring up fights and quarrels, if you are sinning in your actions, it's because you are sinning in your heart.

We've seen so many times that belief determines behavior. If sin is valuing something more than the glory of God, then we have to recognize our problems go deeper than our actions – it goes to our heart and the worldly agenda of exalting myself. I'm valuing me or something or someone else more than God and I've got to get my heart right.

Which is where the last few phrases fit. James says "**Grieve mourn and wail, change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.**"

All those terms refer to intense feeling. James is talking about a grief of such intensity that it cannot be concealed. He's saying it's time to **be BROKEN over your sin.** It's time to sorrow over it. "Let your laughter be turned into mourning; and your joy into gloom." James isn't saying you can't ever smile again. Instead he's saying stop taking your sin so lightly. You are so glib and light-hearted about it. You need to weep.

The world doesn't understand that kind of statement. And that's why the world fails to live at peace. They don't see their sin for what it is. And they don't truly grieve over it. They make light of it. They treat it as if it were nothing serious.

And Christian, we can fall into that same trap. We don't take our sin seriously. That's why we get so angry with each other. **We get angry at other people's sins against US because we are not taking seriously our sins against GOD.**

But those problems go away when we draw near to God & he draws near to us. That goes away when we submit to God and resist the devil. Turn to **Isaiah 6:1-5** with me.

- 1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.
- 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.
- 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
- 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.
- 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

There is no perfunctory "God forgive me for my sins" when we see God for who He is. Instead we see our sin for what it is and nothing humbles us faster than seeing our sin in the light of God's holiness. Never stop confessing your sins. Never doubt that God is faithful and just and will forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. **When we can sin and not CARE, we are nowhere near God.**

But verse 10 wraps it up. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up. God's exaltation may not always be what you think it is or when you think it should be, but it will come – and it will come from God!

Are you beginning to see why there's so much conflict – so many fights and quarrels? Why there aren't many humble people and not a lot of peace?

Few people are willing to die to themselves – to submit to God – to resist the devil.

Few people are willing to call sin what it is – to get beyond the outward wrong action to the inward wrong attitude.

Few people are willing to be broken over what breaks the heart of God.

But for those who do – Satan flees, God draws near, and verse 10 The Lord lifts them up.

The question today is will you be one of them?

**Will you live your life in conflict –quarrels –strife – and active opposition from God – because of your desire to EXALT YOURSELF?**

**Or will you welcome the wisdom and the peace of God into your heart – your life – your relationships – by HUMBLING YOURSELF before God day by day by day?**

You can't say you don't know how. None of us can. Now we must choose the life we want.