
JAMES TO THE TWELVE

#7 Submit to God (James 4:1-12)

Introduction

James came from a family that questioned Jesus and His authority (See Mark 3:21-34). At some point later, the resurrected Christ met with James and his questions were all answered (See I Cor. 15:3-8).

So, in his letter to the scattered Jews, James continues his practical teaching on authentic Christianity. In 3:18, James declares that peacemakers can raise a harvest of righteousness. But apparently there is a real issue of fighting among the believers. (See Acts 15:41 and Philippians 4:1-3)

So, as he turns his attention to the fighting and quarreling that comes from arrogant, proud people, James provides the solution: submit to God.

The Text:

James comments on Their Way of Life (4:1-4)

He asks three leading questions:

1. What causes fights and quarrels among you?

“Fights:” literally it means armed conflict

“Quarrels:” means a dispute

2. Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

“Desires:” From the Greek word “hedone”- “hedonistic.” Can be translated desires, lusts, passions, pleasures. It is the pursuit of pleasure, self-gratification

“I will choose what seems to offer me the greatest happiness.”

“Battle:” the act of serving in the army, doing military service

Reflection: In a “disagreement,” what personal desire am I trying to protect or gain?

3. Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

"You adulterous"- He is referring to believers as being married to the Lord. He is their husband and the church is His bride. And He is jealous God: "I am jealous for you with a Godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him." (II Cor. 11:2)

Also see Hosea 2:19-20 and Isa. 54:5

Flirting with spiritual adultery: Friendship with the world equals enmity with God.

Reflection: In what ways am I fostering a friendship with the world?

In the middle of this section, James draws a conclusion: You don't have what you want.... because:

1. You don't ask of God
2. You ask Him, but you ask with the wrong motive (you ask badly). It is your intention to "spend freely" on your own pleasures.

Reflection: What does my normal prayer life look like? Is God my cosmic vending machine?

God intervenes on their behalf (4:5-6)

God is jealous over His people (Ex. 20:5 and Zech. 1:14)- He opposes the proud.

"The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."
Rom. 8:7

He gives grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34)

Humility: It is not thinking less of myself, but thinking of myself less. We can make an accurate assessment of gifts or talents. We just need to remember where they came from and use them to honor Him not honor self.

Reflection: Would others consider me humble?

James then gives us 10 specific commands in order to help us with our humility (4:7-10)

1. Submit yourself (vs. 7)

Submitting to the Lord: this is the act of accepting the will and authority of Christ in our daily life. He is in charge! Consider Job 22:21 and Ps. 143:10.

Mutual Submission: (see Eph. 5:21-33 and I Peter 3:1-6)

Marital submission does NOT mean you agree on everything, nor does it mean that you leave your brain at the door. Submission does not mean living in fear or putting the will of your spouse before the will of the Lord. Each party must derive their spiritual strength through their own relationship with the Lord.

2. Resist the devil (vs. 7)

Satan has come as a thief. It is his job to steal, kill and destroy (see John 10:10). It is our job to resist him. In order to do so, we must be on the alert (see I Peter 5:8).

3. Come near to God (vs. 8)

We come with a "clear conscience" (Heb. 10:22)

(The tense here indicates a completed condition)

Our guilt is gone (See Rom. 8:1 and Ps. 103:10).

We come, not because we are perfect, but because that's where we belong.

"increase my faith" (Luke 17:5)

"help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)

4. Wash your hands you sinners (vs. 8)

See Heb. 10:22...this cleansing is also a condition that has already occurred.

But there is the need for a daily "clean up." See I John 1:9

5. Purify your hearts (vs. 8)

Purify, it means to have an unmixed product. It's the idea of "cleaning up your act." We do so by sitting still, dwelling on the Word of God, watching our words and monitoring our thoughts.

See Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

6. Grieve (vs. 9) 7. Mourn (vs. 9) 8. Wail (vs. 9) 9. Change your laughter to mourning (vs. 9)

All four of these instructions are focused on our reaction to sin. James is urging us to REPENT from worldly self-reliance and personal ambition. He is advocating for a season of serious reflection.

James does not want his readers to rationalize their sin, but to lament, even be miserable over the destructive nature of our selfish living.

10. Humble yourselves (vs. 10)

Matt. 11:29- notice the way Jesus describes himself.

So What?

James sums up this section with a penetrating question (vs. 12): “Who are you to judge your neighbor? Who are you to put yourself over anyone?”

God first, others next, we are to be last.

Sherry Worel
Sherryworel.com
sworel@stoneybrooke.com