

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Grace Travels Downhill James 4:7-10 Part Two

We are once again returning to the Book of James. Hopefully you will again remember James was primarily written to help professing believers know whether or not they in fact possessed saving or living faith. The epistle of James gives us a series of different tests to help us make that determination.

The first test we examined was the “Response to Trials test” in James 1:2-18.

The second test that we examined was the “Response to the Word test” in James 1:19-27.

the third test that we examined was the “Impartiality test” in James 2:1-13.

The fourth test that we examined was the “Works test” in James 2:14-26.

The fifth test that we examined was the “Speech test” in James 3:1-12.

The sixth test that we examined was the “Wisdom test” in James 3:13-18.

And the seventh test that we examined was the “Friendship with the World test” in James 4:1-6.

This weekend we are returning to our examination of **James 4:7-10**. Let us read these four verses, **(7) “Submit 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 miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”** What did we immediately notice when we began this examination several weeks ago? We noticed that **VV. 7-10** is connected to **VV. 1-6**. How do we know this? We know this because of the word **“therefore.”**

How are these two sections of Scripture connected? You hopefully will remember that James had a problem: certain of his readers, who were professing believers, appeared to be flirting with the world. Their lives were becoming characterized by turmoil with others, with themselves and with the Lord. But though this was happening it was not a hopeless situation. Why? Because of the wonderful truth that he shared at the beginning of **V. 6 “But He gives greater grace.”**

Does this mean that every professing believer who begins to become a friend of the world will be given greater grace? No! The greater grace is only available to those who humble themselves. Listen to the last part of **V. 6 “Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**

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Grace in a sense travels downhill very much like water. If we want to bask in the abundance of God's grace, then we must make sure that we have not exalted ourselves to such a high and lofty place that the Lord's grace cannot flow to us. If we want to fully enjoy the greater grace that the Lord wants to pour out upon us then we need to bow ourselves low before Him by submitting ourselves to Him. **VV. 7-10** is a "Call to Humility."

He introduces this call in **V. 7**, "**Submit therefore, to God.....**" James is calling his readers, who have begun to flirt with the world, to submit themselves. It is not enough for us to know that "**God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble,**" we must act on it.

When we humble ourselves before the Lord, we will not be unopposed. Look at the next phrase, "**Submit therefore, to God. Resist the devil...**" The word "devil" (DIABOLO) means "slanderer." The other primary name given to the devil in the NT is "Satan" which means "adversary, opponent, or enemy." Those who humble themselves before the Lord will be attacked. But if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Look again at the verse, "**Submit therefore, to God, Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**" How do we resist the devil?" Practically speaking, we resist the devil when we prayerfully, in the power of the Spirit, hold forth the Word of God as our shield and as our sword.

James 4:7 is the introduction of the call to humility. Now we need to go to **James 4:8-9**, which is the outworking of that call.

My hope for these messages is that none of us will leave here this weekend just giving lip service to the truth that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, but that we might be living out this truth in our lives and experiencing the blessedness of this personally.

The Outworking of The Call to Humility

The outworking of the call to humility first of all involves a turning to God (James 4:8).

Listen to the first part of **James 4:8**, "**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**" You might ask, "How do we do this?" We do this by "**submitting ourselves therefore to God.**" The command to "**draw near to God**" is just another way of saying, "**Submit therefore to God.**" If we draw near to the Lord, we will in fact be submitting to Him. If we submit to Him, we are in fact drawing near to Him. Why would James repeat the command that he gave us in **V. 7** with a similar command in **V. 8**? I believe James does this in order to emphasize to us that submitting ourselves to God does not only result in the Lord's rule being established in our lives but it also results in a close relationship.

When we submit ourselves to God, it is like the prodigal son's decision in **Luke 15** to return home. Most of you know the story but let me read it for you one more time. "**And He (Jesus) said , 'A certain man had two sons; (12) and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. (13) 'And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into**

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a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.(14) “Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. (15) And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (16) And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. (17) But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! (18) I will get up and go to my father’ When a true believer begins to flirt with the world, pursuing what he thinks will bring him pleasure, he will, like the prodigal son, only end up hungry. He is hungry because he is out of fellowship with God, and when he comes to his senses a true believer will submit themselves and will once again want to return and draw near to God and be satisfied.

The redeemed heart longs for communion with God. Ps. 27:7-8 “Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me. (8) When Thou didst say, “Seek My face,” my heart said to Thee “Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek.” Listen to the words of Ps. 63:1-2 “O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. (2) Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory. Listen to the words of Ps. 84:1-4, “How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! (2) My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. (3) The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, Even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God. (5) How blessed are those who dwell in Thy house! They are ever praising thee.” A true believer cannot persist in flirting with the thinking, attitudes, and actions of the world. His hunger will become so acute, he will invariably be compelled to once again return home to the Lord and to draw near to Him.

But let me ask you this question: If we draw near to the Lord will He draw near to us? And the answer is of course yes! Look again at **V. 8, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”** If we submit ourselves, if we draw near to God, will He draw near to us? Of course He will. In fact, the Lord’s attitude toward us, His disposition toward us, is always totally receptive, if we will simply draw near to Him. How do we know this will be so? He has promised us. What does the verse say? **“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”**

This truth is graphically portrayed in the story of the prodigal son. Let us look again at **Luke 15.** Hopefully you remember that the prodigal son had decided, after he had become hungry, to return to his father’s house. Now let us pick up the story once more and see how the father responds to the return of his son. Let us look at **Luke 15:20 “And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.”** Let me ask you, “As the prodigal son drew near to his father did the father draw near to his son? And the answer is, yes And the same thing will be true of anyone in this room this weekend. If we will submit ourselves to God, if we will draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. In fact, in a real sense, He will run to us. He will embrace us. He will kiss us. This is how eagerly we will be received.

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Are you like the prodigal son? Have you begun to flirt with the world? Have you begun to miss the blessings that were yours when you were enjoying fellowship with your heavenly father? Then I would beg you to respond to this command, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”**

But I don’t want you to think that you can draw near to God without dealing decisively with your sin. This leads us to the very next point; the outworking of the call to humility not only involves a turning to God but also a turning from sin.

The outworking of the call to humility involves a turning from sin (VV. 8-9).

Look again at **V.8** and let us read through **V. (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 miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.”** These verses I believe very powerfully communicate to us that if we truly are going to be able to draw near to God so that He might draw near to us, we must have a proper attitude toward our sin.

Some professing Christians who have begun to flirt with the world and who have begun to become hungry for fellowship with God and the blessings of that fellowship will fool themselves into thinking that they can waltz into the presence of God without dealing decisively with their sin and this just is not true.

Some professing believers think when they are trying to get back to God and draw near to him that all that they have to do is to try and get back to church. This is a good thing but it is not enough. Some people think that when they are trying to get back to God and draw near to him that all that they have to do is read their Bible or to make a greater effort to pray. Certainly this is a good thing but it is not enough. If going to church is not enough, if reading and praying is not enough then what is enough? We need a total house cleaning from top to bottom, inside and out. If we are going to draw near to God we need to deal decisively with sin. (V. 9)

“Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James at this point in the passage is getting very aggressive, because up to now he has been courteously referring to his readers as “brethren” as we saw in **James 1**. But now he insultingly calls them “sinners” and “double-minded.” “Double-minded” literally means “two-souled” and describes them as having a double allegiance to God and to the world. This is a spiritual impossibility. If we are going to draw near to God, we need to make sure we have only one master. What does it matter if we are willing to come to church if we are not willing to turn over every area of our life to the Lord’s control? What good is it if we are willing to come to church but we know we are harboring anger, guilt, shame, lust, envy, pride, fear or greed?

Prov. 28:13 tells us **“He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”** Have we dealt decisively with our sins? There is no way that we can draw near to God until we are willing to do this. And we will most likely not be willing to do this until we are truly broken over our sinfulness.

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James recognizes this, therefore, after saying, **“Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded”** he says in V. 9 **“Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.”** While gloom is not a Christian characteristic, being miserable about our sin is. Are you miserable when you sin?

“Be miserable” (TALAIPORESATE) could be understood “Be devastated.” There are many in the world who experience a form of sorrow when they sin but it does not compare to the sorrow that a Christian experiences when they sin. It does not devastate them in the way that Christians are devastated. Christians who are sinning and who come under conviction are devastated because they understand that their sin is preventing them from enjoying fellowship with God and the blessings of that fellowship (2 Cor. 2:8-11). Therefore when Christians come to recognize that their fellowship with God and the blessings of that fellowship are no longer being enjoyed, they are prepared to do some serious housecleaning.

Listen to 2 Cor. 7:8-11, **“For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it - for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while, (9) I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. (10) For the sorrow that is according to the Word of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (11) For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!”** The sorrow that the Corinthian Church had experienced because of their lack of concern for a sinning brother devastated them. They knew based on God’s Word, that they had done wrong and they had come under conviction. And they attacked their sin.

Are you a professing believer who has begun to flirt with the world? Are you a prodigal son who has begun to realize that you have been tolerating sin and that you are no longer enjoying fellowship with God or the blessings of that fellowship? If you are, then let us look at V. 10.

The Summation of The Call To Humility

“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” During Christ’s earthly life he repeated this truth three different times. In Matt. 23:12 Jesus said, **“And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”** In Luke 14:11 **“For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”** Then we see it again in Luke 18:14, **“For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”**

God evidently wants His people to get the point. I hope we do, because this law will never be broken, ever! When the stars turn to ashes, it will still be intact. Everyone who has ever lived, or ever will live, including every angel and spirit, will be subject to the truth contained in James 4:10.

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We are not to wait passively for this to happen. We are not to wait for someone else to humble us, nor should we wait for the trials and troubles of this life to do it. Rather, we must take inventory of our sinfulness and weakness, and then bow in total submission to God, yielding our total being, our dreams, our future, our everything to Him. It is then that He will pour on the grace - grace upon grace - grace heaped upon grace. He will lift us up.

The summation of the call to humility (V. 10).

CONCLUSION

God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Hopefully every one of us here this morning would agree with this statement. But knowing this is not enough; we must act on it. This is why James goes on in **James 4:7** to say, “**Submit therefore to God.**” Please, for the Lord’s sake, for your family’s sake, for your sake act on this command this morning and plunge into the sea of God’s grace.

Know that this will not be without opposition. The devil, the god of this world, will in fact pursue you. But resist him firm in your faith and he will flee from you. Hold forth God’s Word as your shield and as your sword and you will enjoy the victory and all the blessings of that victory.