

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 1ST, 2023 // BOOK OF JAMES

## GOD RESISTS THE PROUD (JAMES 4:1-6) A PROPER VIEW OF THE CHURCH

We cannot over-romanticize the first-century Christians. The early Church was not perfect, and neither is the modern Church.

- There was plenty of worldliness and carnality that had to be dealt with in the early Church, just like we have today. **Despite "her" imperfections, Jesus gave his life for the Church** (Ephesians 5:27-29).

## ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF THE CHURCH

James points out that the source of the evil around us comes from the evil within us. We start **"wars and fights"** with those around us because of the battle within us. The battle between the desires of the flesh and the Spirit that is within all of us.

- **Though we have these evil desires, God's grace can free us from their dominion.**

## "YOU DESIRE AND DO NOT HAVE"

The word James uses to describe these "desires" is where we get the English word Hedonism, which is the belief that the main purpose of living is to satisfy self.

- **Our pursuit to satisfy the flesh is futile. This pursuit always leaves us unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and perpetually seeking an elusive satisfaction.**

## SEEKING IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

When James says, **"you do not have because you do not ask,"** he is not claiming God is a genie in a bottle who is there to grant our wishes.

- Instead, James reveals that **we have sought to satisfy our desires and needs in all the wrong places and sought to obtain them by the wrong means.**

## SEEKING WITH THE WRONG MOTIVES

Further, James says, **"when you do ask, you ask with the wrong motives."**

- God, who knows the heart of man, knows our motives and drives us. Instead of allowing God's will to govern our lives, **He sees the motive behind our requests and knows if they are governed by pleasure, selfishness, or greed.**

## "ADULTEROUS PEOPLE!"

God loves us with such a deep passion that He cannot bear to witness us give our love and devotion to anyone or anything else.

- God is jealous *for* you, not *of* you (Exodus 34:14). It's a faithful spouse being betrayed by an unfaithful spouse, and **the Spirit of God feels betrayed when our hearts are full of love for the world.**

## AN IMPOSSIBILITY

**"Friendship with the world"** is a deliberate choice to pursue a world system in opposition to God, which is direct defiance and rebellion against God.

- We cannot be in fellowship with the world and in fellowship with God at the same time. **"No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other"** (Matthew 6:24).

## "BUT HE GIVES GREATER GRACE"

Greater than the sin that has bound us, our resistance to God's will, and our pursuit of worldly desires, is God's grace!

- At the same time, James reminds us that grace only comes to the humble. **Our humility is not what earns God's grace but positions us to receive the gift of God's grace.**

## HUMBLE YOURSELVES (JAMES 4:7-12)

### AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

In response to the grace offered to us, there is one thing to do: **submit to God!**

- We realize His greatness and worthiness and bring our will under His control. **"Surrender to Him as a conquering King and start receiving the benefits of His reign."** –David Guzik

## AN "IF, THEN" PROMISE

As we submit to God and resist the devil, a promise is offered: **the devil will flee from us.** We resist the devil when we refuse to give in to the impulse of sin. With faith and spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-18), we stand against his lies and deception.

- **Deal with Satan as a defeated foe who can and must be resisted, and he will flee when he has no foothold** (Matthew 4:1-11).

## ANOTHER "IF, THEN" PROMISE

If we draw close to God through worship, praise, and prayer, seeking counsel and communion, **God will draw close to us.**

- It is not enough for the Believer to submit to God's authority over our lives, prepare to stand our ground against the enemy, then fail to draw close to God. **He will draw near to us when we draw near to Him.**

## THOSE WHO LOWER THEMSELVES ARE LIFTED UP

As we draw near, we will be convicted about our sin, which moves us to **"misery, mourning, and weeping,"** compelling us to find cleansing at the cross.

- When we come to God as repentant sinners, not self-righteous zealots (Luke 18:10-14), **and humble ourselves, He lifts us up.**

## OUR SPEECH TO AND ABOUT OTHERS

When we humble ourselves and "get right" with God, this should be displayed by our ability to "get right" with those around us. With humility, we should be unable to defame another Believer with slanderous, critical, or hypocritical speech.

- **We are called to keep the law of love, "to love our neighbor as ourselves"** (Leviticus 19:18), **and not sit in judgment of it.**

## LIKE A VAPOR (JAMES 4:13-17)

### PROTECTIVE CARE OF GOD

James is not rebuking us for making plans. Luke 14:28 tells us we must "calculate the cost" of our plans.

**James is speaking out against the person who makes plans, disregarding God's providence.**

- **This is planning as if God doesn't exist or making plans and expecting God to get in line with them.**

## THIS LIFE IS BUT A VAPOR

In all our planning and strategizing, we ignore not only the providence of God but the frailty of human life. **We are like a vapor, here for a little while, then we vanish.**

- Just like the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21, who made great plans for the future and his soul was required of him, **we too have a finite amount of time.**

## GET BUSY WITH THE FATHER'S BUSINESS

The realization that we have limited time should not strike fear or inactivity in us.

- We should fervently seek God and His will, then depend on Him to accomplish the work He has called us to. We cannot commit sins of omission, knowing what is right and failing to do it, because **He will hold us accountable not just to know what is right but to do what is right.**

## MAKE YOUR REQUEST KNOWN

- The purpose of prayer is not to persuade God to conform to our will but to align our will with His.
- We are to pray God's will (Luke 22:42).
- We are to pray with proper motives (James 4:3).
- We are to pray with humility (2 Chronicles 7:14).

## RECIPIENTS OF GREAT GRACE!

- Pride keeps us from seeing the necessity of God's grace, whereas humility positions us to receive God's grace.
- James, in verse 8, calls us to **"cleanse our hands and purify our hearts,"** but many of us have not removed our hands from the filth they hold to cleanse them. **Have we opened our hearts to purification?**

## COMPETING FOR PRECEDENCE?

- God will not compete or coexist with other "gods" in our hearts (1 Samuel 5).
- Being "friends with the world" doesn't always reveal itself in hatred for God; most often, it is revealed by us planning life's daily activities with a disregard for God.
- We must plan our lives in alignment with the good and perfect will of God.