

James 4:7-10
Drawing Near to God - 3

1

Introduction

These four verses contain several commands. James's purpose is for Christians to test their faith to find out whether it is genuine or false. He wants no one to be deceived. For those who discover that they belong to the world, there is the offer of salvation.

There is also the charge for believers to put away any remaining vestiges of their former worldly living that continue to tarnish their spiritual lives.

2

Introduction

We have already studied:

- Not to be a friend of the world
 - Submit to God
 - Resist the Devil
 - Draw near to God
- Cleanse your hands (exterior)
- Purify your hearts (interior)

3

James 4:7-10

Therefore submit 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 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

4

Lament

James 4:9a

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

The next three commands are a series of single verbs. The first is “Lament”. It carries the idea of being broken and feeling lost because of one’s circumstances. It is understanding one’s sin separates them from God. It is exactly the feeling expressed by the tax collector who “was unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ” (Luke 18:13).

5

Lament

James 4:9a

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are.”

The misery James is speaking of here has nothing to do with being sad about bad circumstances in life and wanting God to help you have better ones. Nor does it relate to self-denial and sacrifice.

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Lament

James 4:9a

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

This misery has to do with the brokenness over one's sin and violation of God's holy law and the fear of judgment. Paul wrote in Colossians, "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col. 2:23).

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Sorrow

James 4:9b

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

Along with lamenting, the sinner is "to mourn" over his sin. The idea is "deep grief and remorse", a complete despair that laments over sin the way someone mourns the death of a family member or close friend. It is one of the requirements prescribed by Jesus in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). Along with misery and weeping, it defines the emotion of repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9–11).

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Sorrow

James 4:9b

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

True repentance demands that we confront our sins and the fruits of those sins. It is to see the seriousness of our sin and what we truly deserve. We must align ourselves with God and His pronouncement upon our sin. A true repentant heart will be ashamed of his actions and sorrow at his rebellion against God.

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Tears

James 4:9c

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

To weep is the outward manifestation of the lamenting and sorrow. That is what the prophet Isaiah called on unfaithful Israel to do, reminding them, “And in that day the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, for baldness and for girding with sackcloth” (Isa. 22:12). It is what Peter did after realizing that, just as his Lord predicted, he had denied Him (Mark 14:72). It is the weeping produced by godly sorrow that is according to the will of God and produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10).

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Seriousness

James 4:9d

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

James is not condemning legitimate laughter or joy but rather the temporal joy that comes from sin. People sin because it is enjoyable. It brings pleasure and release until the consequences set in. It corresponds to Jesus' warning: "Woe unto you that laugh now! for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25).

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Seriousness

James 4:9d

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

Confessing the sins of his people, Jeremiah lamented, "The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!" (Lam. 5:15-16). James is calling unbelievers to lament and grieve over "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16) that had characterized their former lives and marked them as enemies of God (James 4:4).

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Humility

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Humility is the starting point in salvation. It is the point where we recognize our state in life and our inability to save ourselves. We have already seen that God is opposed to the proud but gives His grace to the humble (James 4:6).

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Humility

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

The command to “humble yourselves” literally means “to make low”. It is the realization of one’s complete unworthiness and lostness because of sin. The more an unbeliever sees God as He really is, glorious and holy, the more clearly, he sees himself as he really is, sinful and depraved.

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Humility

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Peter was overwhelmed and terrified when He saw Jesus miraculously fill their nets with fish, crying out, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8). Later the disciples became even more fearful of Jesus for stilling the storm than they had been of the storm itself, “saying to one another, ‘What manner of man is this! for he commands even the winds and water, and they obey him?’ ” (Luke 8:25).

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Humility

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

God has promised to honor those who are spiritually humble. Jesus made clear that “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12).

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Humility

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

The prodigal is the perfect example of contrite humility. When he came to his senses in the far country, he said to himself, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants’” (Luke 15:18-19). When he returned home and expressed that sincere contrition, “the father said to his servants, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:22–24).

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So What ...

That is a picture of the way in which God gives His “grace” (James 4:6) to those who come into the presence of the Lord in repentance and humility. He will exalt them lavishly.

What about you? Are you still in bondage to your sin? Do you desire forgiveness and restoration with God? If you turn to Him and ask Him to forgive you based on the work of Christ on the cross, He will forgive. If you would like to accept Jesus as your savior, then leave a comment on our Facebook page and I would be glad to talk to you about these things in greater depth.

If you know Jesus but are still struggling with your sin, you need to see your sin from God’s perspective. You need to see it as it is and repent. If you humble yourself before Him, He will lift you up!

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