

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

1

## Introduction

These four verses contain ten commands. Together they form one of the clearest calls to salvation in all of Scripture. James's purpose throughout the epistle is for professed 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 wonderful 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

## James 4:7-10

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, *you* sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

3

## Submission

James 4:7a

Therefore submit to God.

The word “submit” is a military term meaning literally “to rank under.”

No one can be saved without submitting himself to God, coming willingly under His sovereign authority as Lord, to follow His will no matter what.

Submitting to God is obeying His Word about Christ and the fullness of the “gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1), as well as submitting to Jesus as Lord and God (Rom. 10:9–10).

One cannot trust in Jesus as God and Savior and at the same time reject Him as Lord. Where the believer was once under the lordship of Satan, through saving faith he eagerly places himself under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Where he was once the enemy of God and the slave of sin, he is now the loyal subject of his Lord and Master.

4

## Resist

James 4:7b

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

To submit to God, your new Lord, is to resist the devil, your old lord. “Resist” means “to stand against”, “to oppose.” There is no middle ground, no neutrality. Remember that friendship with the world [Satan’s domain] is hostility toward God. To stand with the Lord is to stand against everything sinful and worldly that formerly was appealing, corrupting, and enslaving (Eph. 2:1–3; Heb. 2:14–15).

“Devil” means slanderer, or accuser. It is one of the most common titles of Satan in Scripture. Anyone who does not belong to Christ is a child of the devil (John 8:44). The one who belongs to Christ is a child of God. Salvation brings a change of masters, a change of allegiance, and a change of family. The believer’s life is turned from serving the devil to serving God, and from being a slave of sin and of Satan to being a slave of righteousness and of God (Rom. 6:16–22).

5

## Resist

James 4:7b

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Just as the devil left Jesus after the temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11), he will also flee from all those who resist him. Here is a promise that the devil can be defeated, as powerful as he is. Even those held in his power (1 John 5:19) can be triumphant. The Devil was defeated at the cross and cannot hold a sinner against that sinner’s will. He can only lead a believer into sin with that believer’s consent. When confronted and resisted with the truth of the gospel, he flees, releasing his hold as that repentant sinner. After salvation, he comes again and again through the world system’s working on the flesh but can be defeated repeatedly by the believer who has the “sword of the Spirit” and the rest of the armor (Eph. 6:10–17).

6

## Fellowship

James 4:8a

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Salvation involves submitting to God as Lord and Savior but also brings the desire for a true relationship with Him. Seeking salvation is seeking God (cf. Ps. 42:1; Matt. 7:7–11).

One of the primary functions of Old Testament priests was to “come near to the Lord [and] consecrate themselves” (Ex. 19:22; cf. Lev. 10:3; Ezek. 43:9; 44:13). Jesus states, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3), and later affirmed and defined those who believe in Him, praying that they “may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (v. 21).

7

## Cleansing

James 4:8b

Cleanse your hands, *you* sinners.

The command to “cleanse your hands” means to submit to God’s commands for holiness. Though every believer needs to surrender himself to obedience to God, this command is specifically addressed to “sinners”. The word used here is always used of unbelievers throughout the New Testament.

There are those who come to church and are deceived into believing that they belong to God. Yet upon examination, their trust is not in Christ, but in the wisdom of this world. The offer is unconditional. The unsaved must come to Christ and be made clean (1 John 1:9).

8

## Purification

James 4:8c

Cleanse your hands, *you* sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

In Hebrew parallelism, “purify your hearts” corresponds to “cleanse your hands” and “you double-minded” corresponds to “you sinners”. James associates the outward sins of the hands with the inner sins of the heart. (Ps. 24:3–4; 51:10).

The unbeliever not only is to turn from outward sin but, even more important, from the inner sin of the heart from which all outward sin springs (Matt. 15:19).

The call throughout Scripture is for mankind to come and be purified (Jer. 4:14; Ezek. 18:31, 36:25–27).

A “double-minded” person is one who lacks integrity, who claims one thing and lives another. This is the hypocrite in the assembly of believers who is commonly confronted in James. Isaiah was calling on the double-minded sinner to purify his heart when he implored: “Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.” (Isa. 55:6–7).

9

## Lament

James 4:9a

Lament and mourn and weep!

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

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.”

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## Sorrow

James 4:9b

Lament and mourn and weep!

Along with becoming miserable, the sinner is “to mourn” over his sin. The idea is that of “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).

True repentance demands that we confront our sins and the fruits of those sins. It is hell we 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!

To “weep” is the outward manifestation of the previously mentioned misery and sorrow. 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

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

James gives this command in a Hebraic couplet.

James is not condemning legitimate laughter or joy but rather the flippant, trivial, worldly, self-centered, sensual kinds that unbelievers revel in, despite, and often because of, their sinful pleasures.

Sin can keep a person amused. This means “not thinking.” Satan wants us to look at the worldly pleasures, but God wants a person to step back and evaluate their life. It is when a person takes a serious evaluation that they realize that this world cannot satisfy their real needs.

13

## 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).

The command to “humble yourselves” literally means “to make low”. It is the genuine 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.

However, when a person humbles themselves and comes to Christ, God will exalt them.

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## So What ...

It is important that each person steps back and evaluates their life.

What does your life reveal about your heart? What are you living for  
– the things of God or the things of this world.

What are you trusting in? When the going gets hard, who or what do  
you turn to?

How do you view your sin? Do you see it like a cancer eating away at  
your life and relationships? Do you hate and sorrow over your sin? Do  
you see it as rebellion against God?

The Good News is that God wants to give you freedom, purpose, and a  
relationship with Himself. Draw near to God and He will draw near to  
you!