

Sunday, April 5, 2026 pm

STUIDES IN JAMES (14)

Submitting to God

James 4:1-12 (2)

Tonight we continue our study through the book of James. This is a very practical book with many practical applications. In our last lesson we addressed, “Wars among you”. We noted that war is an ugly thing, whether physical or spiritual. Likely, James had concerns about spiritual wars among those he was writing to. These “wars” could have been waged on 3 different fronts – against God, one another and ourselves. Clearly these brethren we not treating each other as God desires. And that conduct stemmed from the war within – pursuing their own selfish and worldly desires. We noted in that lesson that when you engage in these wars, you are also warring against God, and you will NOT win! God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (vs. 6).

Beginning in vs. 7-12, James outlines the answer to achieving peace – i.e., ending the wars. We will notice 8 things he mentions in our text.

I. **Submit to God – it begins with surrender.**

- a. Making yourself right, regardless of who the war is against, it begins with surrendering to God. Surrendering to God means you are going to put Him first – Matthew 6:33 and obey His will -
- b. Matthew 6:10 – when Jesus taught us how to pray, after praising Him, He said to pray, “*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”
- c. Hebrews 12:9 – even as He chastens us, know that it is for our good. We must be in subjection to the Father and live.
- d. Romans 12:1 reminds us that we are called to present ourselves as a living sacrifice.
- e. Romans 10:3 – there were Jewish brethren who had rejected the Gospel. They were zealous for God but they did NOT submit to His righteousness.
- f. Paul did! Acts 9:6 – “*Lord. What do you want me to do?*”
- g. Matthew 26:39 – Jesus submitted to Him.
- h. Remember this – you WILL submit to Him – Romans 14:10-12 – you will bow. The only question is when!

II. **Resist the devil – he will flee from you**

- a. It also involves standing up to the enemy. This is part of submitting to God. Not only must you resolve that you are going to obey God in all things, that will also involve quitting things that stand in our way of growth. You must cast of the weights and sins that ensnare (Hebrews 12:1). You must not let the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches stunt your faith (Matthew 13:22).
- b. Matthew 6:24 – we cannot serve 2 masters. The ways of the devil and the ways of God are in total contrast against each other.
- c. We must resist the devil. James has talked about temptation – James 1:12-16. We need to be aware of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Ephesians 4:27 – do not give place to him, etc.). Ephesians 6:10-18 calls for us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against him. 1 Peter 5:8-9 Peter said, *Resist him steadfast in the faith...*
- d. *He will flee from you* – James gives us this promise. Satan is NOT all powerful. He CAN be resisted. Jesus gave us that example when He was tempted – Hebrews 4:15. When you are struggling with temptations there are steps you can take to overcome the struggles. If you get up and go elsewhere, do something constructive and WAIT! Usually, the temptation goes away, at least for awhile. Matthew 4:11 notes that the devil left Jesus (Luke 4:13 – he departed from Him until an opportune time).
- e. And the MORE you resist the easier it will become next time.

III. Draw near to God

- a. This is a frequent admonition throughout scripture. In 1 Chronicles 28:8-9, as David is instructing Solomon about building the temple he says, *Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever. "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.*
- b. In 2 Chronicles. 15 2-4, we find Asa, one of the righteous kings of Judah. As he begins his reign, the prophet Azariah is sent to him: *And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.*
- c. To draw near to God means to seek to be like Him. Study Him and imitate Him in the qualities you emulate. Ephesians 5:1 says, *Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children.*
- d. **And He will draw near to you.** This is the obvious promise and our goal. And it is a natural result of drawing near to God. The CLOSER you are to Him, the closer He will be to you!
- e. **NOTE:** The closer you are to God, the more difficult it will be for the devil to do anything to you.

IV. Cleanse your hands you sinners –

- a. This is actually a subpoint of drawing near to God. It is a reference to you doing your part! You need to take action to draw near to God.
- b. Often the idea of “clean hands” was efforts to make yourself pure. Recall that before the priests could enter the tabernacle or offer sacrifices they had to wash. Exodus 30:17-21 finds the instructions to Moses for the bronze laver that would stand before the entrance to the tabernacle. It was filled with water *for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.”*
- c. Psalm 24:3-4 *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.* David understood this was necessary to be in God’s presence.
- d. It is no secret that this comes first before purifying your heart. Simply stated, before you even begin to purify your heart, you have to get rid of the pollutants. STOP SINNING! Remove any obstacle that stands in your way. Etc. Cf. Ephesians 4:20-32, Colossians 3:1-17 – in these texts Paul describes the old man that we put off and replace him with the new man. He describes the ways of the old man FIRST and then they ways of the new man that replaces him.

V. Purify your hearts you double minded

- a. This too is a subpoint of drawing near to God. And as we just noted, once we have “cleared out the house”, we need to work on the heart. The heart here is who we are within.
- b. As Jesus noted, our actions reveal our heart – Matthew 12:33-37, 15:17-20 – it is what comes out of the heart that defiles a man (it reveals who you really are).
- c. Matthew 5:8 – it is the one who has a pure heart that will see God.
- d. NOTE: When you obey the gospel, you are cleansed of your sins, but that is only the beginning of the work! The heart is not purified UNTIL the filth that corrupts it STAYS away.

- e. David in Psalm 51:10, one of his psalms of repentance prayed, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- f. “you doubleminded” – this describes what we have just mentioned. One whose life is NOT consistent. James 3:11-12 described the tongue that blesses God and curses man. Jesus in Matthew 23:25-27 described the corrupt Pharisees as cleansing the outside of the cup and tombs, but inwardly they were corrupted. You will NEVER purify your heart if you keep trying to hold on to sin!

VI. Lament, mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

- a. This is descriptive of genuine repentance. This is a quality necessary to make the changes God demands. Repentance by definition is a change of one’s mind that leads to genuine change in one’s life.
- b. Luke 13:3 & 5, Jesus noted, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”
- c. What made David acceptable after his sins? He was genuinely remorseful – Psalms 6, 32 & 51 are all penitential. Psalm 6:6 as David pleads with YHWH for mercy and healing he notes, *I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.*
- d. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 finds the genuine repentance of the Corinthian brethren. It was because of their penitent hearts that they took extreme measures to make right their wrongs. Thus Paul would conclude, *“In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”*
- e. We should NEVER rejoice at sin – whether in our lives or that of others; whether in action or in attitude or in word. And when we are guilty, repentance is foundational.
- f. NOTE how repentance precedes baptism in becoming Christians (Acts 2:38, 3:19, Luke 24:47). It also precedes our prayers for forgiveness AS Christians (Acts 8:22 – pray means to implore, beg; 1 John 1:9).

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

- a. Here we find the attitude that we need to be able to draw closer to God.
- b. To be humble is to be brought low. It means that you set aside your pride – James 4:6 – *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* Also 1 Peter 5:5 (cf. Proverbs 3:34). Humility is about realizing your standing in God’s presence. It is also about emptying yourself of your pride before others AND even how you view yourself (cf. Romans 12:3).
- c. Matthew 5:3, the very first “beatitude” was, *“blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* This is the one who has a broken spirit. Psalm 51:17, *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.*
- d. Matthew 5:4, the second “beatitude”, *Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*
- e. Our text reminds us that *we humble ourselves in the eyes of the Lord* – we KNOW that He is watching us!
- f. ***And He will lift you up*** – Also 1 Peter 5:6, *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.* The image is of one who bows before a king begging mercy (e.g., Matthew 18:24-27 – the servant that owed 10,000 talents (e.g., millions of dollars) falls before his master and begs for time). The point here – do NOT lift up yourself (that is prideful), but rather let Him lift you up in His time!

VIII. Treat your brother with kindness

- a. Vs. 11-12 bring us back to the “wars” at the beginning of this text. We must treat each other properly! We need each other!
- b. Do not speak evil of one another – bless and do not curse. Recall the warnings previously about the tongue (James 3:1-12). Ephesians 4:31-32 – we put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking, etc.
- c. Do not be judges with evil thoughts (James 2:4). Let God be the judge and Lawgiver. Consider Matthew 7:1-4 in this text.

- d. WHEN we apply the principles we have discussed in this text, it will lead to the peace that we are striving to pursue among ourselves – Romans 14:19.

What James has taught in this text is at the crux of this entire letter. This is the solution to all the problems he has addressed, will address and many others. As Christians, our goal is that God will draw near to us. That is only going to happen if we draw near to Him. Then the spiritual wars, with God, one another and within ourselves will cease. How near is He to you? Think about it!