

James 4:8 “Drawing Near”

For the Children: Sometimes friends stop being friends for a while. Perhaps they get angry with each other over some insult. Perhaps they have forgotten to keep up contact with each other – haven’t spoken for a while, or spent time with each other. Perhaps they have found other interests or other friends. The friendship can be fixed, if both work at it – for example, if they start talking and seeing each other again, and ask forgiveness for any insults or bad behaviour. It is a bit like that with the Lord. If we stop reading what He has written to us, stop talking to Him in prayer, or keep on insulting Him by disobeying His Word, we will not be so close to Him. To get close again, we need His help to listen to His Word, worship Him, pray to Him and obey Him. We need to repent of our sins, asking His forgiveness.

Questions: What kind of things can make us less close to the Lord? What does the Lord do to help us get close again? What action does James tell us to take to get close again?

Introduction:

First Point: Draw Near to God

- **No Earned Nearness:** James does not mean that we first draw near to God, in that way earning His nearness and our salvation. The ground of our nearness to God is Christ. He first draws us to Him by His Word and Spirit.
- **Backsliders Coming Back:** James is talking about those who have drifted away from the Lord coming back to Him again. He addresses those of God’s people who have become worldly, double-minded, guilty of spiritual adultery (vss. 3,4,8). If such people want to again experience closeness to God, they must repent and draw near to Him again.
- **Other Reasons for Feeling Distant:** God’s people may also feel distant from Him if they fail to use the means of grace, mistrust the power of His grace to forgive our sins, or doubt that He really watches over us. We may also feel let down by the sacrament if we have wrong expectations of a mystical experience above what Word and Spirit normally provide.
- **Means to Draw Near:** James calls for decisive action to draw near to God when we drift from Him. We are to resist the devil (v. 7), humbly submit to the Lord (vss. 6,7,10); “draw near” by using the means of grace (v. 8); “clean up our act” (v. 8) and repent of our sins with godly sorrow (v. 9).

Second Point: He Will Draw Near to Us

- **Restoring Grace:** God restores us by grace, just as He saves us by grace – His drawing near when we repent is not earned by us. Christ is also the ground of this grace. Word and Spirit are the means of moving us and enabling us to draw near to God so that He draws near to us. This sanctifying work of the Spirit is referred to as “greater grace” – an addition to the grace of regeneration when we first believed (vs. 5-6). Even when we do act to draw near again, we need the Lord’s help at every point. We need to ask for that help to deliver us from evil.
- **An Encouragement to Repentance:** The Lord also says He will draw near to us when we draw near to Him, so that we will be encouraged to repent – for we are assured that the Lord will forgive us (1 Jn. 1:9). The Lord loves to see repentance in His people. It is a sign that we have humbled ourselves before Him. The Lord’s Supper also encourages repentance by assuring us that Christ has offered Himself as a sacrifice to cover our sins.

Conclusion: