

## Scripture Reading:

**James 3:14** “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

**14** But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. **15** This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. **16** For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. **17** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. **18** Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**4:1** “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

**4** Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? **6** But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." **7** 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.

# *The Confession of the Church*

**This morning we continue our journey through the Book of James even as we celebrate the start of the new church year with the 1st Sunday of Advent! We begin each church year with Advent to remind us of His promised coming of Messiah & the message from James this morning will rightly remind us of our need for Him to have come!**

- **It is a wonderful time of the year to learn the lesson James will teach us about being humble!**

**As you can see from the outlines, we have already covered four messages from James for a young church:**

- **James is showing us the practical implications of Jesus coming to save His people from their sins and serving as His Bride, the Church.**

**As we move into chapter four, we are going to learn the importance of confessing our sin: We will learn that just as James has been brutally honest in this letter to the Saints, we must be brutally honest when confessing sin before our Holy God**

- **We will consider what it means to be humble before God**
- **We will consider the Biblical examples of what it means for God to lift us up or to exalt us.**
- **This will help us understand why confession of sin is a vital part of worship every Sunday**
- **Must also be a model of how we approach God day by day to present ourselves for his service**

**It is a VITAL part of our faithful obedience: NOT something we can “muster up”... As Paul taught the Saints at Colossi: “as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in Him” As Paul declares in Romans one: “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: As it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’”**

After hearing verse ten, “humble yourself in the sight of the Lord...” I am sure that many of us have that famous praise song tune in our heads! What really struck me as I have studied the admonition that James gives to be humble before God is that it is certainly NOT what we often see in these praise songs and many Sunday school lessons... Bob Hudson, who added, “So I will humble myself in the sight of You, Lord” as a new verse is a good example when he says:

“I love the message of the familiar song “Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord.” Sometimes, however, we can sing a song so much that we sing on auto-pilot. I wanted to write something about humility before God, and this song is a prayer that we could be found right where the Lord would have us-in His will. When we think about His holiness and His mercy toward us, how can we help but be humbled as believers? This is when worship really happens, when we are humbled before Him.”

- Does this fit the Scriptural context?
- Technically it does, BUT the question comes with what we practice.
- Consider a Sunday school lesson that uses this song as part of the lesson

It begins with the assumption of Christian standard time!

[Review Sunday school examples of being boastful or proud]

How tough would it be to be humble in these examples?

- Is there a danger that we could be teaching them to be “proud” of their humility?
- Are we teaching them that being humbled is something that we “do”?

Please keep these questions in mind as we look at our text: I dropped back into chapter three to see the context, where we learned the importance of having God the Holy Spirit as our pilot:

3:17: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

- **Having the right pilot takes us to the right places!**
- **Now James appears to turn on the Saints as we move into chapter four...**

**4:1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”**

- **James draws this immediate contrast to remind us about being a broken people**

**He reminds them and US that we must be honest about our fallen state! Something James first mentioned in chapter one: “each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” [verse 14]**

- **This is where the WRONG wisdom will always take us!**

**We must not ask for what we want, but rather for what God wants!**

**Asking not for our pleasures but for the good works He desires us to do!**

- **“you ask...that you may spend it on your pleasures”**
- **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10**

**James continues his challenge:**

**4:5 “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?**

- **Is this the same James who calls these Saints “my beloved brethren”**
- **Has some new group appeared that are “adulterers and adulteresses?”**

**NO James is addressing the same Saints!**

**Here James is simply being very consistent with other Biblical examples of how serious our sin is:**

- **Jesus said that hating our brother = murder:**

**Matthew 5:21,22** “‘You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.”

- **Jesus said that lusting after a woman = adultery:**

**Matthew 5:27,28:** “‘You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”

- **Paul describes his covetous heart in Romans chapter seven as an example for us all AND as the entrance to the glories of chapter 8**

**Romans 7:7,8** “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.” [Use example of “do not throw rocks” sign being posted by a picture window]

Much of Romans 7 is devoted to Paul’s discussion of the remaining power of sin in our lives: James is here reminding the Saints that we must face this struggle head-on. James is brutally honest with these Saints and then reminds them of the importance of proper confession:

**Verses 5b-7:** “‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’”? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

- **God’s desire is that we seek the wisdom that is from above.**
- **AGAIN, even this desire is a gracious gift from God**
- **We cannot produce the faith, will or power to resist the devil in our own strength: We are fully dependent on God’s grace.**
- **This is why James tells the Saints that “God GIVES more grace!**

**Verses 8-9: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.”**

- **This is why our order of worship begins with the call to worship and immediately moves to confession**
- **What James presents IS the Biblical picture of confession**
- **We see examples throughout the Bible!**

**Isaiah coming before God’s throne: Isaiah 6:5: “So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."”**

**King David when Nathan confronted him with his sins:**

**Psalm 51:3-5 “I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”**

- **Lest someone say this is what happened under the Old Covenant, look at how John reacts to the Risen Christ in Revelation chapter one: “when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead!”**

**And Paul gives the example of his own life for Timothy... AND for us all:**

**1 Timothy 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

Finally, we come to verse 10 which is the famous praise song and was the focus of the Sunday school lesson: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

- It is somewhat ironic that in the Sunday school material that I quoted from that they used in part the passage from Luke’s Gospels that gives us the best picture of what James is driving at here:

18:9-14 “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- It is easy to see that we should NOT be proud and boastful like this Pharisee!
- However, the important lesson we must learn from James, and this parable of the publican, Proper humility is NOT simply the absence of pride or boastfulness.

Thinking back to the praise song and the Sunday school lesson, this can be the real danger: The focus is on NOT being a Pharisee

What they fail to teach how to properly be humble before God: [read the final paragraph]

- Where is the confession of sin?

Perhaps the best way to understand this is to think about how we would come before a King:

- We could bow before the King
- We could come boasting and drawing his attention.
- Just sitting is NOT an option.

**Finally, a bit of “context” that I found interesting: Consider what follows the parable of these two men praying in the Temple:**

**Luke 18:15-17 “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.””**

**Once again we find Jesus wanting us to ponder the example of little children to learn some of the great lessons of the faith: Consider this from Psalm 103: “As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”**

**We see in the proper Biblical correction and discipline of children how our relationship to God and ongoing confession is manifested. [explain concept of a Biblical correction] We discipline our children because they ARE members of our family: Being “bad” does not mean they lose their seat at the family table. – Same with all us at the Lord’s Table**

**Proper Biblical correction helps the child deal with the power of sin in their lives: It is NOT primarily about making the home run smoothly or proving that we are in charge [it is definitely not about venting our anger].**

- **As adults we should learn these lessons and properly confess our sins before our Holy God, then we can cry the “Abba Father” of Romans chapter eight.**

**As parents, we must see how important our responsibility to proper discipline children is to their spiritual growth. We can teach them all the right lessons, or all the wrong lessons.**

**I would encourage you to study the full context of Psalm 103:**

**As you do, think of how James calls us to confront our sin while picturing the face of that happy contented child who has properly heeded their parent’s correction:**

**With the season of Advent, we have much to celebrate as Jesus comes to save and exalt His people**



**But it is also a season that should reminds us to be a humble people:  
Knowing our need for the Savior just as we do each week in our Covenant  
Renewal Worship.**

**The Church calendar is important because it takes us through the same  
cycle each year, just as worship does each week like the sun that rises each  
day!**

➤ **Reminding us that we serve the faithful God of the Covenant!**

**One who as you will see in Psalm 103 “knows our frame; He remembers  
that we are dust.”**

➤ **We do not need to give up on that praise song we have discussed:**

➤ **We simply must remember the context of the verse that it quotes!**

**As we sing the familiar tune we should have verse nine come to mind as it  
calls us to lament and mourn and weep.” First we must “Let [our]  
laughter be turned to mourning and [our] joy to gloom!”**

**When we properly confess our sins and come before God with that kind of  
humility...**

**Then He will truly exalt us!**

## **Communion Meditation:**

*Judges 13:15* “Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." 16 And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord." (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the Lord.) 17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?" 18 And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?" 19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on-- 20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar--the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" 23 But his wife said to him, "If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time."”