

Thursday, February 1, 2024 • Read James 4:6–10

Questions from the Scripture text: What does the Spirit give (v6a)? How much of it? What does He say (v6b–c, cf. Pr 3:34)? What does God do to the proud? What does God do to the humble? What does v7 command us to do to God? What does it command us to do to the devil? And what will the devil then do? What does submitting to God mean doing (v8)? And what will God then do? In what two areas does this submitting especially take place? What, about us, makes us need to cleanse our hands? What, about us, makes us need to purify our hearts? What does this mean doing with respect to our prior joys (v9)? How does v10 summarize this section?

What is at stake in refusing to indulge ourselves? James 4:6–10 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **refusing to indulge ourselves is really to take our place before God and near to Him.**

How believers can humble themselves, v6. We just heard in v5 that the Spirit yearns jealously that we would reciprocate God's love. It is the Spirit Who pours out God's love in our hearts to begin with (cf. Rom 5:5). But when we live to indulge ourselves, as if we are our own chief end, we do the exact opposite of loving God (cf. v3–4).

So now the Spirit gives even more grace (v6a), which He does especially by the Scripture. He has given us Pr 3:34, and He blesses to us that Scripture, to show us our smallness so that we will humble ourselves before God. Indulging ourselves is actually a form of arrogance—placing what we desire over what the Lord directs. So, we need grace to be humble—to take our place as creatures who find our purpose and pleasure in our Creator! It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that enables humility.

How believers can resist the devil, v7–8. Just as in the garden, submitting to God (v7a) means resisting the devil (v7b). The first Adam failed to do this. He entertained the devil; and in his fall, all man fell. But the last Adam actively resisted the devil, and after three tries the devil fled (cf. Lk 4:13). Now, those who are in Jesus commit, like their Savior, to resisting temptation. Like their Savior, believers commit to submitting to God (cf. Lk 22:42) and finding Him and His will to be their pleasure (cf. Heb 12:2). As believers resist Satan to humble themselves to God, this Scripture assures them of a reprieve. It assures them that the devil will flee.

But why will the devil flee? Because submitting to God is drawing near to God. The devil cannot endure the presence of God! If we draw near to God by submission, and He draws near to us, the devil cannot abide with us. We do not resist the devil by stirring up some inner strength from ourselves. We resist him by submitting to God, drawing near to God, Whose strength sends the devil flying from us. And what a sweet way of warfare this is! Many believers desire to draw near to God, but they think it is merely some kindling of affection. Truly there must be affection for Him, but here, drawing near to Him is described in terms of submission and cleansing.

Just as the devil cannot abide in the presence of God, neither can our sin or any competing desire. These, too, cannot be tolerated if we are to enjoy the Lord and His presence. Our hands must be clean from sin. Our hearts and minds must be single-mindedly, purely, set upon the Lord Himself. Drawing near to God is not a pile of emotional mush; it is love for Him that is strong and diligent and courageous and resolved to cleanse our hands from every sin. It is love for Him that refuses any competing desire and brings all right desires into their proper place as an expression of our love, first, for Him.

How believers purse clean hands and pure hearts, v9–10. Drawing near to God is difficult because, in our remaining fleshliness, we enjoy sin or worldliness too much. So, v9 teaches us to declare war on that "joy" (v9). What we were apart from Him must be brought low, so that we might be brought before Him (v10a). And it is there that we will find ourselves raised up to inexpressible joy (v10b, cf. 1Pet 1:8). But as long as we are thinking that sin or worldliness are actually pleasure, we will be unable to come before the Lord and have a right view of the joy set before us. So, we need grace to lament and mourn over what had made us laugh and be merry. Can we be merry over that which distanced us from the Lord. No, rather, let us turn that laughter to mourning and that joy to gloom. Then, we will be able to have the true laughter and joy of being lifted up in the presence of God!

What earthly pleasures are you in danger of enjoying for their own sake, rather than as a part of your enjoying the Lord? What sins are you most tempted to hold onto? From Whom can you get the grace to lament and mourn over these things in their resistance to God? How can you draw near to God, instead, and transfer that resistance to the devil? What awaits you, when you do this?

Sample prayer: Lord, give us grace to humble ourselves before You. We confess that we have made ourselves Your enemies in our pride. We have left ourselves open to the devil by being ok with sin and thinking that we can live for ourselves, alongside living for You. Forgive us, and help us! Make us to count sinful and worldly "pleasure" as actually a great grief! Bring us low in submission, whereby we may draw near to You. And lift us up to that joy that we may have in You, through Christ, in Whose Name we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP73C "Yet Constantly, I Am with You" or TPH73C "In Sweet Communion, LORD, with Thee"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

James chapter 4 verses 6-10. These are God's words. 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.

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. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. And he will lift you up.

So far, the reading of odds. Inspired and inner and worked.

So, we've just been hearing. Verses four and five. Friendship with the world or is enmity with God. That is to say Desiring. Uh, the world or things in it. In a way that makes us come to God in prayer. Not submitted to him not valuing him. Uh, as God.

Uh, but rather valuing him as a way of obtaining, the other thing that pleases us, In, or from the world. With that, treating God, that way in prayer as enmity. But just as we hear in Romans 8, he has given us his Spirit. Uh, to help us to pray because we do not know how To pray for what we ought.

And also in Romans 5, That the spirit pours out in our hearts like a drink offering just gushes forth completely Uh, the love of God. Of course, which is never exhausted. And so this same He dwells in us and yearns jealously. So not only does the Holy Spirit, pour out into our hearts, the love of God, but as he dwells in our hearts, he stirs up our love back to God.

He is jealous for the love between us and God. And yet. We have this remaining sin. Uh, in which Uh, are are that sinfulness which remains From our former Nature, loves the world. Instead of God. And so we need the powerful working of the Holy spirit in us to help us have God as our chief pleasure.

And all other true Pleasures as subsidiary to participating in that pleasure, we have in God, That we would only Delight in those things that are for his sake. So, how can we do that? Well, we can do it not by our power, but by God's power. And so James continues.

Now, in the passage before us, he gives more grace He gives more Grace. So just as the Lord's told Paul in second Corinthians 12, My grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness. So also, you will experience in your life that this issue of trying to exchange Pleasures that you have enjoyed apart, from God, forgetfully of God and even Pleasures that you have enjoyed in opposition to God, drawing some kind of pleasure or joy from sin.

And fighting against that, to replace it with the lighting in God himself is one of the places where we feel our weakness, the most, where we feel most helpless, In fact, we live A culture that is obsessed with the idea. Of addiction. Uh, but it is not as if addiction has just begun.

Uh, all sins have addictive qualities. Yes, there are some things that are Um, more. Yeah. Lay hold of the body, more directly and so forth. We're not denying those things. Um, but exchanging fleshly pleasure. Weather pleasure for wrong things or pleasure for right, things apart, from God or in wrong proportions, exchanging, fleshly pleasure for Godly pleasure.

Is one of the places where we feel our weakness, the most, And one of the things that is most proud, then is to try to do it by ourselves, not by the grace of God. Uh, one form that that takes for many people. Is they have an addiction of which they are embarrassed and rather than availing themselves of the help that God has given them.

Uh, whether they're under Shepherds in the church, or if it's Or if it's a child. Uh, with the help of a parent or if it's spouse, the help of spouse. Uh, they cover it up, they're ashamed. Uh, and yet what they're saying, when they do that is I can do this in my own strength.

Or they attempt to do it. Only. Techniques that That psychologists have come up with, or using Medicines that Pharma Psychiatry has come up with. Uh, and they do not do it in dependence on the Lord himself using his means And when we say using his means, we mean, especially morning and evening worship of God, in his word, calling upon his name, singing his word reading his word.

And then especially the Lord's day and the Lord's Day assemblies. Uh, trying to just feel really nice about God is not necessarily using his means. Uh, and that which is emotionally driven will oftenly often departs from the means as God has given Them to us, and Turns aside to emotional sounding songs.

Also. Uh, although biblical friendship And fellowship is a good thing. It is not a replacement. The shepherding relationships that God has given us. So even the small group movement. Uh unless it is, you know, led by elders and are shepherding groups by Christ's appointed under Shepherds it Is a way of being proud of our own ideas for fighting sin.

But there is even worse. That in a spirit of pride, in the heart, That either says, I can do it on my own or even I do not need to do it at all because these things that I Delight in that are worldly. In which I am not remembering God and not delighting him in him in them, they please, me.

And therefore God should be pleased that I have them. And that is a great arrogance, it sets us in the place of God himself. I once sat in a room with a woman who is intent on divorcing, her husband, she did not really have any good reason except that she was not enjoying herself in her marriage.

And the basic theme was God wants me to be happy and having to stay in a marriage that doesn't make me happy. Uh, is abuse. And therefore since God would never want me to be miserable. Uh, This must be a good thing. This is to be proud. And this is very dangerous.

Because as soon as we Have elevated ourselves. Elevated. Ourselves above others? Elevated pleasing ourselves above pleasing God elevated, our own ideas of how to be Sanctified. Over against what God has provided and he himself in what he has provided. Any of this Pride makes God our enemy God, opposes the proud, Or as it says your God, resists the proud.

No, we need more grace. We need more of God's strength in our weakness. And so, we need to come before him in humility, depending upon him receiving that Grace receiving, not according to what we deserve, but according to what Christ deserves, not according to our weakness, but according to his strength, He gives more grace therefore he says God resists, a proud bot gives Grace to the humble what a generous and faithful God he will always be faithful to this word.

He will always keep his work. As we humble ourselves before him, as we see that it is wicked and enmity for us to have pleasure that is apart from him in the world, especially pleasure, and sin. As we see that, what we need is him in the ways that he has appointed and we draw near to him in those ways.

We will find that he works by his grace in us and helps us. He gives Grace to the humble. This is very important because it is not just we, our flesh and God who are involved. We continue in verse 7. Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil. And he will flee.

From you. The devil from the beginning, from the Temptation, in the garden from the fall. Has been trying to convince people. That there are ideas, that may be added to God's ideas. For how to image him, and how to be in fellowship with him. This is how Eve was deceived the first couple of, uh, attempts or the first attempt did not work.

But it was when he convinced her. That this was the way of being made, like God. She was deceived by. Permitting the devil to continue to talk to her. Instead of saying no, God has given me one whom he has set over me to teach me his word. And Adam of course, he was not deceived, he was enjoying the idea that he could actually be in the place of God.

He did not think that he was going to be like God that he was going to be Imaging. God, he was willful just Desiring to determine for himself, what is good? And what is evil and that is exactly the situation. When we have Pleasures that are, Apart from God or competing with God, or even Pleasures in that, which is more directly sinful.

We are wanting to decide for ourselves. What is good, and what is evil? And so the Lord here as he has given us, uh, his means And reminded us that we need to fight sin by his grace. He gives us this wonderful promise instruction, sorry. He gives us this wonderful instruction and attaches it to it.

A wonderful promise, a wonderful instruction resists to the devil Who are we that we may resist the devil. We are those who are united to Christ. We are those who are humbled before God. And God gives more Grace, he gives Grace, and his Spirit within us fights against the flesh.

And so, one of the big parts Uh, of Uh, fighting against sin is resisting the devil, giving sin, giving the flesh giving the devil that first strong. No. And then And then following it by every wave of in every wave of Temptation. No, no, no. Uh and uh the great way of doing that, no, and sustaining that no is drawn near to God, not just no.

Oh, I belong to God. No I'm humbled beneath God. No, I have the spirit who gives Grace. He dwells in me. He yearns jealously for God? No, I am United uh to Christ and I will not join myself to sin. I will not join that which is United to Christ to sin.

And so you'd resist the devil. As the the wonderful command and we're gonna get, um, Some more instruction about that especially in verses 8 to 9 but also this

wonderful promise he will flee from you. And we've seen this happen before. Remember not too long ago, in our, in our preaching and hearing in Matthew with the Lord Jesus, and the devil attempting to tempt him.

And the Lord Jesus giving him that, no resisting him by his relationship with God. Resisting it, by his Uh, by his depending on God's word and trusting God's word without having to prove it and seeking the promises in God's word by the assignments of God's word. Not seeking the promises of God's word in his own way.

And so the Lord Jesus resisting the devil very much in the same way that we have been talking about. And what does the devil eventually do? He gives up Flees, he leaves him alone until a more opportune time. But there is no time so opportune that he could overcome Christ.

And so the one to whom we are united and the one who dwells in our hearts by faith and by the work of his Spirit. And by the indwelling of his He is the one who is with us. And so we draw near to God by submitting ourselves to him.

And by seeking his grace. Uh, in the Sun and by the spirit through the means that he has appointed draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

I grew up not understanding. What that's drawing near to God was. I, I would try merely to Uh, to kind of bring my heart to God internally. Uh, and And have feelings about him. Now, bringing your heart to God is a, is a real thing, and it's not a wrong thing.

But he has given us means, he's given us his word to meditate upon. And as you meditate upon his word, Uh, You know, and you increasingly realize throughout your life. That your God has not just has spoken to you. By that word once in which time it was inscribed and scripturated on a piece of paper.

But that the spirit actively uses that word to give you fellowship with God in your, in your thinking. Upon his word before him and asking him for help to Believe it want to understand it. Sometimes we don't understand it as well. Uh, and also to be believe it and be convinced and remember it and the times that we need to remember it and to make it fruitful in our hearts to give us ability to obey it.

And so, uh, there is this drawing near to God that is That is in his means. And then again, At those particular times that he's given in the morning and in the evening and all day long on the Lord's day, when God has set, up's heart aside time, set apart time for us to draw near to him.

Uh, those are the great times of drawing near, but there's also the drawing near in the life. The drawing near of submitting to him and depending upon his grace and all things. The drawing near of being determined to Delight in him. Not in ourselves, not in our flesh, not an Earthly pleasure apart from him.

And certainly not in sin. Uh, so he's he says draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Another. Reminder, that God is faithful to all of his promises and all of his truth. If we humble ourselves verse 6, he gives Grace to the humble. If we draw near to head, Uh especially in the means of Grace with our hearts sincerely Drawing Near to him by use of those means.

Uh, he will draw near to us. Well, there is one who cannot abide the presence of the Living God. Now, we understand, especially why the devil must flee. A man might learn to sing God's praise. Uh, perhaps vocally verbally, at least in his heart to draw near to God, whenever Whenever he is tempted.

The uh, the devil cannot abide. The presence of God. Uh, and so we must meditate upon Uh, his word God's word and call upon his name. And have that fellowship with him, most of all. When we are under temptation. And there is something else though that cannot abide the presence of God.

And that is our remaining sin. And so, we mustn't think. That we are able to draw near to God without repentance. We mustn't think that we are that we are able to draw near to God without changing things that we do and changing things that we feel and think we must cleanse our hearts.

Sorry, we must cleanse our hands. To draw near to God. Cleanse our hands, you Sinners purify your hearts you double-minded in other words you can't think At sometimes. Well, God is the chief thing in my life. He is the chief pleasure and at other times I'm having other pleasure now in, which I'm not delighting in God.

Or I'm having pleasure in this thing that harms my soul. Um, You know. Way that has come up recently that Uh, was convicted about just again this past Saturday evening. Uh, was Um, Entertainment slate on the Saturday. That are not the sort that prepare our minds and hearts. Uh, directly for the Lord's day.

Um, Yeah it wasn't particularly filthy or anything like that. It just wasn't It wasn't single-minded with the goal of knowing god and belonging to him and living with him. The way that we should, we cannot be double-minded. We cannot have two main priorities in our life. God is the main priority and everything else must be bent to serve him and participate in that as well as possible.

Well and so in order to draw near to God, we need not only to cleanse our hands from sin but also to purify our hearts to be single-minded Um, with our hearts. And this will mean that some things that we used to take much pleasure in much joy in.

They become Grievous to us because they have uh come to be either. Or we have come to see that they were either against God or in competition with him. Um, against this cleansing, or against the single-mindedness. And so there are things that you used to love and laugh. Uh, in and enjoy that.

We should train ourselves to lament and mourn and weep over. Um, So, Uh, for instance, with the example of the Saturday night thing uh where it was something where uh there was genuine laughing and enjoyment, perhaps even It would not have been inappropriate. At another time but learning to instead of laughing and enjoying a It to weep over to grieve over it because it's robbing me of Of being prepared, mind and heart.

For the Lord's day. Um, But this applies to uh, to all other sins and and all other conflicted priorities, Uh, that we learn to lament and mourn and weep over the very things that we had taken pleasure in before that, someone who is given to gossip for. For instance, and Uh, the that they would uh grieve and hate to speak.

About someone else. Uh, rather than taking that pleasure they did Or, or any other sin. This principle of learning by the grace of the spirit to grieve over what? Grieves the spirit and to Rejoice over, what gladdens, the spirit lament and mourning, we let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to Gloom.

He say, well God wants me to be happy. No. God wants you to be happy in himself. There are lots of things that God wants you to be miserable about. That God wants you to cry and grieve and hate. And one of the big parts of the Christian Life is growing by his grace.

In grieving over what Grieves him. And mourning over lamenting. Whatever. Is against him or in competition with him. And he can concludes again in verse 10. Uh, with a similar thought then to verse 6, humble yourselves. In the sight of the Lord this time. Not the lowering yourself of dependence upon his grace and Drawing Near.

Uh, but the lowering yourself. Afflicting yourself, grieving, and mourning over. Uh, that which you had previously so much enjoyed. That we would be willing. Um, to come to call evil, what God calls evil and to call good. What God calls good and to bemoan. Our own remaining sinfulness. And he will lift us up.

He will lift us up by giving us Grace to fight that sinfulness. He will lift us up by giving us that joy, that Delight in himself, which, of course, is not only instead of worldly Joy, but is deeper and greater than any worldly Joy. And this is the lifting up.

So not saying, you know, everyone. Um, Uh, be self-deprecating around other people and God will do something to make them. See how awesome you are. Uh, that is not what he's saying in this passage Who's saying afflict yourself. Uh, for and in your sin depend upon him. And his grace and your battle against and draw near to him and he will lift you out of the Affliction.

The grief, over your sin all the way to the great joy that is even the joy of the Lord Jesus from all eternity in. Um, His divine nature, delighting and God, God will bring you. To the place where you are one. Who Delights in God and there is nothing.

Uh, that we could desire. Uh, more than that. We're nothing. We ought to desire. Nothing more desirable. Than that. So let us pray and ask God to help us. Our gracious Godner heavenly Father, we pray that you would Give us humility. To depend upon your power and our sanctification.

That you would give more grace that we would know the fellowship of your spirit in. That we would draw near to you in your means. And that using your means. Your spirit would Grant to us to be sincere of heart. And genuinely bring our hearts and our minds to you at those times.

And we pray, Lord that you would help us in the time when Sin is presented to us. To give the first strong null. And as subsequent strong, no to every wave of Temptation. Until the word is fulfilled and the devil does flee. We pray Lord that you would make us to count anything.

That is clouding, our our minds or dulling our hearts towards you. As a grief and not a joy. Don't let us O, Lord have Your word and fellowship with you. And depending upon you And loving and serving you, don't let us have it. I choked out either by the cares of the world or by the pleasures.

Of the world but rather O Lord make us to grieve. Over any pleasure that would do that. And so we pray that you would help us. In this spiritual discipline and this heart discipline. Of afflicting ourselves for our sins. So being humiliated before you for our sins. And we pray that your spirit also would bring to fulfillment the promise.

That you will lift us up that you will give us sanctification. That you will give us mortification of those sins that you will give us vivification of Christ and the grace. Uh, that there's fruit in our lives by his Spirit. And that you would lift us up all the way to enjoying you.

The lighting. And knowing your love and pleasure in us. Which we know. Oh God, you have set upon us even from before the world began in your son. Our Lord Jesus. Through whom we ask it. Amen.