

Message #13**James 4:7-10**

Over west of St. Louis, Missouri, are the Meramec Caverns. One of the big reasons people visit these caves is because these are the caves where Jesse James hid. In fact, if you take a tour, they will show you exactly where he hid and how he escaped. Thousands of people visit this place annually. In the late 1800's Jesse James stole more than \$250,000 and killed at least 16 men. Yet to this day, he is viewed as some kind of hero. One article I read said, "...in his own day he won a strange kind of respect as a popular symbol of defiance in the west." Jesse James did not submit to authority and is viewed as some kind of hero.

We live in a world of loud-mouthed arrogant people who say anything about anyone. This is how people who are "friends of the world" and "not friends of God" operate. They will speak out against any leader and they are not about to submit to any authority. Some of these people get elected to offices. They are viewed as some kind of hero.

Well it doesn't work that way with God. These kinds of people will have a rude awakening one day because when it comes to God's world, the non-submissive person will never be honored by God. Those who refuse to quietly submit to Him or His Word may be viewed as a hero by people in this world, but will never be in God's world.

IN THIS LIFE AND IN THE NEXT LIFE, GOD'S GRACE IS GIVEN TO AND EXALTS THOSE WHO ARE SUBMISSIVE, HUMBLE, QUIET AND BROKEN.

There are five key steps that James spells out that lead to God exalting a person in this life and the next life. Now you don't have to follow these steps; but if you don't you need to know when you get before God, He will not honor you.

STEP #1 – The person God exalts will submit to God. **4:7a**

People today will pay big money to sign up for some class or course that will teach them how not to be submissive but dominant and assertive. I guarantee you these classes never take a look at this text.

One who is a believer and is willing to submit to authority is one with a real humility that will be exalted by God. Willing submission shows that the humility is real and genuine.

The verb "submit" is a military term. It was the idea of willingly becoming subordinate to someone of higher rank.

Now in the military this is demanded and should one refuse to do this, one will pay a severe price. In the first century world that James was in, if one did not submit to one of higher rank, he could be executed. No soldier will ever become a soldier of honor if he refuses to submit to those of higher rank.

Now we want to understand that this idea is not just a nice suggestion, this is demanded by God. In fact, the verb “submit” is aorist passive imperative. **What that means is we have been given a command to willingly place ourselves subordinate to God and His Word. We are to voluntarily allow ourselves to be dominated by a submissive spirit.**

Now most people going to church would say no problem. We will submit to God. Well what this means is one needs to be willing to submit to what the Word of God says on various topics and frankly, this covers all phases of life.

We are to submit to secular government (I Pet. 2:13). Husbands are to submit to Jesus Christ (I Cor. 11:3). Wives are to submit to husbands (I Pet. 3:1). Younger are to submit to older (I Pet. 5:5). Servants are to submit to masters (Titus 2:9). God’s people are to submit to each other (Eph. 5:25). People in the church are to submit to the leaders in the church (Heb. 13:17).

Now we are living in a very non-submissive world in which most people will view you as some kind of hero if you don’t submit.

Now let’s say you read that and you say I am not going to do that. No way. No one is going to tell me what to do and I am not about to submit to it. That is your choice. But know this, God will not develop you in grace and God will never exalt you.

In the immediate context, God’s people who will be exalted realize that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (4:6). Proud, arrogant, non-submissive people do get a following and do exalt themselves, but will never be exalted by God.

STEP #2 – The person God exalts will resist the Devil. **4:7b**

Often one will be faced with a choice, do I submit to God or do I submit to the Devil? If you don’t submit to God, you have made your choice.

Now the idea of resisting the Devil is the idea of taking a stand against him. In this context, it specifically means taking a stand against proud, self-promoting, self-aggrandizing, self-centeredness.

The noun “Devil” is the Greek word that means to accuse falsely in a slanderous way. It seems that what James has in mind here is one who would proudly and arrogantly try to exalt self by falsely slandering or accusing another brother or sister in Christ. That is devilish.

When people slander others at church, it is devilish and James says if you want the exaltation of God, you must resist doing that.

There have been many ideas as to what Satan looks like. If you ask most people of the world what does Satan look like, most think Satan looks like some scary being with horns, a pitchfork and has a weird tail and wears dark clothes.

But if you ask James, what does Satan look like, he will tell you he looks just like some who go to church who slander their brother and sister in Christ.

James Adamson said, "...a proud Christian is much more useful than an atheist or a pagan." You see, a proud Christian can unleash Satan's power within the local church by what is said. James says resist that.

Now the promise is if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us. Take a stand against doing that and Satan will flee from you. The preposition "from" (απο) is one that means Satan cannot indwell the believer, but he can come alongside them and tempt them to do this. A desire to open one's mouth and arrogantly promote self or to speak falsely about a brother or sister in Christ is Satanic.

Now Satan's time is limited and he is not going to hang around someone who resists him. So when he sees one is resisting him and his demonic force impulses, he moves out and goes to someone else.

Resist the Devil and he will flee from you and you will be exalted by God.

STEP #3 – The person God exalts will draw near to God. **4:8a**

The contextual point is when you are tempted to do that which is Satanic, draw near to God. There are primarily three ways to draw near to God: 1) By humility, not arrogance; 2) By Prayer; 3) By obedience to His Word.

When you are tempted to speak wrong, do wrong, think wrong and act wrong, draw near to God. Drawing near to God for James was not just some mental or emotional action; it was in the context of humble submission to God and His Word rather than proud Devilish defiance.

Many years ago we lived next door to a neighbor whose cat had kittens. Whenever potential trouble came—another cat or dog—those kittens snuggled up to their mother.

God is promising that if you will draw near to Him via prayer and His Word, He will draw near to you. God stands ready not only to assist His people, but to be very near His people, if His people will draw near to Him. So when trouble comes, we need to snuggle up to our Heavenly Father.

What does it mean that God will draw near to us? God is Transcendent which means He is far above and beyond anything He has created. God is Immanent meaning He is close to everything He has created. God is Omnipresent which means He is everywhere present. So just by admitting these attributes we would conclude that God is already close to those He has created. So how much closer can God be?

The point is if we will purpose to draw near to God, He will draw near to us and shower us with greater grace and more exaltation (4:6, 10). The more we submit ourselves and humble ourselves to God and His Word, the more He will use us and bless us and exalt us.

STEP #4 – The person God exalts will cleanse their hands and hearts. **4:8b**

This is a key practical step in drawing near to God. God will not ever honor or exalt dirty people. God wants His people to have clean and pure lives. The fact that He invites people to “cleanse their hands” and “purify their hearts” is amazing grace. What this means is that He knows what His people are. They are sinners and they are doubleminded.

Now the concept of cleansing hands is one of analyzing what one is doing. The idea of purifying the heart is the idea of analyzing one’s self internally to see where one is at. **James is talking here about an external and internal analysis and clean up.**

Now the context of this is proud arrogance that defiantly refuses to submit to God and His Word. This is a proud, arrogant world given to godless pursuits, pleasures, power and promotion.

In I John 2:15-17 we get a good picture of this dirty world in which we live. It is filled with things like greed, gossip, passions, lusts and pride.

God wants His people clean. If we want to experience God’s grace at the highest level and God’s exaltation, we must be clean. We must be analyzing what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Now James was living in a very legalistic religious world and that world had rules, regulations and traditions. The problem was the heart. God exalts those who have hearts right with Him.

Now James identifies these people as “sinners” and “doubleminded.” This is what we are. And we need to analyze ourselves in view of this reality. If we are going to be exalted by God, we need honest self-analysis to clean up. You cannot be doubleminded in your allegiance to God or to the world. It is one or the other.

STEP #5 – The person God exalts will be honest about himself and sin before God. **4:9-10a**

Now these verses are not saying that a believer should live a life of misery and gloom. This is talking about the attitude we should have about our own sin.

Talk about the opposite of proud defiance and proud self-confidence and selfish arrogance, this is the kind of attitude that one really will have whom God will exalt. **If you want to experience God’s grace at the highest level, you must see yourself at the lowest level.**

There are six specific requests that James makes for those who want to be exalted by God:

Request #1 - You need to be miserable. **4:9a**

There is a faulty doctrine that is sweeping through Christianity that says to love and esteem yourself. The view is be proud of yourself. God says you want to get close to Me, then loathe yourself. When you sin you should be devastated. When you are growing in grace, your own sin will make you miserable.

I just got a letter from some listener who wanted me to stress God is love, God is love, God is love. Well He is love, but He is much more than that. He is righteous and holy and just and we need to see ourselves honestly, we are miserable wretches.

Request #2 - You need to mourn. **4:9b**

We not only need to see our sin and be miserable over our sin, but we need to mourn it. People who are honored by God have real remorse over their sin. The fact is many people are miserable over their sin but they don't mourn the fact that they sinned. One famous person who was at the end of his life and was in a sad state said if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't change a thing. What a fool. It was the choices you made that put you in your miserable condition.

Request #3 - You need to weep. **4:9c**

Have you ever personally and privately mourned over your sin before God? If you haven't you will never be exalted by God. People who are right with God have an overwhelming sense of their sin and guilt.

Request #4 - You need to turn laughing into mourning. **4:9d**

Sin is no light matter and it is no laughing matter. It is serious.

Request #5 - You need to turn your joy into gloom. **4:9e**

We need to see our wretchedness before God and "weep for it in misery."

Your sin should upset you. Your loud mouth explosions should break you down. When you don't submit to God or His authority, you should be convicted and grieved by it and if that is not happening, then you are not on a path in which God will exalt you.

Request #6 - You need to humble yourself in the presence of God. **4:10a**

People think they need to exalt themselves. God says that is not the way. You humble yourself and I will exalt you. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say when it comes to God, "down is up and up is down." If these steps are followed, the promise from God is that "He will exalt you."

What is so sad about this list of requests is most don't get it and most haven't done it. If you really want to count for something and if you really want to make a difference so that you are exalted by God, try this formula. Try it and see if it works.