

James Chapter 4B

Our Study in the Epistle of James has raised some significant questions about a believer's relationship to sin. There is a great deal of confusion on the subject.

- Do all believers, at some point, after having receiving the knowledge of the truth fall back into sin? Yes
- Does that mean that those who are Born of God are still enslaved to the power of sin? Absolutely Not we are free!
- Is there a point, in this mortal life, when we will gain full and complete victory over sin? (that's what Joyce Meyers says – but not what the Bible says)
- Last Question: If God has truly forgiven all of our sins, past, present and future, does it really matter how we live? Paul anticipated that question:

Romans 6:1 **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**

- And his answer:

Romans 6:2 **By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

- By no means – strong language stating that believers must not continue in a life of continual, unrestrained sin.
- What does Paul mean when he said that we died to sin? He goes on to explain:

Romans 6: 3 **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

- It is a spiritual FACT, that all true believers have been crucified with Christ,
- When he died, we died and dead men have been set free from the power of sin.
- When He was buried we were buried with him and when he rose from the dead we were raised to new life with him.
 - Friends, This is the declaration that we make when we go under the water in Christian Baptism. I am crucified with Christ!

Believers are raised together with Christ. They are made ALIVE with Him.

- For his own glory, even when we were dead in our trespasses God made us alive together with Christ, by grace we have been saved.
- NOW that we are risen with Him what is our relationship to SIN?

Romans 6:11 **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.**

- Paul doesn't tell us to FEEL as if we were dead to sin, he tells us to ACT on the truth of God's Word and reckon or consider Christ's death as our own death and his resurrection as that which empowers us to live a New Life.

You may liken this to endorsing a check: If we really believe that the person who wrote the check, possesses the resources behind the check then we are free to sign our name and collect the money.

- So it is that the riches of God's grace, the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection may be received and applied to our own lives by faith.
- God does not command us to become dead to sin. He tells us that we already ARE dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

This great spiritual truth is illustrated for us in the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

- When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. There was no question that he was dead. (John 11 Martha said "By now he stinketh")
- By the power of His Word saying, "**Lazarus come forth**" Jesus raised him from the dead. Lazarus had no part in that resurrection it was accomplished solely by the sovereign grace and power of Almighty God.
- Now, Lazarus was raised to walk in newness of life.
- Then in John 12 we find him seated with Christ enjoying sweet fellowship around the banquet table.

In the same way, God has delivered us from death through the sacrifice and glorious resurrection of Christ.

- He has filled us with the Holy Spirit and empowered us to live a brand new life.
- Like our friend Lazarus we are, **seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**" Ephesians 2:6
- We are no longer slaves to sin, in fact we have become slaves to righteousness. (Rom 6:19)
- But it seems there are times when we suffer from identity crisis.

That brings us to our outline for this morning:

1. Misconception of our identity (The deceitfulness of sin causes a temporary schizophrenia in many believers)
2. Multiplication of Grace (God gives more grace bringing us to repentance)
3. Marks of True Repentance – James gives us 10 commands of true repentance

Far too many Christians live their life like the children of Israel when they walked in the wilderness.

- God set them free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.
- He delivered them from death through the waters of the Red Sea.
- He personally led them on a pilgrimage to the Land of Promise. (Pillar)
- BUT their hearts were divided and they longed for the treasures of Egypt.

Numbers 11:4 **Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish**

we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

- Israel was free from their cruel taskmasters, they were liberated from bondage.
- Pharaoh had been defeated, his armies destroyed.
- BUT the quarreling and fighting of the people revealed that their hearts were still tied to Egypt.

Last week James addressed a similar pattern of behavior in the church. Believers who were liberated from slavery to sin were suffering from an identity crisis. They were found fighting and quarreling with one another because their hearts were still in love with this fallen world. James describes them as Adulteress.

James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- This is that miserable place of conviction where we left off our study last week. Instead of battling against sin, these believers were fighting with one another, instead of overcoming the world they were seduced by its fleshly pleasures.
- As I tried to understand our continued struggle with sin and our "Love for the World" I came upon an article written by Bryan Chapell, Listen:

As new creatures in Christ, we can't claim that there's NO hope of change in our lives. We're not in bondage to our old nature. John declares, "**He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world**" (1 John 4:4). Satan's powers aren't greater than Christ's provision (Phil. 4:13). But if we're not slaves to sin, then why do we sin?

The answer, that we hate—but that Scripture makes plain—is that we sin because we love it (John 3:19). It is the desires of our flesh that yield to the allure of sin (James 1:13–14). Consider this simple truth: If sin did not attract us, it would have absolutely no power in our lives. We sin when we love it more than we love living for our Savior.

- As difficult as those words are for us to swallow, we have to admit they are True.
- Is there any hope for us? Let's go back to James and pick up where we left off.
- God, who is a jealous God will not allow us to remain in this desperate condition.
- What does he do? He graciously communicates the depth of his love, He reveals his pure and perfect jealousy for us and in doing so He imparts greater grace.

With multiplied Grace, the lover of our souls opens our eyes so that we see His abundant patience, his mercy, his loving kindness toward us and our hearts are broken once again over our sin.

2. Multiplied Grace

James 4: 5 **Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?** 6 **But he gives more grace.**

- The reason why we simply CANNOT continue to live in the same sinful patterns of behavior is not because of anything good that is IN US.
- It is because HE gives more grace! Greater grace.

As John puts it, John 1:16 **For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.**

- It is the grace of God, the revelation of His love that calls us back to our first love.
- Daily infusions of grace from God, by his Word and through his Spirit produce a lifestyle of humble repentance that is described for us in James 4:6-10

Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

- Throughout our lives, we will experience divine opposition to our fleshly pride and greater grace as the humility of Christ is developed within us.
- The revelation of God in all of his glory, high and lifted up has an immediate and significant effect on our foolish pride.
- Picture a Chawawa standing up to a Great Dane
- Consider the Prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 6: 1 **In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.**

- (Isaiah's reaction to God's revealed glory)

5 **And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for 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!"**

- Pride lies at the heart of our sinful nature, we can see it clearly in the lives of other people but we seem to be blind to its presence in our own lives.
- God stands opposed to the proud like a mighty army that stands opposed to an enemy.

When we walk in pride, God becomes an immovable force in front of us.

- Because He loves us, he disciplines us and He brings corrective trials into our lives
- It seem that our prayers are hindered and the intimacy that we desire to experience with Him is withheld.
 - He is opposed to the proud BUT gives grace to the humble.

That gracious work of God that brings humility to the redeemed soul breaks our rebellious heart and produces a sincere willingness to submit.

- His grace leads us to repentance and James now provides us with 10 commands of true repentance.

Marks of true Repentance

James 4: 7 **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

- To submit is to voluntarily align oneself under the authority of another. Like a soldier who falls into line when the drill sergeant barks out a command.
- SO it is that Submission to God is a willful yielding of oneself to the sovereign rule and authority of God as it is revealed in his Word.

John Mac: “Virtually by definition, to submit to God, as Lord is to resist the Devil.

- There was a time when we “**Followed the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.**” This IS living in opposition to God.
- On the contrary, submitting to God is standing against, living in opposition to the Devil.
- To stand in submission to the Lord is to stand against everything that is sinful and worldly. I don’t see anyplace in the Bible where God’s blesses a life of spiritual compromise.
- I’m not trying to be legalistic, I am trying to be realistic.

It is common today, to have people who call themselves believers, who say that they want to serve God, and live for his glory, and YET they continue to live in the same immoral manner in which they lived before coming to Christ.

- They happily yield themselves to the immoral ways of the world and they actually think it is acceptable of God because it is all under his grace.
- The holiness of God is a totally foreign concept to many, even within the church. Acceptance of Gay marriage, transgender rights and co-habitation before marriage have become the new normal. Peter warns us.

1 Peter 1:14 **As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,** 15 **but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,** 16 **since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

- When we stand against the Devil we do not stand in our own power, our own abilities or wisdom. We stand on the victory that Christ won on the cross.
- Our holiness is a holiness that we have received from God in Christ. And that holiness continually transforms us into his image. WE cannot boast in what we have freely received.

Now those who submit to God, those who resist the devil are the same who draw near to God

James 4:8 **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

- Drawing near to God in James' day would have described the movement of the priests as they approached Temple in worship.
- This is not simply the moving of the thoughts or emotions but the advance of the whole person coming into the presence of God by means of sacrificial blood

A ritual cleansing of hands and feet was necessary for the priests but James speaks of a cleansing a purification that is different, This is a cleansing of both the inner and outer man that can only be accomplished by the blood of Christ.

Heb 10:4 **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

- But of Christ the writer of Hebrews says:

Heb 10:14 **For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

- By the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of Christ all who believe are forever perfected even as we await the finished work of God, Our glorification.
- For NOW we live in a similar position as the disciples of Christ when they sat with him in the Upper Room.

John 13:10 **Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."**

11 **For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."**

- We who believe have been washed, we have been cleansed, NOT by our own works, not by our own efforts but by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)
- Nevertheless every day we encounter the defilements of this corrupt world and we find ourselves in need of a foot washing.
- A daily cleansing that takes us back to the Cross and prepares us to worship our Savior.

When we are exposed to germs and viruses in this world, infirmity can afflict the frailty of our flesh. Very often, especially this winter, we need to take some kind of bitter medicine in order to remove the virus that entered our bodies from our corrupt surroundings.

Continual contact with this fallen sinful world can bring spiritual infirmity to even the most healthy of souls.

- James moves on to describe the bitter medicine of repentance that frees us from the spiritual viruses that afflict our frail flesh.

James 4:9 **Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.** 10 **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

- This command of James to repent is packed with deep emotion.
- He want's us to see the wretchedness of chasing after worldly idols and living in an adulterous relationship with this fallen world.
- He calls us, no he commands us to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit with weeping and mourning, with humility and gloom.

Throughout the past week I have wept with two families, two wives who have been separated from their beloved husbands due to death or disease.

- They wept over the love that was lost. Mourned the wages of sin and looked to the Lord for help in their time of need.

James calls us, likewise to weep and mourn over the separation from God that sin brings into our lives.

- Sin separates us from the Lover of our souls; repentance brings restoration and renewal.
- Sin builds a prison of guilt and shame but Repentance breaks the chains and sets the captive free.
- As Jesus said:

Mt 5:4 **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

As we move into communion this morning lets consider the words of Paul to the church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 11: 27 **Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.**

- Eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner would be to profane the great significance of that for which the bread and cup stand.
 - While they are simple foods, they signify the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. On the cross He made atonement for our sin and justified all who believe.
 - By that same sacrifice, He has adopted all believers into the family of God. We who were many have been made one in Christ.
 - SO when we come to the table, it is a time to right any wrongs within the family. Time for all fighting and quarreling to cease.

1 Corinthians 11:28 **Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

29 **For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

- 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.
31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.
32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Time of reflection as we prepare to receive the elements.