

How to Stop Being a Friend of the World Pt. 5

Humble Repentance

James 4 :7-10

James 4:1–11 (NKJV)

4 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.

Introduction:

Today we come to the conclusion of a very important and relevant portion of Scripture. One of the most profound and important passages of our day. It introduced us to the sobering thought that a believer can make himself an enemy of God by becoming a friend with the world. This is so disturbing and sobering that it should shake us to our very core. It is a reminder of the seriousness of being a child of God and that you can bring yourself under severe discipline from your Heavenly Father who yearns jealously for you. He bought you with a steep price of the punishment and death of His only begotten Son and will not tolerate another lover or another god in your life.

It is also a terrifying reminder that the church can so drift into to the world that she no longer looks like the Bride of Christ. But plays the role of a harlot selling herself for the pleasures of the world. It reminds us that we as a church can make our self the enemy of God and as has happened to the

some of the churches listed in Revelation 2-3, God would fight against them and would remove their candlestick

And sadly for many churches, their candle was blown out long ago, Ichabod was written on the front door and God has left.

The only way out of this is a humble repentance granted by the grace of Almighty God.

Repentance is the true fruit of regeneration. When one is born again, the believer enters a life of repentance.

Martin Luther, the Reformer understood this early on and wrote the first 3 Theses of his 95 Theses that he nailed to the door of the church of Wittenberg Germany.

The Great confessions of our faith, the Westminster confession, London Baptist confession, all understood the necessity of a life of repentance.

Repentance is a doorway into salvation and the road upon which we walk in our sanctification. Too often today, repentance is taught to mean, just a change of mind, with no necessary need to turn from sin.

It is believed by some that if you preach a repentance from sin, or a turning away from a life of sin, that you are teaching a human work.

That you are asking someone to clean up their life before you get saved.

But this is not the case at all.

Repentance is not a human work. It never has been and never will be.

2 Timothy 2:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Acts 11:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Acts 3:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities."

Acts 5:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

As believers we are to be confessors and repenters

1 John 1:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Acts 19:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸ And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

Review

James 4:1–6 (NKJV)

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.”*

This is why it reads like this,

Since God Resist the Proud, the self centered,
hedonist

v7 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.

James 4:7–10 (NKJV)

⁷ **Therefore submit (A.Pass Imperative) to God.**

1. submit (A.Pass Imperative) to God.

The ten aorist imperatives in these verses constitute an urgent call to repentance to correct their blameworthy position before God. These imperatives, like curt military commands, demand incisive action. They reflect the seriousness with which James viewed their double-mindedness.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). *James* (Revised Edition, p. 236). BMH Books.

1. Submit
2. Resist
3. Draw near
4. Cleanse
5. Purify
6. Lament
7. Mourn.
8. Weep.

9. Turn your laughter to sorrow.

10. Humble yourselves.

ὑποτάσσομαι; ὑποταγή, ἥς f; ὑπείκω: to submit to the orders or directives of someone—‘to obey, to submit to, obedience, submission.’

1. submit (A.Pass Imperative) to God.

2. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

their worldliness has resulted in a distance separating them from God

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). *James* (Revised Edition, p. 237). BMH Books.

So in his call for repentance, He commands a drawing near to God.

The aorist imperative calls for a decisive, complete return on their part. This does not mean that the initiative for restored relations lies with man, but the imperative is a call to man’s will to respond to the divine call.

Cleanse hands, sinners, purify hearts double-minded

Only the pure in hand and heart can enter into communion with God in His holiness

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 238). BMH Books.

Cleanse *your* hands 53.28

καθαρίζω^b; καθαρότης, ητος *f*; καθαρισμός, οὔ *m*: to cleanse from ritual contamination or impurity—‘to cleanse, to purify, purification.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 534). United Bible Societies.

The injunction “wash your hands” employs the language of ceremonial cleansing for the priestly approach to God (Ex. 30:19–21; Lev. 16:4),

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NKJV)

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This figurative usage appears in the Old Testament (Ps. 24:4; Isa. 1:15–16)

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you sinners*; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

The sharp address “you sinners” (*hamartōloi*) seems to be used deliberately to pierce the readers’ conscience. Although commonly used of the unsaved, the parallel with “double-minded” makes clear that James is applying the term to Christians. They are manifestly guilty of sin in failing to maintain God’s standard for His saints. In his use of the term here, James clearly indicates that their return to close communion with God demands a change in their worldly conduct.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 238). BMH Books.

and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

“Purify your hearts” again employs familiar Jewish ceremonial language (cf. John 11:55), but here... it has a moral meaning, calling for inner purification.

1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV)

²² Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the

brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

1 John 3:3 (NKJV)

³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Psalms 51:6–10 (NKJV)

⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

The term basically denotes a removal of that which disqualifies one for acceptable worship, resulting in a condition of purity and chastity. The “heart” again denotes their whole inner life (cf. 1:26; 3:14). As those who foster friendship with the world and are guilty of spiritual adultery, they need an inner purification, renewing total dedication to God. A similar purity of hand and heart is called for in Psalm 24:4 for those approaching God.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 238). BMH Books.

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ***you double-minded***.

____ “You double-minded,” literally “two-souled” (cf. 1:8), reproves them sharply for their divided affections: hankering for the world while trying to hold to God. They are guilty of trying to serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). God demands undivided affection as well as undefiled conduct.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 238–239). BMH Books.

δίψυχος *dípsuchos*; gen. *dipsúchou*, masc.–fem., neut. *dípsuchon*, adj. from *dís* (1364), twice, and *psuchḗ* (5590), soul, mind. Double–minded, doubtful. In James 1:8, referring to the doubter or waverer which corresponds to *diakrínō* (1252); in the pl., in a general sense as an unstable person (James 4:8). Such a person suffers from divided loyalties. On the one hand, he wishes to maintain a religious confession and desires the presence of God in his life; on the other hand, he loves the ways of the world and prefers to live according to its mores and ethics.

Syn.: *akatástatos* (182), unstable.

Ant.: *bébaios* (949), certain.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

God expects absolute Loyalty. There is not middle ground or grey area. You are with for him or against him, you are either a friend or enemy. There is no such thing as a casual acquaintance with God.

Matthew 6:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Lesson:

As we return to our passaged to finish out this section, it is important to know that the key to all genuine repentance is

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,
Contrast this with

⁶“God resists the proud,

Pride is a terrible thing in the site of God. It is a declaration of self sufficiency that divorces itself from

a dependence on God. It is a deceptive declaration of personal greatness and self righteousness that denies the obvious evil in the heart.

It is the original sin of the Devil

Isaiah 14:12–15 (NKJV)

¹² “How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!

¹³ For you have said in your heart:
‘I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.’

¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Paul says of the a candidate for Elder in a church that.....

1 Timothy 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

Pride is at the top of the list of the things God hates.

Proverbs 6:16–19 (NKJV)

- ¹⁶ These six *things* the Lord hates,
 Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:
¹⁷ A Proud look,
 A lying tongue,
 Hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans,
 Feet that are swift in running to evil,
¹⁹ A false witness *who* speaks lies,
 And one who sows discord among brethren.

A proud רומ **rum** (926c); a prim. root; *to be high or exalted, rise*

Thomas, R. L. (1998). In [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Foundation Publications, Inc.

There are great warning in scripture regarding Pride.

Psalms 101:5 (NKJV)

- ⁵ Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
 Him I will destroy;
 The one who has a haughty look and a proud
 heart,
 Him I will not endure.

Isaiah 2:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Exodus 10:3 (NKJV)

³ So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

We know what happened to Pharaoh and his armies.

Daniel 4:30–32 (NKJV)

³⁰ The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”

³¹ While the word *was still* in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the

field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

Daniel 4:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

Daniel 5:18–30 (NKJV)

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.

¹⁹ And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. ²¹ Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the

dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

²² “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. ²³ And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who *holds* your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴ Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

²⁵ “And this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

²⁶ This *is* the interpretation of *each* word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;

²⁷ Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸ Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

Luke 18:9–14 (NKJV)

⁹ 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.”

Salvation is directly dependent on humility. Pride is a barrier to salvation

Psalm 10:4 (NKJV)

⁴ The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*;
God is in none of his thoughts.

Psalm 18:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ For You will save the humble people,

But will bring down haughty looks.

Pride is independence from God

Humility is dependence on God

Pride is self sufficiency

Humility is Poverty of Spirit

Pride is Love of Self

Humility is love of God

Pride says I want my way

Humility says I want God's Way

Pride is disobedient

Humility is obedience.

Pride for the believer, should be like trying to mix oil and water.

For the true believer, he has recognized from the very beginning that he has nothing to offer.

“Nothing in my hand I bring, only to thy cross I cling.”

He is the sinner crying out, “Have mercy on me”

He is the man of

Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)

³ **“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

A believer being prideful is the antithesis of his new creation. It is a betrayal of his identification with Christ.

It is opposite of what brought him into the kingdom.

Pride is a disgusting, dishonoring, deceitful disease of the fallen nature of man. It has no place in the life of the believer.

We should be the one's noted for our humility, our selflessness and our utter dependence on God for everything, not only in action but in word.

We are only here because of him

We are only forgiven because of His Grace

We are only saved because of his Mercy

All that we have, all that we are, all that we shall be is directly and permanently dependent on God.

1 Corinthians 4:1–7 (NKJV)

4 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be

judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. ⁷ For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

This humility is absolutely essential to ability to repent.

Without it there will be no repentance. Without repentance there is not forgiveness for restoration of the believer to fellowship with God.

Without humble repentance there will be no drawing near to God and God will not draw near to you.

Without humble repentance there will be no cleansing of the hands or purifying of the heart.

These believers that James was writing to had become so infected with the world that they had adopted the boastful arrogance of the world. They had become self centered, self sufficient, pleasure seekers. The world revolved around them. It wasn't about serving others, it was about serving self. They had become so arrogant and self serving that their prayers were "me" focused.

James is calling on these believers to repent of self idolatry. They had made themselves the center of the universe and the idol to bow too. They were clearly the perfect picture of cultural christianity today in America.

We are as the Laodicean church.

Revelation 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not

know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

We are the Laodicean church. We don't need anything. We don't even know how to manage all that we do have.

This is why prayer meetings are so low in attendance. We don't need anything. The sad thing is, we don't think we need anything spiritually.

I was talking to a brother a few months back who attended a very large church here in the midlands which have a few thousand come. But he said the prayer meetings, were lucky to have 15. We are no better.

We are James 4:1-6

James is calling on the believers of that first century church to Repent. To Humbly repent.

To repent of

1. Self-centeredness
2. Self-sufficiency
3. Idolatry of self.
4. A Pleasure seeking attitude and goal.
5. Selfishness

6. Strife, Coveting , Lust Eyes, Lust of flesh, Pride of things.
7. Friendship with world and love of the World.
8. Disloyalty with God
9. Unfaithfulness to God.
10. Double mindedness
11. Pride, Arrogance, Boastfulness,Haughtiness.

James 3:14–16 (NKJV)

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.

As a result of there sin, James says

⁶“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”

v7 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

This repentance is more than a change mind. It is a change of will. It is determination to turn from the sin and turn to God. It is humble recognition of the offense this sin has cause God. It will express itself not only in volitional acts of repentance. (stopping certain sinful actions) but also a deep inner emotional grief for our sin. This is why James says

⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

He is not saying we can never have joy or happiness. That we cannot smile and laugh or act everything has to be a dirge. That life has to be one big pot of tears. Some of you need to learn this...

But He is calling on us in our times of repentance for a serious somber, mourning over our sin.

Matthew 5:3–4 (NKJV)

- 3 “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

2 Corinthians 7:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Jonah 3:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

¹⁰ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Zechariah 12:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. ¹¹ In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² And the land shall mourn, every family by itself:.....

Here in our text

Three further aorist imperatives without any modifiers, unite to form an urgent demand for open and thorough repentance. The intensity of the demand is startling, intended to shake these double-minded believers.

9 Lament

(ESV). ⁹ Be wretched
 (NASB95) ⁹ Be miserable
 NET — Grieve

ταλαιπωρέω *talaipōréō*; contracted *talaipōrṓ*, fut. *talaipōrésō*, from *talaípōros* (5005), afflicted, wretched, miserable. To endure toil and hardship, be afflicted, distressed, miserable, to lament or mourn. In the NT, used only in James 4:9 metaphorically meaning to endure affliction, distress.

Deriv.: *talaipōría* (5004), misery.

Syn.: *kakopathéō* (2553), to suffer hardship; *hupophérō* (5297), to endure, undergo hardship; *páschō* (3958), to suffer; *kataponéō* (2669), to be oppressed with pain; *lupéō* (3076), to grieve, be in heaviness.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

“Grieve” (*talaipōrēsate*), “be wretched, be afflicted,” calls for a recognition of their wretchedness and shame because of their sins. The verb, which occurs only here in the New Testament,

although noun and adjective forms are used elsewhere (see Rom. 3:16; 7:24; James 5:1; Rev. 3:17).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 211). Moody Press.

primarily denotes going through hardship and distressing circumstances; then it came to be used of the feeling of misery and wretchedness because of the outward circumstances. Ropes renders it “Make yourselves wretched,” but there is no indication that James is calling for ascetic practices, such as fasting in sackcloth and ashes, to induce this feeling. Mayor holds that, since James was known for his asceticism, this imperative “is best understood of voluntary abstinence from comforts and luxuries.”⁹⁵ Well aware that such practices were no satisfactory substitute for inner penitence, James is best understood as calling for a deeper inner feeling of wretchedness and shame because of their sins. The aorist imperative is probably ingressive: “become wretched.” When a true realization of their sinfulness strikes home, the feeling of wretchedness and grief will follow.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 239). BMH Books.

It carries the idea of being broken and feeling wretched because of one’s circumstances—in this case, that of being sinful, lost, and separated from

God. It is exactly the feeling expressed by the tax collector spoken of by Jesus who “was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ” (Luke 18:13).

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are.”

The misery James is speaking of here has nothing to do with being sad about bad circumstances in life and wanting God to help you have better ones. Nor does it relate to religious asceticism, or extreme self-denial and sacrifice that is supposed to make a person humble and more worthy in God’s sight. Paul clearly rejects that sort of self-imposed misery, warning that

the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully

shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Tim. 4:1–3)

As the apostle explains to believers in Colossae, “These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence” (Col. 2:23). This misery has to do with the brokenness over one’s sin and violation of God’s holy law and the fear of judgment.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 211). Moody Press.

9 Lament and mourn and weep!

“Mourn and wail” denote the natural outward manifestations of their sense of wretchedness. The verbs often are used together to portray the intensity of such a feeling (Mark 16:10; Luke 6:25; Rev. 18:15). “Mourn” relates to the general outward demeanor of those gripped by deep grief. Trapp remarks that it “imports a funeral-grief.” It indicates a grief of such intensity that it cannot be concealed. “Wail” points to the resultant overflow of tears. The verb was used of wailing for the dead, but here it means crying or sobbing because of sin and shame. Such tears are “a sign

that a man is broken to pieces because of sin.” The two verbs picture the emotional expressions of penitence, as Peter sobbing in shame when seized with a realization of his sin in denying Jesus (Mark 14:72).

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 239). BMH Books.

The idea is that of deep grief and remorse, a complete despair that laments over sin the way someone mourns the death of a family member or close friend. It is one of the requirements prescribed by the Lord Himself during His incarnation: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). Along with misery and weeping, it defines the emotion of repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9–11).

Francis Fuller wisely observed:

To repent is to accuse and condemn ourselves; to charge upon ourselves the desert of hell; to take part with God against ourselves, and to justify him in all that he does against us; to be ashamed and confounded for our sins; to have them ever in our eyes, and at all times upon our hearts, that we may be in daily sorrow for them; to part with our right hands and eyes, that is, with those pleasurable sins which have been as dear to us as our lives, so as never to have to do with them

more, and to hate them, so as to destroy them as things which by nature we are wholly disinclined to. For we naturally love and think well of ourselves, hide our deformities, lessen and excuse our faults, indulge ourselves in the things that please us, are mad upon our lusts, and follow them, though to our own destruction. (Cited in Spiros Zodhiates, *The Behavior of Belief* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], 2:286)
 MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 211–212). Moody Press.

9 Lament and mourn and weep!

To **weep** is the outward manifestation of the previously mentioned misery and sorrow. That is what the prophet Isaiah called on unfaithful Israel to do, reminding them, “Therefore in that day the Lord God of hosts called you to weeping, to wailing, to shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth” (Isa. 22:12). It is what Peter did after realizing that, just as his Lord predicted, he had denied Him. “Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, ‘Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’ And he began to weep” (Mark 14:72). It is the weeping produced by godly “sorrow that is

according to the will of God [and] produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 212). Moody Press.

⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! **Let your laughter be turned to mourning** and your joy to gloom.

“Change your laughter to mourning” calls for a striking reversal in their emotional expressions. “Laughter” (*gelōs*), occurring only here in the New Testament, looks to their loud, unseemly gaiety as pleasure-loving friends of the world. Their hilarity will become mourning when the realization of their folly seizes them (Prov. 10:23; Eccles. 7:6). The verb “change” (*metatrapetō*), “turn back, turn around,” occurs only here in the New Testament. The aorist passive third person singular points to a force outside of themselves producing the reversal, whereas the imperative calls upon their will to let it work. The change will occur as Spirit-wrought conviction seizes them. The demanded reversal relates to their past sinful pleasures. This does not mean that laughter in itself is evil (cf. Ps. 126:2), nor is James

prohibiting future laughter for his readers. “James is no killjoy,” Moo asserts and then points out, “But ‘laughter’ in the Old Testament and Judaism is often the scornful laughter of the fool (Ec. 7:6; Eccclus. 27:13) who blithely refuses to take sin seriously.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 239–240). BMH Books.

The ninth command, like the fourth and fifth (4:8b–c), is in the form of a Hebraic couplet, expressing the same basic truth in two different but parallel forms. James is not condemning legitimate **laughter** or **joy** but rather the flippant, trivial, worldly, self-centered, sensual kinds that unbelievers revel in, despite, and often because of, their sinful pleasures. It corresponds to Jesus’ warning: “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:25), and is the opposite of a beatitude given a few verses earlier that is recorded only in Luke: “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh” (v. 21). In both verses Jesus used a verb form of the noun that in the present text is rendered laughter.

Confessing the sins of his people, Jeremiah lamented, “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have

sinned!” (Lam. 5:15–16). James is calling unbelievers to lament and grieve over “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” (1 John 2:16) that had characterized their former lives and marked them as enemies of God (James 4:4).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 213). Moody Press.

If you will humbly repent

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

God has always honored those who are spiritually **humble**. The Lord testified to Solomon: “[If] My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). The psalmist praised the Lord, saying, “You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear” (Ps. 10:17). Through Isaiah God promised, “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isa. 57:15).

Jesus made clear that “whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself

shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12). Again, the prodigal is the perfect example of contrite humility. When he came to his senses in the far country, he said to himself, “I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men’ ” (Luke 15:18–19). When he returned home and expressed that sincere contrition, “the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found’ ” (Luke 15:22–24).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 214). Moody Press.