

# CHRIST OUR REFUGE: FLEE THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH --REMEMBER SAMSON

Our God is jealous and He is Holy. The sins He hated in the Old Testament, He hates in the New Testament.

What would offend someone who loved us so much that He wants us to be utterly loyal to Him?

We become an enemy of God when we become friendly with the world.

And what is friendship with the world again? As for the lusts of the flesh

- **“Lust of flesh” is being tempted by our flesh to chase pleasures, this equals the cravings of the body.** *These are all of the sensual temptations.* This is lust for another person. The desire to have and enjoy the body of an individual, either mentally or physically, even though such pleasure is illegal and/or immoral. We can feed these lusts by going to places where we see uncovered bodies, or watching TV and movies that have various states of immodesty, or by seeking out images in magazines and online that feed these evil desires.

But often we aren't aware that we are drifting into this dreadful place because we become friendly with the world *gradually*. *We forget to ask ourselves questions like--*

Am I emotionally attached to anything that God hates?

Do I have affection for something that is utterly opposed to Him?

Is the world of the Devil and all of its rebellion and lusts that is hostile towards God—looked upon with interest, for entertainment or even for pleasure?

Are God's enemies my favored companions?

Do I flee the lusts of the flesh or show interest and good will towards what God hates?

Now listen to the words of the Apostle of holy living, the most disciplined man of the First Century who wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else—as we turn to Ephesians 5.1-14.

Ephesians 5:1-14 Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father. 2 Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ's love for you was like sweet perfume to

him. 3 Let there be no sex sin, impurity or greed among you. Let no one be able to accuse you of any such things. 4 Dirty stories, foul talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God's goodness, and be thankful. 5 You can be sure of this: The Kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshiper—he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. 6 Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them. 7 Don't even associate with such people. 8 For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! 9 Because of this light within you, you should do only what is good and right and true. 10 Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless pleasures of evil and darkness, but instead, rebuke and expose them. 12 It would be shameful even to mention here those pleasures of darkness that the ungodly do. 13 But when you expose them, the light shines in upon their sin and shows it up, and when they see how wrong they really are, some of them may even become children of light! 14 That is why God says in the Scriptures, "Awake, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead; and Christ shall give you light." TLB

The NIV captures verse three so clearly, look at those words again—"But among you **there must not be even a hint** of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Now where have we gotten to in our American Culture? Are we listening to Paul or is our life slowly being squeezed into the shape our lusts of the flesh driven world around us pressures us to be every day?

Remember Romans 12.1-2—

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. NKJV

Before we get to Samson and all his failures with the lusts of the flesh, let's look at where we have gotten to in our world today. This is a magazine article I read over two years ago. This is just the first page—it was very convicting and distressing. It is very blunt and I hope that it will be enough to offend everyone of us into re-examining our lives to be sure we are not getting slowly squeezed into a place that we will embrace the lusts of the flesh and have our life become an enemy to God!

*Suppose I said<sup>1</sup>, "There's a great-looking girl down the street. Let's go look through her window and watch her undress, then pose for us naked, from the*

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<sup>1</sup> By Randy Alcorn, found online at: <http://afajournal.org/2003/september/903purity.asp>

*waist up. Then this girl and her boyfriend will get in a car and have sex – let's listen and watch the windows steam up!"*

*You'd be shocked. You'd think, What a pervert!*

*But suppose instead I said, "Hey, come on over. Let's watch **Titanic**."*

*Christians recommend this movie, church youth groups view it together, and many have shown it in their homes. Yet the movie contains precisely the scenes I described.*

*So, as our young men lust after bare women on the screen, our young women are trained in how to get a man's attention.*

***How does something shocking and shameful somehow become acceptable because we watch it through a television instead of a window?***

*In terms of the lasting effects on our minds and morals, what's the difference?*

*Yet many think, **Titanic?** Wonderful! It wasn't even rated R!*

*Every day Christians across the country, including many church leaders, watch people undress through the window of television. We peek on people committing fornication and adultery, which our God calls an abomination.*

*We've become voyeurs, Peeping Toms, entertained by sin.*

### ***Normalizing evil***

*The enemy's strategy is to normalize evil. Consider young people struggling with homosexual temptation. How does it affect them when they watch popular television dramas where homosexual partners live together in apparent normality?*

*Parents who wouldn't dream of letting a dirty-minded adult baby-sit their children do it every time they let their kids surf the channels. Not only we, but our children become desensitized to immorality. Why are we surprised when our son gets a girl pregnant if we've allowed him to watch hundreds of immoral acts and hear thousands of jokes with sexual innuendos?*

*But it's just one little sex scene.*

*Suppose I offered you a cookie, saying, "A few mouse droppings fell in the batter, but for the most part it's a great cookie –you won't even notice."*

***"To fear the LORD is to hate evil"*** (Proverbs 8:13). *When we're being entertained by evil, how can we hate it? How can we be pure when we amuse ourselves with impurity?*

*God warns us not to talk about sex inappropriately:*

***“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity... because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place” (Ephesians 5:3-4).***

*How do our favorite dramas and sitcoms stand up to these verses?*

*How about **Seinfeld** and other nightly reruns? Do they contain “even a hint of sexual immorality” or “coarse joking”?*

*If we can listen to late night comedians’ monologues riddled with immoral references, are we really fearing God and hating evil?*

Because we are so loved, God wants us to repent of any friendship with the world—so He warns us by showing us what will happen to us if we persist in this friendliness to the world mode.

Now that takes us to Samson. He is the classic picture of one who through the lusts of the flesh became a friend of the world.

The life of Samson [is a tragic story of the cost of yielding to the lusts of the flesh- and that’s what I want to show you this evening as we start back in the book of Judges 13-16.](#)

[His life](#) is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh; Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life.

[The greatest enemy Samson had was himself.](#) What a warning to each of us who have the same problem—it is called our flesh. Within each of us a traitorous inclination against God never slumbers, and always smolders. Given any amount of fuel either through the desires of the body, the desires of the eye or the pride of life—and it blazes to life in a conflagration of destruction.

Samson’s history is an illustration of Paul’s warning in 1 Cor. 9:27:

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Samson was [disqualified](#). [In Heaven he was remembered as a man of faith. On earth he was remembered as a man who was disqualified.](#) Hebrews 11:32 cites him for his faith in God’s Word, but apart from this, very little can be said on his behalf. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12, NKJV). Note the steps that led to Samson’s sin and tragic end.

To have grown up with Samson must have been amazing. His neighborhood pals must have stood in wonder at his immense strength. His enemies must have fled quickly. It was like having a one-man army.

As a young man probably in his teens, we get the first indicator that Samson was not going the direction the Lord had pointed him. **He was in great need of God's grace.** He begins to live by his desires and not God's. He begins to serve his own lusts and not God's Words. A string of women begin to parade through his life. In fact **seven times** Samson is guided by the lust of his eyes when he sees women that please him. That was a dangerous choice each time. Here is the list: Judges 14.1, 2, 3, 7; 15.1, 2; 16.1.

The final, and deadliest woman is Delilah in Judges 16.4. Her name has become synonymous with lust, deceit, betrayal and ruin. She tries to find the secret of his strength for an enormous bribe. **She finally wears him down.** Samson knows it is his hair and in a series of three lies he slowly gives clues.

C. H. Spurgeon's summary says it all:

*At last<sup>2</sup> he falls into the hands of Delilah. He foolishly plays with his own destruction. At last he lets out the secret, his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favor to him.*

*While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen!*

*And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him - "Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! Let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle!*

*Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder - the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill.*

*That he should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favor of God for a while; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all.*

**Samson's** soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. **Practicing of sin blinds us, then sin slowly binds us with its fetters and finally blinded and bound we have to go grinding through life because of sin. Talk to anybody that's**

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<sup>2</sup> Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 21st, 1858, by the REV. C. H. SPURGEON at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens. Sermon # 224.  
<http://thebible revival.com/teachings/books/0008/0224.htm>

lived an immoral life that's come to Christ- ask them how exciting it really was.

Talk to someone that's been in the drug culture that's come to Christ- ask them whether it's as exciting as it appears to be in the media. Talk to anybody that's gotten into the world of alcohol, bars and ask them whether it really satisfies. It doesn't- it has a passing pleasure that slowly blinds- that binds us with cords that we forge for ourselves that we cannot break and finally we become the one who is grinding out an existence totally the captive of sin. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time.

What was Samson's problem?

1. First, Samson<sup>3</sup> was **dominated by lust**. That passion led Samson to desire a Philistine woman as a wife, which was strictly forbidden by God's Law. In addition, that passion led him to liaisons with prostitutes, like the one with the woman Delilah who betrayed him for money. [How many times do men say no, no, I'm doing that because I love her. No- love can wait to fulfill a legitimate desire, lust can't. Lust always fulfills legitimate desires in an illegitimate way. You want to know the difference between love and lust? Can you wait? If you can't it's lust. Love always waits.](#)
2. Second, Samson was **driven by pride and revenge**. He was more moved by anger at personal affronts to strike out at the Philistines than he was moved by the suffering of the people he was supposed to lead (cf. 14:19–20; 15:7–8; 16:28).
3. Third, Samson was **defeated by himself**. We can hardly imagine what Samson, with his great strength and godly heritage, might have been. If only he had lived out daily the formal commitment to God expressed in that Nazarite vow.

The rest of the story shows the tragic end of the believer who will not let God have his way with his life. From 16.20 on, Samson does nothing but lose. [What exactly did Samson lose?](#)

1. **Samson loses his hair**, the symbol of his Nazarite dedication; for that dedication had long since been abandoned. [God allowed the outward symbol of it to be taken away from him.](#)
2. **Samson loses his strength**, but doesn't even know it until he is overpowered. Judges 16:20 [And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. He did not know how futile it is for the servant of God to try to serve the Lord when out of His will because he loses his strength. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. We operate in our own strength, he will let us fail in our own strength. We operate without heeding His warnings, He will let us live without heeding his warnings. We operate without walking in the Spirit? He'll let us operate that way.](#)
3. **Samson loses his sight**, as the Philistines put out his eyes.
4. **Samson loses his freedom**, for they bind him with fetters of brass.

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<sup>3</sup> Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

5. **Samson loses his usefulness to the Lord**, for he ends up grinding corn instead of fighting God's battles. What a picture of sin. 1<sup>st</sup> sin blinds, then sin binds, and finally sin grinds. Ask any person who has lived a life of alcohol, a life of immorality, a life of drugs – they will tell you no matter how alluring it looks, it grinds—as the writer of Proverbs says it's gravel in the mouth. And all of this began when Samson despised his blessings and defied his parents!
6. **Samson loses his testimony**, for he was the laughingstock of the Philistines. Their fish-god Dagon, not the God of Israel, was given all the glory.
7. **Samson loses his life**. Samson was a castaway he had committed sin unto death, and God had to take him off the scene. His loved ones claimed his body and buried him "between Zorah and Eshtaol"—the very place where he had started his ministry (13:25). What about Samson's death? Was it suicide, and was it wrong<sup>4</sup>?

Turn to 1 Corinthians 9 These are some of the warning verses of the New Testament. You might want to mark them. The scriptures tell us that we should ponder the example of the Old Testament. What about us in the New Testament? You say we're not Nazarites and we get our hair cut and we don't stay away from the fruit of the vine and from being near dead people and all that. We aren't in the Old Testament. What's the message for us?

1 Corinthians 9:27 But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should **become disqualified**---

Disqualified is **adokimos** in Greek, and it is a very interesting word. It's the word in the ancient world that was used in coin making. Individual men would melt gold and pour it into molds and they would stamp it with a number and they would give it out as currency and they agreed on how much it weighed.

But people learned early on that you could file off part of that gold coin and if you filed a little bit off of a lot of coins you could get coins with out working. So if you found coins with file marks on them- they would be **adokimos**- they'd give them back and say I'm not taking that coin, its not right, someone has shaved off the edges, cut the corners, and ruined its worth!

What Paul is saying is, after I've lived my life and poured my life into the mold of God's will--if I cut corners and say I'm serving God so I can also serve my lust a little bit- I can have a little secret- you know life's hard and you got to have a few pleasures...

No says Paul, I'll not cheat in the holiness department or in the judgment God will say that one cut the corners, we'll disqualify that life. That's what Paul was afraid of. What's the message for us? 1 Corinthians 3 and the fires of God's Judgment burning away worthlessness from our lives is something to meditate on.

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<sup>4</sup> Some Philistine temples had roofs overlooking a courtyard, above wooden columns planted on stone foundations. The central pillars were set close to furnish extra support for the roof. Here the victory celebration and taunts flung at the prisoner below drew a big crowd. The full strength of Samson, renewed by God, enabled him to buckle the columns. As a result, the roof collapsed and the victory was Israel's, not Philistia's. He died for the cause of his country and his God. He was not committing suicide, but rather bringing God's judgment on His enemies and willing to leave his own life or death to God. He was the greatest champion of all Israel, yet a man of passion capable of severe sin. Still, he is in the list of the faithful (cf. Heb. 11:32). Judges 16 in the John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

What happened to Samson in New Testament terms? To answer that, and as a warning to every one of us called to life long consecration to the Lord, here is a series of verses that explain to us that there are "sins unto death". As believers we are--

1. CONSECRATED -- ALL NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS ARE CONSECRATED TO THE LORD LIKE SAMSON WAS.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, -wow- If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that **your body is the temple (naos the sacred chamber where God dwelt) of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Don't shave off the corners, don't excuse, don't justify, don't allow sin in because God says you and I are to be consecrated.

2. ANSWERABLE -- WE WILL ANSWER TO GOD FOR WHAT WE DID WITH OUR BODY.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, **he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 But **I discipline my body** (hupopiazō-GK.) This mean hit under the eye- Paul says I am hitting myself under the eye- not literally- he wasn't some kind of nut that was trying to hurt his body and be a self sacrificing person physically- he's saying I'm trying to knock out my flesh **and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should **become disqualified---** or have cut corners.

3. OWNED--GOD IS INVOLVED -- GOD WILL NOT STAND BY AS WE SIN. We will answer to God for what we did in our body because we as believers are consecrated to God.

1 Corinthians 11:30-31 For this reason **many are weak –those are people who couldn't control their appetites- God sent weakness in to their lives- and sick among you, and many sleep.** For this reason **many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.** 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged (by God).

What is sleep? Death of the body- and the spirit is with Christ. People get weak, sick and die not because they're at that age when it's time to for it to happen and



it's a glorious going home- it's because they do not deal with their pride, lust and they live for the flesh. That's exactly what he's saying- meditate on that some time.

#### 4. LIABLE--GOD GIVE US WARNINGS -- CHASTENING PROVES GOD'S LOVE.

Hebrews 12:5-6 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; **6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.**"

Those who live by the lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life- those who will not separate from the world, those who love the world, who make friends with the world, those Who walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, sit in the seat of the scornful; (Psalm 1:1) God says don't be deceived I'm not mocked- you'll reap what you're sowing.

Hebrews 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

You say well I'm living it up and doing what I want and nothing is happening. Verse 8 should speak to you then-

Hebrews 12:8 But if you are without chastening, of which all –by the way all always means all- all the time in the Bible- have become partakers, **then you are illegitimate and not sons.**

God says every single one of my sons and daughters I spank if they live in sin. God's warning us.

#### 5. RESPONSIBLE--YOU CAN GO TOO FAR -- GOING TOO FAR TOO OFTEN WITH SIN WILL BE DEADLY FOR BELIEVERS.

1 John 5:16-17 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. **There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.** 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

You see what all that unusual language means is this: if you go too far, too long, God says that's enough and takes you out of the world. Do you know what happened to Samson? He went too far, too long and God took him out. He sinned unto death. It's a tragic thing.

#### 6. WARNED--GOD KILLS BELIEVERS WHO WON'T REPENT IN TIME. Revelation 2:22-23 **Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, -God has a time period and He waits, chastens, weakens,**

sickens and when that does not bring about Godly sorrow that leads to repentance then God kills believers who will not repent- and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Apparently during the grinding at the mill, Samson repented of his sin. Sightless, being made fun of- they made him trip over things, they hit him and all that and he was grinding in the mill and they had made him their center attraction- like an amusement park- but while that was going on- God offered him one more chance to act by faith. His hair had begun to grow and Samson remembered his calling. He asked God for strength to win one more victory over the enemy. God answered his prayer, but in defeating others, Samson lost his own life.

Samson is a powerful illustration of friendship with the world through the lusts of the flesh—and those destructive powers that the lusts of the flesh wield.

- Samson illustrates people who have power to conquer others, but who cannot conquer themselves.
- He could set the Philistine fields on fire, but was consumed by the fires of his own lust.
- He could kill an attacking lion, but was utterly defeated by the passions of his own flesh.
- He could easily break the bonds that men put on him, but the shackles of his own sin gradually grew stronger on his soul.
- He could have led the nation, he preferred to work independently, and as a result, left no permanent victory behind.
- He could have been remembered for what he built up, but instead everyone but God only remembers what he destroyed – lions, foxes, fields, gates, soldiers, women's purity, and his own life and ministry.

Samson is a powerful reminder of God's grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time.

The life of Samson is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin, and the restoring power of grace. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh; Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life. Yet Samson in the final analysis, as God sees His life – is a man of faith. One moment of godly sorrow, leading to a repentant prayer of faith -- at his darkest hour, brought him back to the place of blessing. Marvelous grace of our loving God, grace that exceeds our sin and our shame.

God's grace tells us that even if we have lived like Samson- Samson made it– to testify—anyone can who will turn in faith and repent and look to God. As a lost person, turn while you hear His voice. As a believer, there is no one who has gone too far to

miss God's grace if you'll respond while you hear His voice. But if you continue, you can go too far and there is a sin that leads to death. Samson- what a picture of sin that destroys and grace that restores and our God who give us a second chance. Let's bow together and ask the Lord to speak to our hearts according to what His Spirit has laid upon us.

**4:7–10** In a series of 10 commands (10 imperative verbs in the Gr. text),

**4:7 submit.** Lit. “to line up under.” The word was used of soldiers under the authority of their commander. In the NT, it describes Jesus’ submission to His parents’ authority (Luke 2:51), submission to human government (Rom. 13:1), the church’s submission to Christ (Eph. 5:24), and servants’ submission to their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18). James used the word to describe a willing, conscious submission to God’s authority as sovereign ruler of the universe. A truly humble person will give his allegiance to God, obey His commands, and follow His leadership (cf. Matt. 10:38).

**Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** The flip side of the first command. “Resist” literally means “take your stand against.” All people are either under the lordship of Christ or the lordship of Satan (John 8:44; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 3:8; 5:19); there is no middle ground. Those who transfer their allegiance from Satan to God will find that Satan “will flee from” them; he is a defeated foe.

**4:8 Draw near.** Pursue an intimate love relationship with God (cf. Phil. 3:10).

Salvation involves more than submitting to God and resisting the devil; the redeemed heart longs for communion with God (Pss. 27:8; 42:1,2; 63:1,2; 84:2; 143:6; Matt. 22:37). **Cleanse your hands.** The OT priests had to ceremonially wash their hands before approaching God (Ex. 30:19–21), and sinners who would approach Him must recognize and confess their sin. **purify your hearts.** Cleansing the hands symbolizes external behavior; this phrase refers to the inner thoughts, motives, and desires of the heart (Ps. 24:3,4; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 18:31; 36:25,26; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22). **double-minded.** See *note on 1:8*. **4:9 Lament.** Be afflicted, wretched, and miserable. This is the state of those truly broken over their sin. **mourn.** See *note on Matt. 5:4*. God will not turn away a heart broken and contrite over sin (Ps. 51:17; 2 Cor. 7:10). Mourning is the inner response to such brokenness. **weep.** The outward manifestation of inner sorrow over sin (cf. Mark 14:72). **laughter.** Used only here in the NT, the word signifies the flippant laughter of those foolishly indulging in worldly pleasures. The picture is of people who give no thought to God, life, death, sin, judgment, or holiness. James calls on such people to mourn over their sin (cf. Luke 18:13,14). **4:10** See Ps. 75:6; Matt. 23:12. This final command sums up the preceding 9 (see *notes on vv. 7–10*) commands, which mark the truly humble person. “Humble” comes from a word meaning “to make oneself low.” Those conscious of being in the presence of the majestic, infinitely holy God are humble (cf. Is. 6:5).<sup>5</sup>

How can we be the friends of God and the enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil? James gives us three instructions to follow if we would enjoy peace instead of war.

1. **Submit to God (v. 7).** This word is a military term that means “get into your proper rank.” Unconditional surrender is the only way to complete victory. If there is any area of the life kept back from God, there will always be battles. This explains why uncommitted Christians cannot live with themselves or with other people. “Neither give place to the devil,” cautions Paul in Ephesians 4:27. Satan needs a foothold in our lives if he is going to fight against God; and *we give him that foothold*. The way to resist the devil is to submit to God.

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<sup>5</sup>John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

2. **Draw near to God (v. 8).** How do we do this? By confessing our sins and asking for His cleansing. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." The Greek word translated *purify* means "make chaste." This parallels the idea of "spiritual adultery" in James 4:4. Dr. A.W. Tozer has a profound essay in one of his books, entitled, "Nearness Is Likeness." The more we are like God, the nearer we are to God. I may be sitting in my living room with my Siamese cat on my lap, and my wife may be twenty feet away in the kitchen; yet I am nearer to my wife than to the cat because the cat is unlike me. We have very little in common. God graciously draws near to us when we deal with the sin in our lives that keeps Him at a distance. He will not share us with anyone else; He must have complete control. The double-minded Christian can never be close to God. Again, Abraham and Lot come to mind. Abraham "drew near" and talked to God about Sodom (Gen. 18:23ff), while Lot moved into Sodom and lost the blessing of God.
3. **Humble yourselves before God (vv. 9–10).** It is possible to submit outwardly and yet not be humbled inwardly. God hates the sin of pride (Prov. 6:16–17), and He will chasten the proud believer until he is humbled. We have a tendency to treat sin too lightly, even to laugh about it ("let your laughter be turned into mourning"). But sin is serious, and one mark of true humility is facing the seriousness of sin and dealing with our disobedience. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

If we obey these three instructions, then God will draw near, cleanse us, and forgive us; *and the wars will cease!* We will not be at war with God, so we will not be at war with ourselves. This means we will not be at war with others. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). 6

### *THE GRACE OF GOD (v. 6)*

The answer is to remove the question mark from the middle of verse 6 and put it at the end of verse 5 where it belongs, and then read the opening words of verse 6 not as a question, but as a declaration: "But he gives more grace." That is the answer—more grace! This is not saving grace, for every believer has that. Rather, it is literally "greater grace"—God's gracious supply to live as we ought in a fallen world. As Augustine put it, "God gives what he demands." There is always, for the believer, greater grace. This is without doubt one of the most comforting texts in all of Scripture.

This verse means there will always be enough grace regardless of our situation or need—always. The writer of Hebrews confidently tells us, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). We have no need which outstrips his grace, and we never will! Even if we fall into abject sin there is a stream of grace, as Paul said: "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20b). "For daily need there is daily grace; for sudden need, sudden grace; for overwhelming need,

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6Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

overwhelming grace," says John Blanchard. John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace," knew this well:

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come:  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.*

There is always more grace. An artist once submitted a painting of Niagara Falls for an exhibition, but neglected to give it a title. The gallery, faced with the need to supply one, came up with these words: "more to follow." Old Niagara Falls, spilling over billions of gallons per year for thousands of years, has more than met the needs of those below and is a fit emblem of the flood of God's grace. There is always more to follow! The Apostle John referred to this reality, saying, "For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:16, NASB). This is literally "grace instead of grace" or, as others have rendered it, "grace following grace" or "grace heaped upon grace."

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater;  
He sendeth more grace when the labours increase;  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.  
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done:  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.  
His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

(Annie Johnson Flint)

Whatever our condition or situation, he always "gives us more grace." He gives grace to overcome *personal weaknesses*. If to your alarm you find that you are repeatedly succumbing to a burning pursuit of hedonism, God will give you more grace if you ask. If you are a victim of an imploding self-centeredness which repeatedly sucks you into its nothingness, and you want deliverance, there is grace for the asking. Perhaps you are so stubborn that you have never lost an argument. Perhaps you are such a knothed that you never listen to anyone. Now you find that your most intimate relationships are impaired, so that your spouse and friends find your presence a burden, but you want to change. God will give you more grace. If you have fed on cherished hatreds, but now see that the feast has really been the Devil's feast and the main course your soul, and you want deliverance, he will give you more grace.

Perhaps your life has *insurmountable obstacles*. Perhaps a terminal disease. There is more grace. Or a loved one's death. There is more grace. Or a shattering divorce. There is more grace. Or the bitter ashes of failure. There is more grace.

There is also grace to do the *impossible*. If God is calling you to sell all and go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel or to take up a social crusade—whatever he asks—

there will always be more grace.

*For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

Is there any condition to receiving this river of grace? Yes—a very slight one for some people, a Donner Pass for others. James quotes Proverbs 3: 34—“That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (v. 6b). A proud life is hard to grace. That is why Jesus said, “But woe to you who are rich ... Woe to you who are well fed now ... Woe to you who laugh now ... Woe to you when all men speak well of you” (Luke 6: 24–26). He knew that the rich, well-fed, laughing, those who are spoken well of, are naturally weighted with the relentless gravity of pride and thus find it difficult to open up to God’s love and mercy. It is true that “he gives us more grace,” that there is always greater grace, grace upon grace, grace heaped on grace. But it is also true that “‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (v. 6). Have we provoked our Maker’s jealousy? If so, he will give us more grace. *Lord, we come humbly to you asking for more grace!*<sup>7</sup>

*RESIST ... COME NEAR (vv. 7b, 8a)*

“Resist” is a military metaphor which means to *stand against*, as in combat. This martial language suggests the parallel language of Ephesians 6 where we are told how to prepare to resist the Devil. The primary element is an understanding of the enemy, which Paul memorably gives us in verse 12: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” From this we learn that the struggle is *supernatural*, supra-flesh and blood. We also learn that it is *personal*, for the word for “struggle” suggests hand to hand combat—swaying back and forth in sweaty battle. Finally, it is *futile* if fought with conventional weapons because we are fighting against serried ranks of evil angels led by fallen angelic princes. Once we understand the nature of the enemy, we must put on the proper armament. For this let us picture the old warrior Paul in his own spiritual armor.

1. He has worn his warbelt so long that it is sweat through and salt-stained and comfortable like an old horse’s bridle, and it holds everything perfectly in place. The “*belt of truth*,” God’s truth, has girt him tight for years, so that it permeates his life and truth reigns within. He is armed with the clear eyes of a clear conscience. He can face anything.
2. His torso is sheathed with a battle-tarnished breastplate. It is criss-crossed with great lateral grooves from slicing sword blows and dented from enemy artillery. The “*breastplate of righteousness*” has preserved his vitals intact. His holy life has rendered his heart impervious to the spiritual assaults of Satan.
3. His gnarled legs are comfortable in his ancient war boots. He has stood his ground on several continents. The boots are the “*gospel of peace*,” the peace *with* God that comes through faith in him, and the resultant peace *of* God—the sense of well-being in wholeness—*shalom*. He stands in peace, and being rooted in peace he cannot be moved.

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<sup>7</sup>Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: James—Faith That Works*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

4. Paul's great shield terrifies the eyes, for the broken shafts and the many charred holes reveal him to be the victor of many fierce battles. He has held the "*shield of faith*" as he repeatedly believed God's Word and so extinguished every fiery dart of doubt and sensuality and materialism. None have touched him.
5. On his old gray head he wears a helmet which has seen better days. Great dents mar its symmetry, reminders of furtive blows dealt him by the enemy. The "*helmet of salvation,*" the confidence of knowing that he is saved and will be saved, has allowed him to stand tall against the most vicious assaults. His imperial confidence gives him a regal bearing.
6. Then there is his sword. He was equal to a hundred when his sword flashed. The "*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*" the ultimate offensive weapon, cut through everything—armor, flesh, glistening bone, and running marrow—even the soul (cf. Hebrews 4:12).

These are the weapons: *truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God*—and any believer who resists with these will put the Devil and his armies to flight! This is not arrogance. This is the truth! You and I can withstand the Devil if we wear the armor God provides. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (v. 7).

Such resources are available to us! But there is another half to this: "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (v. 8a). There are two views which the Christian ought to cultivate with all that he has: the Devil's back and the face of God.

The soul-tingling truth here is, if you go after God, he will go after you! This was the prodigal son's experience when he neared his home: "'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him'" (Luke 15:20). The father smothered him with kisses. Inch toward God, and he will step toward you. Step toward God, and he will sprint toward you. Sprint toward God, and he will fly to you!

What is James' overall point here in this positive call to draw near? In a word, *prayer*. The essence of prayer is the heart drawing near to God. Prayer is the soul's desire to come to him, to receive his love, to feel his power as we conform to his will. This is exactly what Paul's soldier in spiritual armor does. Every piece is in place. The spiritual forces of wickedness approach, and there will be lethal battle. But first the soldier falls to his knees and prays in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers (cf. Ephesians 6:18).

There is only one view more welcome than the backside of the Devil—and that is the face of God. Paul tells us, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). As his children and *in his Son*, we are near. But there is a *nearer nearness* available to all: "Come near to God and he will come near to you." If you will take that step, a new nearness to God will be yours, and with it buoying tides of his grace.

### *WASH ... PURIFY (v. 8b)*

The external is, "Wash your hands, you sinners," and the internal is, "purify your hearts, you double-minded" (v. 8b). This is a call to clean up one's acts and inner life. James is bitingly aggressive, because up to now he has been courteously referring to his



correspondents as “brethren,” but now insultingly calls them “sinners” and “double-minded.” The latter literally means *two-souled* and describes them as having a double allegiance to God and the world. This is a spiritual impossibility. Ridiculous! we think. But it is just as much (or even more) absurd for a true child of God to serve two masters. The Lord calls us to a single-minded allegiance to himself. He wants us to have eyes only for him! Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart (*the single-minded*), for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8). Jesus meant they would see him in this life, because this purity of focus invites deeper spiritual understanding. Seeing God in life is the highest good—the *summum bonum*—because all those who see him become like him. “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Are we two-souled Christians—having wandering eyes, one raised to Heaven, one focused on earth—absurd Mickey Cohens? If so, there is only one thing to do: *repent!* “Wash your hands ... purify your hearts”—and get ready for more grace!

### GRIEVE ... CHANGE (v. 9)

Nevertheless, while gloom is not a Christian characteristic, mourning over our sin is. “Grieve” describes the wretchedness one ought to experience when he falls to sin. “Be devastated” is the perfect expression of what “grieve” means. “Mourn” expresses inner grief, and “wail” refers to a funeral lament. “Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom” is a scathing denunciation of Christians who are so insensitive and superficial that they are laughing when they ought to be weeping! Some laughter indicates a sickness of soul which only tears can cure. Have we wept over our sins? Years ago, at a great convention, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse stood before a vast throng and began his address dramatically by saying: “Up is down!” and then after a lengthy pause, “Down is up!” In doing so, he was intoning an unbreakable spiritual law: God exalts the humble and debases the proud. During his time on earth Jesus repeated this on three separate occasions: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14; cf. Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11). The gravity of grace will always channel the rivers of divine favor to the lowly—to those 1) who submit to God, 2) whose soul’s momentum is away from the Devil and toward God, 3) who purify their inner and outer lives, 4) who mourn over their sins, and 5) who obey the final summary command, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (v. 10). We are not to wait passively for this to somehow happen. We are not to wait for someone else to humble us, nor should we wait for the vicissitudes of life to do it. Rather, self-humbling is *our* Christian duty. We must take inventory of our sinfulness and weakness, then bow in total submission to God, yielding our total being, our dreams, our future, our *everything* to him. It is then that he will pour on the grace—grace upon grace—grace heaped upon grace—“and he will lift you up.”<sup>8</sup>

### SAMSON (SAVE)

[Samson is one of the most powerful pictures I've ever seen of the futility and loss that](#)

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<sup>8</sup>Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: James—Faith That Works*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

friendship with the world brings. Samson gradually became a friend of the world and reaped in his lifetime the complete loss of everything he had lived his entire life to get.

Samson is a powerful reminder of God's grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time. [That's the wonder of God's grace, the God of the second chance.](#)

The life of Samson is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin, and the restoring power of grace. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh; Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life. Yet Samson in the final analysis, as God sees His life – is a man of faith. [What a picture of grace.](#) One moment of godly sorrow, leading to a repentant prayer of faith -- at his darkest hour, [God](#) brought him back to the place of blessing. [God is the God of the second chance.](#)

Marvelous grace of our loving God,  
grace that exceeds our sin and our shame.  
Yonder on Calvary's Mount outpoured—  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled...

[I always like to say:](#) If Samson made it – anyone may. [He was about as low and as far and defiled as you can get and yet he made it and was one of God's dear heroes of the faith.](#)

All of this wonderful heritage of Judges 13, the grown Samson despised!

God said to never drink—he drank. God said to never touch—he touched. God said to never cut—he cut. Instead of putting himself in God's hands to accomplish his God-given task, he chose to live to please himself. How tragic it is when God gives a young person a wonderful heritage and a great opportunity, and he or she treats it lightly. [God says to whom much is given, much is required and there are children that grow up in the shadow of Godly parents, under the sound of God's Word, with the knowledge of God and yet they choose to neglect that and worse than that they turn from it. God says there's a great danger in turning from Him.](#)

Let's continue with Samson because in the first few verses of chapter 14 we see a problem.

**SAMSON DISOBEYED HIS PARENTS (14:1–4):** One evidence of spiritual decline can be the way we get along with our loved ones- [especially his parents- he disobeyed them.](#) [What did he decide?](#)

***He decided to go away from the Lord.*** [<sup>1</sup> Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. \(14:1\) Did you know](#)

that's a little statement but it's a profound statement. He chose to go down away from the Lord's way. He was a Nazarite, he was to be not only separated from death and alcohol and from anything to do with disobedience. He was to be pure as the Lord's servant and that meant marry only within the covenant people. Well Samson went down- it is true both spiritually and geographically. Instead of staying in the borders of Israel, he went into enemy territory and fell in love with a heathen woman.

***He decided to ignore God's rules.*** He knew the laws of separation God had given to the Jews, but he chose to ignore them- he chose to not only go to Timnah and look for one but he picked one- he didn't just think through--- hey maybe there's some pretty gals down the road here—no—he spied one and wanted one and chose one. He went away from the Lord, he looked in the wrong spot for what he wanted and then he chose to ignore God's rules but look at this- in verse 3: **And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."** Literally she is in my eyes. Did you know that's what the Hebrew words are- for she is in my eyes. He says man I can't get her off my mind I can see her all the time, she's filling my mind. You know what that is? Total outward focus- he saw her body, he never saw her spirit, he never looked at her soul, he never thought of her character, he looked at her body and was living for the moment, for the lusts of his flesh and

What was in his eyes? Her character? Her devotion to God? No, it was her body, her looks, her allurements that kept her burned into his mind. (see Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3; and 2 Cor. 6:14–18; also Gen. 24:1–4).

***He decided he was his own authority.*** That started when he chose to disobey his parents. When they said don't do that Samson---- now God overruled because God, knowing his propensity, knowing his lust was going to use this as a vehicle of His judgment on the Philistines but Samson was still responsible—be not deceived, God is not mocked, what he sowed, he's going to reap.

Note that he *told* his parents; he did not *ask* them. And when they reminded him of God's law, he defied them. "Get her for me," he insisted, "for she pleases me well!" It did not bother Samson that his desires displeased his parents. Note that in this instance God mercifully was going to overrule his sin and use it to weaken the Philistines (v. 4). Christian young people need to stop and consider carefully when they find themselves defying godly parents who know God's Word.

But let's hasten to the tragedy of Samson's life is the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter because

**SAMSON PLAYED WITH SIN (16):** Samson had already gotten into trouble with one woman, but now he tried again, this time going deep into enemy territory to Gaza. **Pride has taken hold of him, he is the superman so he can go marching right into the epicenter of the Philistine army going for another woman. And his lusts take him into the city of Gaza.**

- o Again, God warned him by allowing the enemy to almost catch him, but Samson still refused to repent. It was then that Delilah came into his life and led him to his doom.

- The Valley of Sorek was near his home, but Samson's heart was already far from God **that he should know and love and serve**. It shocks us to see this Nazarite sleeping on the lap of a wicked woman, but this is what happens when people choose to go their own way **to play with sin** and reject the counsel of loved ones and the Lord.
- Three times Delilah enticed Samson, and three times he lied to her. Each time, the enemy attacked him, so he should have realized he was in danger. But read Prov. 7:21–27 to see why Samson yielded. He was asleep when he should have been awake! Remember the warning Christ gave to Peter in Matt. 26:40–41. Note that each lie Samson told actually took him closer to the truth. How dangerous it is to play with sin.

Proverbs 7:21-27 With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. 22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, 23 Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life. 24 Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: 25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; 26 For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. 27 Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.

Matthew 26:40-41 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."