

James 4:4-12

“More Grace”

- I. Intro
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I. Intro

This morning we conclude our study of the effects of worldly wisdom that produces according to 3:14 “**bitter envy, self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing**” has on three relationships.

- I. Vs. 1b **At war with OURSELVES:**
- II. Vs. 1a, 2a, 11a **At war with OTHERS:**
- III. Vs. 2b-6 **At war with GOD:**

We will examine how such prolonged association with worldly wisdom will affect our relationship with God then deal with the antidote to this 6-12.

II. Vs. 4-5 At war with God

Vs. 4-5 **At war with God**: Few, if any, Christian would wake up one day and decide to go back to a time when they were at war with God. But that is what they are inadvertently doing when they continue to choose worldly wisdom that leads to the personal character traits of “**bitter envy, self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing**”. So, severe is this that James puts it into too terms that describe **human infidelity** as he calls out those who have become so engaged in the battle that they are “***adulterers and adulteresses***”. There rebellion against Godly wisdom has destroyed the harmony of their relationship with God and now they have conflict. How was such a breakup with God accomplished? James tells his readers that **it was from a persistent cheating on God** by having an active relationship with the world system with its worldly wisdom. The analogy isn’t a stretch

as Paul in Romans 7:4 tells his readers that as believers we are married to Christ. The original Jewish readers of this letter were very familiar with this comparison as they needed to only read the prophets of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Hosea where each of these prophets under the Holy Spirits direction rebuked the nation of committing “*spiritual adultery*” by following the worldly wisdom like the pagan nations and worshipping foreign gods. Having describe the condition James moves on to tell us that such a condition of “*Spiritual adultery*” is begun by “friendship with the world” and by the world he means the world system that has worldly wisdom as its only influence and is anti-Jesus and anti-God. The world system that is guided by worldly wisdom that appeals to the flesh is one characterized the sacrificing of the spiritual at the altar of the material, the future at the altar of the present, the eternal at the altar of temporary, the things of God to the altar of the our feelings. We can see many cases of this friendship that ends up with “*Spiritual adultery*”, Lot whose relative Abraham was a friend of God made the world his friend and ended up in war with others and finally at war with God. Psalm 1 reveals the gradual descent into “*Spiritual adultery*” when using Hebrew poetry describes the blessed mad who is following Godly wisdom as the person who: Walks NOT in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful. In each of these three examples of what the Godly man doesn’t do we see a threefold progression of the gradual descent into being at war with God as first they are entertaining counsel from those spouting worldly wisdom, which then leads them to hanging around those who are habitually practicing sin to finally being so involved in worldly wisdom that they end up being a part of the group that attack those who follow Godly wisdom. Paul told Timothy that such a person becomes over time of following

worldly wisdom instead of Godly wisdom in 2 Timothy 3:4 “**traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**” Living in such a way as this means that we are “grieving the Holy Spirit” who lives in us and this is why James says in verse 5 “*Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, “**The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.**”* Paul described a fellow Christian Demas whom he said in 2 Timothy 4:10 “**has forsaken me, having loved this present world,** and has departed for *Thessalonica.*” It’s not too strong to describe a person who has made friendship of this world a greater priority than a relationship with God as being “enmity with God”. The dictionary describes “enmity” as being “**the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone**”. A by-product of such a war against God is that the Holy Spirit who lives in us to completely possess us, empower us and control our lives for our good and God’s glory will not be able to do so and that will make us less responsive to God’s Word that seeks to transform us into His image. I find it such an amazing blessing to realize that God is like a loving husband who so loves His bride that not only does He give her all His intention and love He wants the same from her. When we live to please the old nature, we are declaring war against God.

III. Vs. 6-12 Nine keys to restoration

Vs. 6-10 Here in verse 6-12 James tells us what we can do to change our condition if we have been following worldly wisdom that has produced the battlefields in our hearts that has taken its toll upon relationships with ourselves, others and God. Notice that James divides this into two sections with verses 6-10 dealing with ourselves and God and verses 11-12 dealing with our relationship with others.

The first thing that we note is found in James words, “*But He* (the Holy Spirit) *gives **MORE GRACE.***” To the person who has succumbed to worldly wisdom that has caused the personal characteristics of “***bitter envy, self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing***” and destroyed relationships with others and God we are told that the first thing that the Holy Spirit will grant is “MORE GRACE”! The same “GRACE” that initiated the unbeliever to receive Jesus is given to the person who has chosen to reject Godly wisdom for worldly wisdom in order to restore them back into fellowship! But this “MORE GRACE” can only be received by those who are broken from their pride and are now humble! One of the most amazing realities of the bible is that God’s grace is always available for our deepest needs and rebellions if we will be humbled and broken! Abounding grace is the only lifeline offered or needed by God to our personal rebellion. No requirements of penitence, or a few laps around purgatory. No groveling and begging on our part to do better next time. Neither does God demand that we come back and eat slop like the prodigal, no He calls the fatted calf and order a celebration because the child has come back to His grace and mercy! Instead just as it was when we first came to God, if we are going to be the recipient of God’s grace we will have to kill our pride and arrogance. When we proudly turned away from Godly wisdom to Worldly wisdom we must now need to humble ourselves and kill this pride that led us away. From this James tells his readers that the giving of God’s grace and our humility has ***nine key parts to it that are in a specific order:***

1. Vs. 7a “*Therefore submit to God*”: **Re-relinquish control of your life to God who has given you His unmerited favor.** The Greek word for “submit” is a military term that means to “*take rank under another*”. The person who has been under the influence of worldly wisdom to where they are in active rebellion against God will need to remember their true rank and humble themselves before God. They will need to realize that they aren’t the captain of their own ship, they

- need to surrender the control of their lives afresh so they can again enjoy the grace of God. There is one sure fire way to not experience the grace of God; try to earn it and think you deserve it! Such a surrender will require the person to admit without excuses that they haven't been doing a good job of running their own life instead they have been ruining their life. Again, it is important that we take these out of order or skip one of these 9 keys to restoration. Years ago, in bible college a fellow student was saying that each and every day he got up every morning on the edge of his bed "resisted the devil so that he would flee from him. You could tell he was quite proud of the process until another student wisely pointed out that he had missed read that verse as the first part of that was "submitting to God.
2. Vs.7b "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" **Resist the devil's worldly wisdom and it will no longer influence you.** James instructs his readers to next "resist the devil" and promises that their resistance will cause the devil to flee. Peter also made a similar promise in 1 Peter 5:8-9 when he wrote, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*" To be effective in resisting the devil you will need to do three things:
 - A. **Put on Christ whom Paul describes as the armor of God.** Ephesians 6:10-18
 - B. **Devour the word of God.** Matt 4:4
 - C. **Fervently pray and abide in Christ.** John 15:7, 1 John 5:14-15
 3. Vs. 8a "*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*" **Restore worship as a priority.** James had just said to "*submit to God*" now he admonishes to "*draw near to God*" In the Greek the verb "draw near" is the way the First Testament described the Levitical priests approaching God with the sacrifices. It has to do with coming close to God in order to worship Him and when we draw near to Him to worship He draws near to us as our relational intimacy increases and we experience a deeper encounter with Him. Notice in James's words that it is God who is first initiating as we are being wooed to Him and is inviting us to come close so that He can fill us.
 4. Vs. 8b "*Cleanse your hands, you sinners..*" **Renounce sinful actions.** This phrase we remind the original readers of this letter of the priests who had to ceremonial wash their hands before they could approach the Holy Place in the tabernacle. The Psalmist said this in Ps. 24:3-4 "*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.*" The point James is making is that as we come back to God's grace we won't be able to hold onto actions and attitudes that separate us from His grace.
 5. Vs. 8c "*Purify your hearts, you double-minded.*" **Reject sinful attitudes.** James calls his readers "*double-minded*" which is a term that means fickle and a procrastinator which describes a person who is trying to still love worldly wisdom while attempting to maintain a relationship with Christ. This vacillation will stop a person from experiencing God's grace and what was behind Joshua's exhortation to the nation of Israel to decide whom they would follow.
 6. Vs. 9a "*Lament and mourn and weep.*" **React to sin with a broken heart.** James'

words again would remind the original reader of the prophets who would call the nation to repentance by having them grieve as if they lose a loved one by putting on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of the loss. When Paul dealt with his sin he cried out in Romans 7:24 “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*”

7. Vs. 9b “*Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*” **Refrain from an indifferent attitude.** James isn’t saying that a Christian should wear black sack in their face and look sad all the time. We ought to have joy and be thankful in Jesus. But when our rebellion because we have followed worldly wisdom has separated us from enjoying our relationship with the Lord we won’t be frivolously indifferent as if the things of this world were of greater importance than experiencing God’s grace.
8. Vs. 10a “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” **Respond in humility to God’s blessings.** This phrase occurs over 50 times in the bible and is referred to 100’s of times. We need to constantly be reminded that God’s blessings are not attached to our self-inflated sense of greatness. God has lavished upon us His goodness and grace in spite of us not because of us. Paul possessed that question to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 4:7 when he asked, “*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?*”
9. Vs. 11a “*Do not speak evil of one another..*” **Refuse to slander your brothers and sisters in Christ.** This is the same word in verse 7 rendered there as “devil” or slanderer. So, when we are slandering another we are at work for the devil. Any time we speak against our fellow Christians making them look bad, judging their motives and hearts, condemning them, tearing them down instead of building them up we are at the devil’s work! Paul admonished the believer in Ephesus in 4:29 to “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only what is good for edification, that it may impart grace to its hearers!*”

A we ponder these words from James my prayer is that we would examine our hearts and if we determine that we have been under the influence of worldly wisdom that we apply these 9 keys to restore our hearts back to God and each other.