

*The unfolding of your words gives light.*

## Faith That Works

### *An Exposition of the Book of James*

<sup>6</sup>But He gives a greater grace<sup>a</sup>. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE<sup>b</sup>." <sup>7</sup>Submit therefore to God.<sup>c</sup> Resist the devil and he will flee from you<sup>d</sup>. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you<sup>e</sup>. Cleanse your hands, you sinners<sup>f</sup>; and purify your hearts, you double-minded<sup>a</sup>. <sup>9</sup>Be miserable and mourn and

<sup>a</sup> 4:6 **But He gives a greater grace.** And who needs grace more than a sinner who sees his or her own covetousness (see previous verses)? This verse has the only use in the epistle of James (twice here) of the common New Testament word for "grace," but that does not mean the concept is foreign to the letter. The very first chapter (1:17) identified God as the giver of everything good. Even though this letter was likely written before Paul wrote so much about grace, do not be deceived into thinking the doctrine was "undeveloped." Grace is not confined to dispensations, as is revealed by what Noah found in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8; see also Numbers 6:24-26; 2 Samuel 9; Psalm 45:2; 84:11; Esther 2:17; Jonah 4:2).

<sup>b</sup> 4:6 **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.** This comes from the book of Proverbs:

He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 3:34

What a dreadful thing to find yourself on the wrong side of God. Imagine picking a fight with the Creator! The best way to do this is to seek to usurp his right to rule. This sin is called pride.

There may be a connection between pride here and the desires of the previous verses. Note the immense contrast between what God gives the proud and what he gives the humble. Have you ever run into the hand of God rather than taking what is in it? Based on this section of James, the marks of a "worldly" person are: wanting your own way, seeking satisfaction in what people can give you, prayerlessness, selfish praying, covetousness and pride. If you have a choice between the riches of the world and the riches of God, which would you choose? Humble people willingly accept whatever comes from God's hand. Proud people want their own way and invite judgment.

<sup>c</sup> 4:7 **Submit therefore to God.** "Submit" means "To place under." This is the word that is used of citizens submitting to rulers and wives submitting to husbands (Ephesians 5; 1 Peter 3). Submission is the opposite of resistance. The Lord Jesus has been charged with being less than God because He obeyed the Father. Would he have been more convincing if he had *resisted* the Father? So, then, to submit is to be like Jesus. The appearance of "therefore" leads you to the previous verses. The reason we submit to God is that God opposes the proud (4:6).

<sup>d</sup> 4:7 **Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** Naturally, the way you respond to God ought to be the opposite of the way you respond to the devil. Some people have it backwards and resist God while submitting to the devil.

The idea of waging war against the devil has been taken to some unbiblical extremes. Some people become very intrigued with the works of Satan and seek some sort of mystical power to expel him. Daniel prayed and obeyed. Our Lord quoted Scripture to him. We are not commanded to "bind" him or "claim authority" over him. We are commanded to resist him.

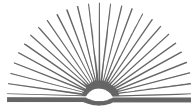
<sup>e</sup> 4:8 **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.** This is not proof that God helps those who help themselves. It is a command to keep your relationship with God fresh. Believers have already been brought near to God because of the cross (Colossians 1:22).

<sup>f</sup> 4:8 **Cleanse your hands, you sinners.** If you would not approach a meal after working in the barn without first washing your hands, why would you draw near to God with no intention of changing your sinful behavior? Acts 19 records a group of young believers burning the books

James 4.06-10  
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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weep<sup>b</sup>; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom<sup>c</sup>. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you<sup>d,e</sup>

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that assisted in their spiritual blindness before they met Christ. Some people would call this a foolish waste of money. James calls it washing your hands.

<sup>a</sup> 4:8 **purify your hearts, you double-minded.** Sometimes you need a good “brain washing.” Here is another connection between James and the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

James does not point out a problem without giving hope. He certainly points out that it is bad to be “double-minded” (“two-souled,” see also James 1:8), but he also shows the way to be purified. Double-minded people need cleansing in the heart. The “heart” is the core of your being, the center of all your functions. Certainly this includes the mind, observing that this bit of advice is addressed to the double-minded. These people need cleansing in the heart.

<sup>b</sup> 4:9 **Be miserable and mourn and weep.** Jesus called mourners “blessed.”

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:4

In this case the mourners are those who see their sin and find that the remedy is clear. Better to mourn and find refuge than to be happy all the way to hell.

<sup>c</sup> 4:9 **let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.** There are many things that should make you very serious. God wants you pure before He wants you happy.

<sup>d</sup> 4:10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.** This call to repentance follows on the heels of several sin-revealing challenges (your untamed tongue, your lack of wisdom, your anger, your idolatry). An honest self-appraisal brings you to the realization that you stand filthy in the presence of the God who is completely pure and who can allow no filth in his presence.

<sup>e</sup> 4:6-10 Those who charge James with presenting a legalistic message fail to see the hope he offers. We have all met people who are very critical. People like that are sometimes fun to be around because they use wit to criticize people you do not like. Then you find out that they have some biting jabs for you as well. The criticism James levels here is very different because rather than cursing our darkness it points us to the light. He points out the sins that plague us and then shows us the only way out. Consider why these are hope-giving verses:

1. They reveal God as the only hope for sinners (not religious performance of any kind). James presents a God-centered theology. Like the story of the great flood in Genesis 6, James is not short on judgment, but clearly directs attention to the God of grace who always provides a way of escape.
2. They identify conditions for which there is a remedy. Dirty hands and impure hearts can be washed. Critics merely tell us how bad we are. James is like a faithful physician who sets the grim diagnosis before us and then says, “There is a cure.”
3. They sanctify legitimate grief. Genuine joy is a missing element in the lives of many believers, but so is genuine mourning. We love comedy in our culture but forget that tragedy is God’s powerful tool to bring us to himself. No one will ever laugh themselves into the kingdom of God.
4. They point us to a future hope. There are some tragic lives that are a continual nightmare. Most of us know very little of the hard times that make us want to escape this world. When you find yourself in place in grief because of your own sins, the sins of others or just the realization that you are living in a sin-cursed world, James tells us there is a place to run where you will be exalted.

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