

#6 James Chapter 4

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Here in this letter from James to Jewish believers, he has been giving us several tests of genuine faith, true saving faith, the faith of those who have been born again. James was writing to Jews who have left Judaism, with all of its rituals and symbols, to embrace faith in Jesus Christ, a decision that came with a lot of persecution. They were ostracized by their families and really, all of society. They would have been rejected by friends, families, jobs... and also persecuted by the Gentile culture of the towns and cities in which they lived. The writer of Hebrews addressed the temptation to return to their old way of life... how they could easily surrender in the face of persecution and go back to Judaism.

James is touching on the same subject and giving a number of tests of faith, several things that signified true saving faith as opposed to false faith. It's one thing to say you are a Christian; Churches, cities, the World is full of people who claim to be 'Christian,' It's another thing altogether to live a life that exemplifies true, saving faith. He is saying that true faith will lead to works that prove the validity of one's faith and he said that faith without the proof of those works is dead. The first test James gives us of true faith is how we respond to trials. Do we complain and rebel or do we 'count it all joy?' Then he examines how we respond to temptations. Do we persevere or do we blame others? Then, what do we do with the Word of God. Do we love it and obey it? Are we doers of the Word or just hearers only? Then, how do we respond to people? Do we regard and give honor to rich people while shunning and dishonoring the poor among us or do we reach out to 'visit widows and orphans in their need' and do we try to meet the needs of those within our local body? Never forget... when James or any other New Testament writer is talking about helping the poor... they are always, primarily referring to the poor within our local Church body. It has never been God's purpose for the Church to meet the needs of the World or of our city or of our neighborhood. The Church's mandate from God has never been about changing the culture or making the World a better place. All of those things are false doctrines of demons meant to distract us from God's plan and purpose for the Church which is to care for and nurture the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as a particular flock is healthy and growing in Christ, the individual sheep are meant to be trained and taught how to take the Gospel out to all those they know. His plan is for the Church to be attractive because it cares for its own. Widows and orphans are to be cared for and loved by their own Church family; that is what attracts other widows and orphans. Poor Christians are to be cared for and loved by their own Church family; that is what attracts other poor people. That is what causes a Church to grow. Jesus said that He is the one who builds His own Church... not pastors and not 'church-growth gurus.' He said, 'I will build My Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.' If a pastor is looking to Rich Warren for how to build his Church, or looking to Joel Osteen or anyone else, he will fail. He may cause his Church to grow in numbers but it will never grow in faith and depth. Only when a pastor learns to teach his flock **to truly care for each other** and how **to individually take the Gospel to the lost**, will his church grow spiritually strong as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James is saying that if your faith is real, if the faith of your Church is real, it will be proven out by good works that reflect the love that Jesus Christ has for His own children.

In chapter 3 James gave us the important test of true faith in how we control our tongues.

Now we come to another vital test of true faith... our attitude toward the World. John wrote, 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.' 1 John 2:15

John wrote, 'If anyone loves the World, the love of the Father is not in him.' James says it even stronger; he tells us that just wanting to be 'friends' with the World **makes us God's enemy**.

James 4: Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ²You 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. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. 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**. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously" **But He gives more grace**. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, **but gives grace to the humble**."

I don't know of any way to explain away the harshness of that statement from the Word of God... an enemy of God. Friendship with the World... loving and serving the World... wanting the love, friendship and appreciation of the World, wanting to be pals with the World's leaders... makes one an enemy of God.

First... James is not talking about wars between nations; he isn't talking about the Roman Empire taking over the World. Nor is he referring to wars between Churches... Baptists against the liberal teachings of Methodists. He means wars within a Church... divisions and disagreements, the things that lead to Church splits... the Elders hate the Pastor or the Pastor's wife is against the choir director or the Millennials hate the Baby boomers... or just... Susan hates Martha and Robert hates Dennis.

A younger associate Pastor thinks the Church should be run in a more modern fashion. The Church should change to better reflect the culture of their city; he thinks the Church should serve and love the city. He believes that if the Church was more like the city, it would be more attractive to those in the city. He wants to better his situation; he is jealous of the position and authority of the Senior Pastor. He begins to gather around him allies, others who have various small gripes against the Senior Pastor or his wife. Those allies then find even more confederates who begin to imagine all sorts of shortcomings of the Pastor, none of which really amount to anything at all. Finally, the Associate Pastor, supported by many others, calls on the Pastor to resign. When the Senior Pastor refuses to resign, the Associate Pastor tries to take all those who had seemed to support him and leaves to go start a new Church. Some of those who had 'supported' him leave with him while others decide not to go and still others just quit and find another Church.

At the end, you have the original Church which is now somewhat 'crippled' although it really has had a good house cleaning, getting rid of a good number of unhappy and discontented people... and you have a new Church that is filled with discontented people, led by a jealous, unsubmitive and rebellious man. It all began with the jealous and rebellious heart of the Associate Pastor who wanted to be the Senior Pastor. Now he is the Senior Pastor of a sick little Church that will eventually just fade away and disappear.

Or... what is just as common... the Pastor hides some kind of sin in his life. He secretly wishes he could live like an unrepentant sinner but still have people think of him as a virtuous role model. When his sin is exposed, he refuses to leave his position or he quits and soon after starts a new Church and his core of faithful followers stay with him because they are more attached to him than they are to the Lord Jesus Christ but the 'new' Church shrivels and remains a sick and useless little group. Perfect examples of this are Jimmy Swaggart and Ted Haggard along with almost countless others. Apparently, Haggard said to Grant, a young man with whom he had a 'relationship, 'You know what, Grant, you can become a man of God, and you can have a little bit of fun on the side." That is a situation that is so filled with hypocrisy and baloney that I could go on and on but I won't... we're all sinners and we're only saved by God's grace and mercy in choosing us and calling us to Himself. Many of us struggle with many things, James just said so in the previous chapter which is why he said that most of us should not seek to be teachers, or pastors for that matter. What makes a Pastor or teacher or any Christian keep his sin hidden? Pride... 'What will they think of me? I will lose my position. They won't look up to me.' Pride. What did James say? God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. When a person chooses to confess his sin, seeking deliverance, God is gracious even if people are not.

God is jealous... He won't share His glory and He won't share us, His children, with the World... our friendship with the World is like adultery toward God. Our desire for friendship with the World, our wanting 'a little bit of fun on the side,' is like desiring adultery... if it's happened in our hearts, we are guilty.

Friendship with the World... the Greek word James uses for friendship is 'Philia,' which comes from Philos which is one of the four Greek words for love: Philos, Agape, Storge and Eros. **Philos** means an emotional attachment and affection for. **Agape** is volitional, meaning it is a decision, a choice... it is the kind of love God has for us, His children, and it is the kind of love we are commanded to choose to have for each other... it is the love of 1Cor 13: always patient and kind, never keeping account of wrong suffered, etc. it never fails. **Storge** means a natural affection that just comes forth out of the soul, like for a family member, a child or spouse or even your dog. **Eros** is erotic, sexual love

One of the reasons the marriage relationship is so important to God is that it is the most complete relationship we can have as humans; in its proper, balanced form, it is the only relationship that encompasses all aspects of love: spiritual, emotional and physical, and why it is so important that the sexual expression of love be restricted and confined only to within the marriage relationship between one man and one woman.

A proper marriage relationship is Philos, friendship, it is Agape, the choice to always love, no matter what... it becomes a natural, familial affection and it is expressed sexually.

When Philos is in one's heart for the World, it is actually more dangerous than a heart of misdirected Eros. Eros is obvious; it can be addressed, dealt with and repented of. But Philos, friendship for the World can deceive its 'owner' into thinking it is a good thing, a thing to be desired and nurtured. One can be deceived into thinking that being a friend

of the World is a good thing. If we are a friend of the World, they will like us and not hate us and then we can more easily win them to Christ.

Now James is speaking to everyone who is found wanting in their walk of faith... whose faith has been failing these tests of faith that he has been giving us. The one who is impatient in trials, the one who doubts God and is double minded, the one who shows favoritism to the rich and dishonors the poor within their congregation, the one who does not listen and is easily angered, the one who is a hearer of the Word but not a doer, the one whose tongue is unbridled, the one whose faith is not borne out by good works... these are the ones to whom he says:

Verse 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.

He is not saying these things to regular Christians who are walking with the Lord and who are growing in their faith. He is saying them to all whose faith is not passing these tests of faith.

This is a series of ten commands and is a clear invitation to salvation. He is writing to all those in the Churches to which he is writing and to every Church of today, to all those sitting in the pews who are not really born again... 'Wake up! Turn to Christ before it's too late. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.'

This isn't written to those who are born again because God has already drawn near to His children, never to withdraw from them in any way. Jesus said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'

What does it mean to submit to God? It simply means to turn from sin and turn to God, to love Him and to obey Him.

What does it mean to resist the devil? We spent 12 weeks studying Ephesians and the Armor of God. To resist a demon who is lying to us, we learned that God's plan is that we stand still until the attack passes. We are to stand still and resist believing the lies a demon is telling us. To the unsaved, he is saying, 'Resist the call to live in sin, turn to God and His free gift of Salvation.'

Jesus said, 'Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' Mat. 11:28 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

James continues to admonish everyone in this congregation, test your faith; know with certainty whether or not you are truly born again or whether or not you are deceived and deceiving yourselves into believing you are born again when you are not. It is the same admonition he gives to every one of us throughout all of Church History.

Our call to go into all the World and preach the Gospel is not meant just concerning people outside the Church in our neighborhood, city, nation and World but it is also a command to ever be aware of the spiritual condition of all those who sit next to us in Church and Sunday School. We are to be aware not only as to whether or not our own faith passes these tests of true living faith, but also whether or not the faith of our supposed brothers and sisters in our own congregation passes these tests of true living faith or if we or they are deceived and deceiving themselves.

Paul wrote, 'Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.' Gal 6:1

Jesus said, 'Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.' Matt 18

We are to be watching out for each other, and not afraid to address sin when we see it if, that is, our motivation is love and a desire to rescue one from sin and death.

God is always open and willing to receive the one who comes to Him. No matter what condition someone comes to Him, He has more than enough Grace for all their need. He has Grace, He gives Grace and then He gives more Grace.

Verse 11: ¹¹ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

James has been telling us that one of the marks of a born again person is a spirit of humility. A humble person is the one to whom God gives Grace unlimited... more Grace. One of the marks of a proud person, one who is not humble, is one

who speaks evil of other Christians. When we judge others, we are trying to usurp God's power and authority... the same thing that Lucifer wanted to do when he said, 'I will be like the Most High.'

Paul said that when we judge another we are actually revealing what is really in our own hearts and we are judging ourselves... 'Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?' Rom 2:1

Verse 13: 'Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.'

Jesus told the story of a certain rich man: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸ So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

²¹ "So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16

None of us know what will happen tomorrow or even today. The best we can do is to have a desire to walk in the will of God. Compared to the totality of eternity, the time of the length of our lives is virtually nothing. It's as if we could stretch a line from here to the Sun, almost 93,000,000 miles, and then on top of that line we lay across it one single hair. The width of that hair in comparison to eternity is the time we spend on Earth and the width of that hair is still about 100 million times too thick... the time we spend now on Earth is virtually nothing in comparison to eternity and yet, for many of us, we act like this tiny amount of time now is what is important and all the rest of our eternal lives is what is unimportant. We grasp and hold on to our short little lives on Earth as if our time in eternity is worthless.

The opposite is true. The only value our short lives have now is in what we do that will last in rewards for eternity... and it's not measured in large and grandiose World-wide ministry type things that are impressive to other people... it's measured in small and even tiny incremental instances of simply doing God's will.

Every time we do what is according to God's will, no matter how small, we gain eternal rewards that will never be taken away.

Jesus said of small acts gaining eternal rewards... 'And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.'" Matt 10:42

And every one of those rewards is far beyond our imagination... we have no frame of reference... we cannot even imagine the kinds of incredible things that God has planned for His children's eternal joy and excitement.

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Cor 2:9

The number one characteristic of a true child of God is a desire to do the will of God... no matter how large or how small.

Peter wrote, '...that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.' 1 Pet 4:2

John wrote, 'For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.' 1 John 2:16

A child of God has a desire to do the will of God even if it is contrary to his own will because his desire is that his own will be conformed to the will of God.

The best example is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Who, when He was about to be betrayed and then crucified, prayed that if possible, He did not want to go through such a horrible experience but He said to His Heavenly Father, and ours, 'Not My will but Your will be done.' He had previously said, 'I came not to do My Own will but the will of Him Who sent Me.' and also, 'I came into the world to do the will of God.'

As true Children of God, our desire is also to do God's will. Even though our obedience is imperfect and we don't always do His will, there is still always within us the desire to do His will. If that desire is absent, that is a mark of one who is not born again, who is not a child of God, one who is a rebel in whom the Spirit of God has not brought about miraculous transformation.

Here is another test of living faith, doing the will of God but more precisely, wanting to do the will of God.

Pharaoh was doing the will of God but not because he wanted to.

Pride is behind the failure of all these tests of faith whereas humility is behind the desire to do God's will... Pride is in the heart of the one who rises up and declares, 'I will do my own will... no matter how large or how small!'

Verse 17: 'Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.'

James is wrapping everything up from the last 4 chapters. All these tests of true faith... none of them are optional; all are mandatory. He has given us numerous rules for how we should conduct ourselves within our own Church body... here at Gracepointe. Paul said that when there was no law, there was no sin. Now James is giving us some law.

Thou shalt consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. If you don't, it is sin. Thou shalt not specially honor rich people and dishonor poor people. If you do, it is sin. Thou shalt not fail to visit widows and orphans in thier distress. If you do, it is sin. If you don't bridle your tongue, it is sin. etc.

'Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.'