

“Getting Right With God”

September 2, 2012

Text: James 4:7-10

The subject of this morning’s text is *Getting Right W/ God*.

It might be asked who the people are James has in mind, who

need to get things right with God—Xns, or non-Xns?

He doesn’t make that clear, at times calling them

“*brethren*,” and yet at other times referring to them

as “*sinners*.”

But ultimately, it really doesn’t matter—every man/woman needs

to deal with his/her sin, & make things right w/ God.

*** This is instruction that every non-Xn needs, because his/her soul’s eternal destiny depends on it.**

His soul is his real self, & if it is condemned to hell, his loss will

be incalculable/terrifying.

Anyone who is not sure whether/not he’s “in X” should

never seek to make himself easy about the matter,

until he is sure.

If he has no peace w/ God in his heart, and if God never

seems to answer his prayers, he has an urgent need to

seek the Lord until he truly is sure.

*** On the other hand, there are periods in the lives of true Xns when they too need to get things right with the Lord.**

They may be at peace w/ God, reconciled to Him, but they lack

the peace of God, because of sin in their lives.

That was even true of Paul in his struggle w/ his flesh, as he groaned, "*I practice the very evil that I do not wish*" (Rom 7:19).

So James' words here apply to struggling Xns, a/w/a non-Xns.

If they don't, then much of this epistle is largely irrelevant to Xns.

I don't see how that could be, given the effect some of you have told me *James* is having on your hearts/lives.

This issue of whether/not *James* applies to Xns goes to the heart of our understanding of evangelism.

Do we tell sinners just to pray a certain little prayer so they'll escape hell when they die, & go to heaven instead?

Shouldn't we invite/encourage those who are sick/tired of their sin to get their hearts right w/ God, & find peace w/ Him by placing their faith in X?

We should be telling those who desire sweet communion w/ the Lord to seek His face, & to keep on seeking a closer relationship w/ Him, long after their conversion.

We should be telling them to come to Him in order to worship and love Him w/ their whole heart/soul/mind/being.

We should be showing them how to draw ever closer to the Lord, & to continually find their peace in Him.

I hope that, whether you know you are truly born-again, or not,
you will always seek to get things right with God & to draw
nearer to Him.

James ended last week's text by saying=> *"God is opposed to the
proud, but give grace to the humble."*

Those who are right with Him, receive His grace.

Those who aren't, experience His opposition.

**This morning's text instructs us how to get right with God,
becoming a recipient of His grace, not His opposition.**

It says the prerequisites of our getting right with God are=>

- 1) right responses, 2) right actions,
- 3) right attitudes, 4) and a right mindset.

* **The Right Responses** (to God, and to the devil).

Our response to the devil is to resist him, but our response to God
is to submit & draw ever closer to Him, in love.

[James 4:7]=> *"Submit **therefore** to God. Resist the devil and he
will flee from you."*

"Therefore" connects this back to last week's text.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble;

"Therefore" humbly submit yourself to Him, so that you
will receive His grace, not His opposition.

"Therefore" also connects our submitting to God back to
everything we have read in chapters 3 & 4=>

* Do you want to eliminate your quarrels/conflicts w/
others?

- * Do you want to choose godly-wisdom over worldly wisdom?
- * Do you want God to answer your prayers?
- * Do you desire to eliminate the spiritual adultery of worldliness from your life?

Then submit to God.

Line up your will under His will, so that whatever His Word tells you to do/not-do, you obey, yielding willingly to His will.

This, like all the other commands in this text, takes a grammatical form, that calls for an immediate decision on our part.

Decide right now, that you are going to submit to God.

James' call for an immediate decision to become submissive, goes beyond that, to involve swallowing our pride & adopting submission as our general way of life.

We are to embrace submissiveness as our approach to life, knowing that our Heavenly Father is sovereign God, who controls every detail of our lives, and we can trust Him.

E.g. we are committing ourselves to submit to government authorities because God tells us to do that, in Rom 13, and we have decided to submit to Him in that.

- * Young men are committing themselves to submit to their elders, because God tells them to do that in I Pet 5:5.

* We will submit to church leaders, as He says in I Cor 16:16.

* Wives are choosing to submit to their husbands “*as to the Lord*” because God tells them to do that, in Eph 5:22.

* Workers are deciding to truly submit to their masters (Titus 2:9).

I.e., the decision to submit to the Lord implies adopting a humble, submissive attitude towards anyone God places in authority over us.

In fact, we are to have a submissive attitude toward all fellow believers because Eph 5:21 says=>

“*Be **subject** [submissive] to **one another** in the fear of Christ.*”

Most importantly we are committing ourselves to submit-to/obey the Word.

If we are to get things right with God, we must start by adopting a humble submissiveness toward Him/His-Word.

The 2nd response James calls for is one of *resistance* to the devil.

In order to relate ourselves rightly to God, we must, of necessity, take a stance of resistance against His enemy—Satan.

We aren’t told to oppose him, but merely to resist him, when he attacks us with various temptations.

In order to do that, we need to have on the whole armor of God at all times, as described in Eph 6:15-17=>

Truthfulness, righteousness, the gospel of peace;
The shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, & the
sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God).

Paul also added=> “*pray at all times in the Spirit*” (6:18),
& Jesus specifically told us to pray that God would
deliver us from the evil one (Mt 6:13).

Peter ignored Jesus’ warning to resist Satan through prayer, &
he paid the price, when the devil caught him off guard, and
he ended up denying X.

For a believer to keep his relationship w/ God
right/strong/joyful, he must guard himself against
Satan’s attacks.

**James assures us that if we resist Satan, he will have to flee
from us.**

Our defense from his attacks becomes an offense against him
personally.

Because X defeated him on the cross, our resistance in X’s
name, & in submission to His Word, becomes an
attack on the devil, from which he must flee.

**Our 3rd response in seeking to get things right with God is to
draw near to Him—to commune w/ Him and lean on
Him for strength.**

[Verse 8a]=> “*Draw near to God & He will draw near to you.*”

In contrast to the devil’s fleeing from us when we resist him, God
draws nearer to us when we draw near to Him.

Man's greatest privilege in this life is to draw near to his Creator.

In the OT Temple, a person's rank/privilege before God were indicated by his nearness/proximity to the Holy of Holies, where God manifested His presence.

E.g. priests were the most privileged group of all, being allowed to actually enter the Holy Place, to serve the Lord.

God had told the Levites (the priestly tribe)=> "*Levi does not have a **portion** [of tribal land] or **inheritance** with his brothers [the other tribes]; the LORD is his inheritance*" (Deut 10:9).

In the Temple, non-Jews—the least privileged—weren't allowed to get any closer to the Holy Place than the outermost court, the Court of the Gentiles.

Closeness to the Lord is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility, and can, if abused, be a grave danger, when a person's heart is not right w/ God as he approaches the Lord.

2 OT priests—Nadab/Abihu—lost their lives because they ignored the fact that God is absolutely holy.

Coming near to Him w/ a sinful/presumptuous attitude, exposed them to His wrath.

Lev 10:2=> "*Fire came out from the presence of the LORD & **consumed** them, and they **died** before the LORD.*"

Fear of the Lord is an essential element of our getting right with Him, and even of our drawing close to Him, as He bids us to do.

His holy ways, & His holy thoughts, are far above ours.

Forgetting that, & responding to Him w/ contemptuous familiarity, will only drive us farther away from Him.

Man's sin makes him the enemy of God, and creates a barrier that keeps him far from God, spiritually.

An unsaved person cannot draw near to the Lord until he is cleansed from sin, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus.

But those who place their faith in X to cleanse them from sin, are privileged to be brought near to God.

Eph 2 gives us the good news that=> *"In Christ Jesus you who formerly were **far off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ"* (Eph 2:13).

When Jesus died, the veil in the Temple was torn apart, opening the way for all those who believe in Him to draw close to God.

To approach God uncleansed of sin, would expose a person to the same dangers that cost Nadab/Abihu their lives.

That's why we must never approach the Lord's Table w/ unconfessed sin, as Paul tells us in I Cor 11=>

*"But let a man **examine** himself [for sin], and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. / For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks **judgment** to himself, if he does not **judge** the body rightly"* (11:28-29).

You/I must judge ourselves before we take Communion, if we are to avoid Nadab/Abihu's error.

But once a person is cleansed from sin through Jesus' blood, & he has confessed his sins to his Savior, he can enter into joyous personal communion w/ the God of all Creation.

Heb 4:16=> *"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."*

And there we can experience a greater abundance of life/joy than we could ever know in any other way.

David said=> *"As for me, the **nearness of God** is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge"* (Psa 73:28).

Redeemed hearts long to commune with God.

Again quoting David=> *"O God, Thou art my God; I shall **seek** Thee earnestly; My soul **thirsts** for Thee, my flesh **yearns** for Thee"* (Psa 63:1).

And yet, David also understood that even a believer cannot approach God in all His holiness, with unconfessed sin.

In Psa 24 he wrote=> *"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?/ He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**"* (Psa 24:3-4).

There was a bowl of water called a *laver* in the Temple, in which the priests were to wash their hands/feet.

They were never to do their priestly duties w/o 1st washing in it.

God used this as an object lesson to teach all of Israel that anyone who comes near to Him must first be morally/spiritually clean.

Our response to God is to be one of seeking nearness to Him.

But our sin can never be allowed to defile His presence. That brings us to the 2nd prerequisite for getting right with God.

*** The Right Actions**

[Verse 8b]=> “*Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and **purify** your hearts, you double-minded.*”

In order to draw near to God, there must first be the cleansing of our lives/deeds through confession, and the purification of our hearts.

This action will also help fortify our resistance against Satan.

The Jewish Xns to whom James wrote this, would have viewed it in terms of OT priestly ceremonies.

To them, the cleansing of “*hands*” would have represented confession of their sinful/worldly deeds, including the contention/strife taking place w/i their churches.

Although our hands symbolize the outward deeds we do (which is why they must be cleansed), some of our most sinful deeds are the words we say.

In 3:14, James described the “*bitter jealousy and selfish ambition*” in his readers’ hearts, which caused their contentiousness.

“*The heart*” refers to a person’s whole inner-man/inner-life,
which produces such sinful deeds.

Jesus said=> “*Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts,
murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false
witness, slanders*” (Mt 15:19).

They needed cleansing, just as Jesus cleansed the feet of the
Apostles in the Upper Room.

But that cleansing required that they confess their sins to X.

I Jn 1 says of Jesus=> “*If we **confess** our sins, He is
faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to
cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I Jn 1:9).

In the Upper Room, Jesus told Peter & the other Apostles=>

“*He who has **bathed** needs only to wash his feet, but is
completely clean; and you are **clean***” (Jn13:10).

Those who have been washed in the blood of X, are free
from any sin that might condemn their souls.

But they still need to confess their sins to Him, daily,
keeping things right, between Him/them.

**However, a person who has never asked Jesus to
pardon/cleanse him from sin, needs more than foot-
washing.**

He needs heart-purification—X’s washing away of all his sins.

He is among the “*double-minded*” whose hearts have never
really been opened up to X, for cleansing.

These folks vacillate, between love for God, & love for the
world, never actually committing themselves to X.

They yearn for the things of the world, but try to hold onto
Him for security, & end up trying to serve 2 masters.
But even some truly born-again believers dabble in worldliness at
times.

In this temporary state of double-mindedness, they can
never know the pure joy of nearness to God.

But neither can they really enjoy the sins of the world,
because their conscience won't allow them to.

If double-mindedness is the ongoing state of their lives, the truth
is, they aren't truly born-again after all.

They are like those whom God described thru Isaiah,
saying=>

*“This people draw near with their words And honor
Me with their lip service, But they **remove their
hearts far** from Me, And their reverence for Me
consists of tradition learned by rote” (Isa 29:13).*

They need more than Jesus' foot-washing.

They need a bath in God's grace, to be washed clean of all
their sins, based on Jesus' atoning sacrifice for sin.

**Whether the people who fit James' description here are saved
or not is (in a sense) a moot point.**

Either way, they need a cleansing of their outward hands/deeds
and they need an inward purification of their hearts, to get
things right with God, so they can ascend His hill and enjoy
His holy presence.

And when they do, Psa 24 also promises=> *“He shall receive a*

blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psa 24:5).

* **The Right Attitude** (an attitude of sincere/genuine repentance)

Before a person can get things right with God, he must have the right response to God—a submissiveness that seeks to draw near to Him.

If that readiness to submit isn't present, he's deceiving himself.

He doesn't really want to get right with God.

This right response leads-to/produces the right actions=> an outward cleansing of hands, & an inward purification of hearts.

But unless a person has the right attitude, those actions are just a meaningless formality.

His “cleansing/confession/purification” are merely insincere game-playing.

So it ultimately comes down to a truly repentant attitude that sincerely mourns over its sin, the way you would mourn/grieve at a funeral.

That's what James is talking about in=>

[Verse 9]=> *“Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.”*

This is the exact opposite of what 21st century worldly-wisdom/psychology teaches=> misery must be avoided at all costs.

Non-Xns think this way, being unable to think beyond this world.

They view an unpleasant life as a true tragedy, ending in death, followed by nothingness (unabated misery from beginning to final end).

In their minds, an all-holy/all-powerful God whose wrath is to be avoided, and whose favor/love is to be sought, doesn't even exist.

But we know from Scripture that this life is simply a precursor to everlasting life—either in heaven, or in hell.

So if the misery/mourning/weeping of true repentance must be part of getting right w/ God, so be it.

And James (a/w/a all of Scripture) says that indeed they must, but that they will ultimately pay off.

And not just sorrow for sin, but true repentance.

You won't hear that in most gospel presentations today, which start out vague, focus on the personal benefits of “accepting X,” and end w/ no call to repent of sin at all.

But that's because they don't represent the true gospel.

James is calling for people to embrace the deep inner grief & wretchedness that results from recognizing one's sin.

Out of that grief will come the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The OT prophets actually encouraged people to put on sackcloth, put ashes on their heads, mourn over their sins, & weep aloud over God's judgment.

E.g. Jeremiah=> *“Put on sackcloth, Lament and wail; For the fierce anger of the LORD Has not turned back from us”* (Jer 4:8).

The prophet Daniel himself wept over his people's sins.

Dan 9:3=> *"I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. / And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed."*

Verse 5=> *"We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances."*

The degree to which these words sound foreign/weird to us, is the measure of our ignorance of the true repentance God requires of those who would get right w/ Him.

This phenomenon of weeping over sins isn't limited to the OT.

In Lk 7 a sinful woman came to X, grieving over her sin=>

*"Standing behind Him at His feet, **weeping**, she began to wet His feet with her **tears**, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume"* (Lk 7:37-38).

Mk 14 described the scene in which Peter denied X 3 times.

Vs 72 says=> *"Immediately a cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, 'Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And he began to **weep**."*

In view of the shamefulness of our sin, weeping is not at all inappropriate—but laughter is.

* This is why James says=> *"let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom."*

* This is also why the prophet Isaiah rebuked Judah, saying

*"In that day the Lord GOD of hosts, called you to **weeping**, to wailing, To shaving the head, and to wearing **sackcloth**. / Instead, there is **gaiety** and*

*gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,
Eating of meat and drinking of wine: 'Let us eat and
drink, for tomorrow we may die'' (Isa 22:12-13).*

Does this mean Xns should never laugh, or even smile?

No, Phil 4:4 says=> *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I
will say, rejoice!"*

But a deep sense of joy/rejoicing is very different from a
worldly atmosphere, that makes life just a series of
one-liners and party-jokes, refusing to deal seriously
with eternal spiritual issues.

Repentance is dealing honestly w/ the grievousness of our sin.

It is refusing to laugh off our guilt as the flesh wants us to.

Is it a meritorious work, for which God repays us by saving us?

No! We are saved by His grace alone, not by our good
works.

Repentance is a gift of God's grace, not by our good works.

We might pray for a repentant spirit, but we can't work it
up, on our own.

There is something we might do, that would help bring us to
repentance=> Reread God's Law (the 10 Commandments).

Then read Jesus' explanation of the Law's meaning in
Matthew 5.

Then judge ourselves honestly against that Law.

Francis Fuller defined true repentance like this=>

"To repent is to accuse and condemn ourselves; to charge upon ourselves
the desert of hell; to take part with God against ourselves...; to be
ashamed and confounded for our sins... in daily sorrow for them; to part

with those pleasurable sins which have been as dear to us as our lives, so as never to have to do with them more, and to hate them, so as to destroy them as things which by nature we are disinclined to do.”

Anyone who truly wants to get right w/ God (whether Xn/non-Xn) must begin by letting the H.S. break his heart over his sin, then repenting of that sin in order to forsake it.

18th century English preacher/evangelist George Whitefield=>

“Every man by his own natural will hates God. But when he is turned to the Lord by evangelical repentance, then his will is changed; then his conscience, now hardened and benumbed shall be quickened & weakened; then his hard heart shall be melted.”

* **The Right Mindset**

A humble mindset is both the final prerequisite in our getting right with God, & the ultimate result of our doing so, because it is foundational to godly-wisdom.

It also leads us on, to a blessed reward.

[Verse 10]=> “*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*”

As we have seen over the past few weeks, godly wisdom is based on a humble mindset.

That’s where all these right responses/actions/attitudes lead us=> living safely/humbly under God’s care, content in His will, enjoying what we couldn’t have handled before=> exaltation.

“*Exalt*” basically means to life up.

God lifts the sinner out of the hopeless pit of sin/death/despair.

He lifts the slaves of sin out of their hopeless
habits/lifestyles.

But ultimately, He will lift depraved sinners from dishonor
to honor.

**Joshua was a humble man whose exaltation didn't spoil/ruin
his humility.**

He had been the servant of Moses, the servant of God=>

i.e., the servant of a servant—the humblest of men.

When Moses died, Joshua didn't grab for political power & assert
himself, to take Moses' place.

He could have, because God had told him beforehand that
he was to be Moses' successor.

But Joshua was such a humble man, that he chose to wait
quietly/humbly.

Finally God had to nudge him, telling him it was his time to lead.

In Josh 3:7, God told him=> *“This day I will begin to **exalt**
you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that
just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.”*

Joshua humbled himself, and God exalted him.

**Someday we, like Joshua, will be so truly humble, that X will
exalt us to rule w/ Him, & it won't create a proud spirit
w/i us either.**

When we return to earth to be revealed with Him in His glory,
wearing the white robes of righteousness, none of us will
be proudly thinking=> “This glory on my face must make
me look very impressive.”

We won't be thinking about ourselves at all.

We'll be reveling in the fact of our Savior's finally
receiving all the praise/glory He deserves.

We will finally have mastered the humble mindset of godly
wisdom.

**Meanwhile, James tells us to humble ourselves in the
presence of the Lord—fully submitted to Him.**

Aware that He is right there with us, sees right through us,
and is fully aware of any sin/pride w/I us.

It involves our actively choosing humility over pride,
surrendering to His-will, & entrusting ourselves fully to His
power/love/care.

This is how Peter said it=> *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under
the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the
proper time, / casting all your anxiety upon Him, because
He cares for you”* (I Pet 5:6-7).

Anyone who has attained that humble mindset can be confident
that he is right with God.

And there he will experience the joy/security God has
intended for him, from the very beginning.

Jesus, in His crucifixion, became the ultimate example of a Man
who humbled Himself, and was exalted by God.

Phil 2:8-11=> *“Being found in appearance as a man, He
humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point
of death, even death on a cross. / Therefore also God
highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name
which is above every name, / that at the name of*

*Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who
are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, /
and that every tongue should confess that Jesus
Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

“Getting Right With God”

September 2, 2012

Text: James 4:7-10

1. Every man and woman needs to deal with his or her sin and make things [12 right] with God.

Rom 7:19

2. We should be telling those who desire sweet communion with the Lord to keep on seeking a closer relationship with Him, long [12 after] their conversion.

Jms 4:6

This morning’s text instructs us in how to get right with God; the prerequisites of our doing so are...

*** Right Responses**

[James 4:7]

3. Submit to God; line up your will under His will so that whatever His Word tells you to do or not to do you obey, yielding [20 willingly] to His will.

Rom 13:1; I Pet 5:5; I Cor 16:16; Eph 5:22; Titus 2:9; Eph 5:21

4. In order to relate ourselves rightly to God, we must of necessity take a stance of [24 resistance] against His enemy—Satan.

Eph 6:15-17; 6:18; Mt 6:13

[Verse 8a]

5. Man’s greatest privilege in life is to draw [10 near] to his Creator.

Lev 10:2

6. An unsaved person cannot draw near to the Lord until he is cleansed from sin through [12 faith] in the shed blood of Jesus.

Eph 2:13; I Cor 11:28-29; Psa 73:28

7. Redeemed hearts long to [16 commune] with God.

Psa 63:1; 24:3-4

*** Right Actions**

[Verse 8b]

Mt 15:19; I Jn 1:9; Jn 13:10

8. Those who have been washed in the blood of Christ are free from any sin that might condemn their souls; but they still need to [16 confess] their sins to Him daily.

Isa 29:13

9. Whether people are saved or not, they need a cleansing of their hands and deeds and a purification of their [14 hearts] to get things right with God.

Psa 24:5

*** Right Attitude**

[Verse 9]

10. James is calling for people to embrace the deep inner grief and wretchedness that results from recognizing one's [8 sin].

Jer 4:8; Dan 9:3, 5; Lk 7:37-38; Mt 14:72

11. In view of the shamefulness of our sin, weeping is not at all inappropriate—but [18 laughter] is.

Isa 22:12-13

12. Anyone who truly wants to get right with God must begin by letting the Holy Spirit break his heart over his sin, then repenting of that sin in order to [16 forsake] it.

*** Right Mindset**

[Verse 10]

13. Right responses, actions, and attitudes lead us to living safely and humbly under God's care, content in His will, enjoying what we couldn't have handled before: [24 exaltation].

Josh 3:7; I Pet 5:6-7

14. Anyone who has that mindset can be confident that he is right with God; and there he will experience the joy and security [8 God] has intended for him from the very beginning.