



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A MESSAGE OF ASSURANCE...DRAW NEAR TO GOD: JAMES 4:8A
TO: COLORADO LEGISLATORS, SPOUSES AND THE GOVERNOR
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James doesn't want us to be deceived about the genuineness of our faith, constantly calling on us to examine our lives to see if the faith we profess is actually possessed. James has warned us in chapter 3 against a worldly wisdom that is earthly, natural and demonic that results in jealousy, selfish ambition leading to disorder and every evil thing. We learned in James 4 that you can't be a friend of the world and a friend of God. There is no middle ground for if you are a friend of the world, pursuing the lust of your flesh and selfish desires, then you have made yourself an enemy of God. James has wasted no words in dealing clearly with sin, exposing our hearts and motives. And it is that sin that separates us from God. This stands as a warning to all, demonstrating a true need for salvation found in Jesus Christ alone offered in James 4:7-10.

I. A MESSAGE OF ASSURANCE- JAMES 4:8A

James 4:7-10: "Submit therefore 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. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. 10. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Ten imperatives are given by James in James 4:7-10 as he calls on us to deal with our sin. These commands are not to be taken lightly for they reveal the path to salvation and restoration with God. They are military terms which demand incisive actions and thus reveal the seriousness God places on true repentance. James begins by exhorting them to an urgent call of repentance with a godly, sincere sorrow for their sins that begins with submitting to God. Submitting means to place ourselves under God's authority, under Christ's lordship, and willingly commit to obey Him in all things. The second imperative James gives is to resist the devil. Again, there is no middle ground for who controls your life. You are either submitted to God, acknowledging His rightful rule and reign in your life or you are a friend of the world and the ruler of this world, the devil.

James calls us to submit to God and resist, oppose, withstand the devil. We will be engaged in this conflict our entire life. This is a perpetual resistance against the devil. God offers an added promise to assure us that resistance is possible against the devil. Satan is a defeated enemy and he has no power over the believer and we must constantly take our stand in opposition to the devil as our true enemy in perpetual resistance against him.

A. "DRAW NEAR TO GOD" - JAMES 4:8A

James 4:8a: "Draw near to God..."

James issues this third command to "Draw near to God." Once again this is a call for a decisive and complete return to God. It is a call to respond to the divine call of God to "come near". God is calling us to an intimate fellowship with Him. Through salvation, we submit to God as our Lord and Savior and that brings a true desire for a true relationship with Jesus Christ. We are called by God to draw near in intimate fellowship with God, to communion with the living, eternal almighty God.¹

"draw near"+Greek **"engizo,"** verb, aorist imperative, command to draw near, to approach.

We are called to intimate fellowship with God and what an incredible privilege that is. This is an invitation of definite turning towards a treasured communion with the living Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing greater than knowing, having a deep, personal and growing relationship with the God who created the universe.

Before our Lord went to the cross, He prayed for what was most on His heart. And what was that? That we might know Him and possess that cherished relationship that leads to eternal life and brings us into a unity and love with God unequalled. Martin Luther called man's highest pursuit as knowing God. And God's highest purpose for man is that we might know Him. "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." John 17:3. Paul said his passion and pursuit was, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Philippians 3:10. God is calling us to draw near to Him, to approach Him, to come near to Him. James has already dealt with those who are drawn to fellowship with the world in James 4:1-6. So what does it mean to draw near to God?

1. A QUALIFIED APPROACH - JAMES 4:8A

James 4:8: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."

The remainder of James 4:8 makes it clear that repentance is our first step towards God. Coming near to holy God necessitates a call to repentance and purity. The idea of drawing near to God was used of the priests who served in the Tabernacle. They were to be cleansed and pure before coming near to God in His Temple. "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored." Leviticus 10:3 and Leviticus 21:21-23. The prophet Isaiah spoke of those who draw near to Him with their lips (outward show) but not with their heart indicating no true, inward transformation or relationship with God in Isaiah 29:13, "Because 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..." Drawing near to God speaks to a qualified approach. Drawing near to God is an expression of sincerely coming near to Him in repentance and all humility. Hebrews 10:22 tells us, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

David wrote in Psalm 51:16-17, "For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Following his adulterous sin with Bathsheba, David confesses his heartfelt and sincere repentance to God for his sin and received God's undeserving merit and

BIBLE STUDIES

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favor through forgiveness. That's what grace is. He acknowledged that what God desired was not an outward show, but an inward humbling of his heart to repentance and sorrow for his sin. God does not refuse this. We must take a lesson from David for this is how we are to draw near to God; with a humble, sincere, pure, repentant and forgiven heart.

2. AN OBEDIENT APPROACH - JAMES 4:8A

James 4:8: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."

The truly redeemed one with a submitted heart will long for communion with God. David expressed his deepest desire in Psalm 27:8, *"When Thou didst say, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to Thee, 'Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek.'*" David yearned to seek the Lord with all that he was. Do you? In Deuteronomy 6:5, Moses called on God's people to, *"love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."* With all their might, utmost exertion, maximum strength, and supreme effort; God's people were called to love Him with their heart and soul. We are seeking to know God and love Him with this kind of obedient approach and effort.

But this doesn't just happen. You don't just "drift" into fellowship with God. What does it mean to draw near to God? It takes regular, discipline time in God's Word, prayer, private and public worship, feasting at the Lord's Table, devoting ourselves to Christian fellowship and cultivating every avenue where we can draw near to God.²

Psalm 42: 1-2 says, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."* In Psalm 63:1 David wrote, *"O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee. In a dry and weary land where there is no water."* This is a serious commitment of obedience, passion and pursuit to know God and grow in our relationship with Him. It's a commitment to deliberately cultivate fellowship with God.

Can you believe He commands us to this great privilege? Yet it comes with such awesome responsibility that we must take seriously. And we are reminded of His great provision for us just as James has already emphasized in James 4:6, *"but He gives a greater grace"*, so too, Hebrews 4:16 reminds us, *"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."* God is tirelessly on our side, providing what we need to live a life that truly pleases Him.

B. "AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU" - JAMES 4:8A

James 4:8a: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

If we sincerely draw near to God with all that means, then we can be assured of His favorable response, *"and He will draw near to you."* Just as in Luke 15:20, the prodigal son received his father's favorable response when he repented and returned in humility to his father, so believers find God watching; waiting to welcome and restore His children into His waiting arms of fellowship.

Jeremiah 29:12-14 says, *"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, declares the Lord."* God wants us to know Him, to seek Him and we will find Him; in rich fellowship and communion when we search for Him with all our heart.

How do we come to God? With a sincere, repentant, clean and pure heart! How do we draw near to God? Daily, regularly, individually and corporately; devoted to communion with Jesus Christ and cultivating constant fellowship with God.

Psalm 145:18 reminds us that, *"The Lord is near to all who call upon Him. To all who call upon Him in truth."* That is a timeless certainty of comfort. And we are reminded of our secure position of favor and blessedness in this intimate relationship with God by these verses from David's Psalm 65:4, *"How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose, and bring near to Thee."*

And what comes from drawing near to God? What comes from His nearness? May this Psalm reflect the devotion we embrace and reality we enjoy in sweet fellowship with our living Lord and eternal God.

*"Whom have I in heaven but Thee?
And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
For, behold, those who are far from Thee will perish;
Thou hast destroyed all those who are
unfaithful to Thee.
But as for me,
The nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
That I may tell of all Thy works."
Psalm 73:25-28*

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.205.

²Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.152.