



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE: JAMES 4:8

COLORADO

JANUARY 31, 2012

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The first step James calls us to, is that of recognizing Christ's lordship and God's authority in our lives and giving way to Him. Without reservation, we must completely arrange our life under His direction. 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. (Jeremiah 29:12-14) 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. And what comes from drawing near to God- a sweet fellowship with our living Lord and eternal God! Turn to God, acknowledge your sin, humble yourself and remember that God gives a greater grace (James 4:6). No matter what the desire or temptation from our flesh or the world, God gives us more grace to overcome those sinful, selfish desires and we can walk the way God calls us to.

A MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE- JAMES 4:8

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."

I. A CALL TO RADICAL REPENTANCE- JAMES 4:8B

James 4:7-8 directs us to *submit to God, resist the devil and draw near*, all aorist imperative verbs that convey a sense of urgency with a need for immediate compliance as James calls on us to deal with our sin. These commands are not to be taken lightly for they reveal the path to true repentance and salvation. They are like military commands, demanding incisive actions. And we are in need of a wake-up call for we have departed from godly attitudes and behavior. James calls us to uncompromising, Christian living and not a half-hearted faith. James has more to say in the verses that follow, demanding incisive action from us all as he calls for radical repentance.

A. "CLEANSE YOUR HANDS" - JAMES 4:8B

James 4:8b: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners;"

This is the fourth command calling us to a thorough repentance which positions us to God and His ways. This must happen when you draw near to God for repentance is the sinners' first step towards Him. Note the dramatic change as James addresses his readers with such seriousness, no longer as "brothers", but now as "sinners".

%cleanse+ Greek **%katharizo**, "to make clean in a moral sense from sin."

James uses this ceremonial term used for the priests in the Old Testament.

Before the priests would enter into the Temple to offer sacrifices, they would wash their hands. This was an external washing that represented priestly purity as they came to serve before a holy God. So how does this pertain to us? The hands were symbolic of their outward, defiling deeds. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul says, "I want men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension." Paul is referring to a morally pure life pertaining to deeds. James begins by first calling us to repentance, to cleanse our hands, to deal with our sin and confess our sinful conduct. The command to cleanse is the command to confess our sins to God.¹ We cannot come to God on our own terms and we must have clean hands by repenting from our sin, withdrawing from every evil deed. This is a sharp rebuke by James and he is saying to stop being a friend of worldly pleasures. In 1 Corinthians 15:34, Paul again writes, "Become sober minded as you ought, and stop sinning for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." This is the only approach to God; and you can be assured of God's favorable response. Joined with the call to outward cleansing is the call to "purify your hearts."

B. "PURIFY YOUR HEARTS" - JAMES 4:8C

James 4:8b: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."

The imperative to "purify your hearts" is a call for inner purification. Because God is a holy God, the only way we can enter into communion with Him is with pure hands (external conduct) and hearts (inner thoughts and attitudes).

%purify+ Greek **%hagnizo**, "purify from defilement, morally in the heart. It refers to a continuous action to keep on purifying."

Our heart refers to our thoughts and attitudes, our mind, will and emotions. James demands that we deal with the inner sins of our heart, the one's no one may see except God. Jesus makes it clear where all sin stems from when He said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." The outward sins of the hands are connected with the inward sins of the heart and we are called to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts; constantly confessing our sins. The first step in drawing near to God is by dealing with our sin. Psalm 24:3-4 says, "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, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully." We need clean hearts and hands to stand before the Lord. And the promise of God to come near from James 4:8 is not just in salvation, but also in restoration of fellowship with God. Just as the father of the prodigal son in Luke 15, God always stands ready to forgive and welcome back His children when they turn from their sinful ways. James doesn't stop there as he changes his address from "sinners" to "double minded". We have looked at this word before in James 1:8.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL, ROOM 271

Colorado

A Message of Repentance...James 4:8

double minded+Greek **διπλοσυχος**, "meaning two souled, doubter.

The only place this word is used in the New Testament is here in James. This individual James describes probably claims to know Christ as His Savior, yet by his actions, he reveals that he does not. A double-minded man is one who has one foot in the world and one foot with God. He speaks one way but acts another claiming to be a Christian but not living accordingly. This person knows of God's Word and maybe has made a profession of faith without a true confession of faith. He is unwilling to submit himself wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot be a friend of the world and with God. It is impossible to have that double allegiance because to be a friend of the world is to oppose God and His ways. We are called to an undivided allegiance and affection to God. A double-minded man is trying to serve two masters, two gods. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Could this man reveal that in fact, he has no faith?

There are two thoughts regarding the Scripture here in James. First, because God demands undivided allegiance, one who seeks to be friends with the world cannot be a friend of God because it is impossible to have a double allegiance. As James 4:4 says, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Certainly a double minded sinner refers to an unbeliever who has no faith at all. James would be calling this one to salvation.

The second view would be that James refers to one who is "double minded" is one who is spiritually unstable, waivers in his faith and vacillates. James's accusation that his readers are attempting to be "friends" with both God and the world at the same time is a conflict of basic allegiance that our jealous God will simply not tolerate. The Christian is pulled between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan, the realm of the Spirit and the realm of the "flesh." To allow "the world" to entice us away from total, single-minded allegiance to God is to become people who are divided in loyalties. James demands true repentance of both this external behavior- *wash your hands*- and the internal attitude that leads to such behavior-*purify your hearts*.²

C. "WHAT'S THE POINT?" - JAMES 4:8

James 4:8b: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."

The heart of this letter is a call to wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ with an urgent call to repentance. It is a call to uncompromising Christian living, not a half-hearted faith. James 4:6 reminds us that God gives a greater grace to the humble. God's grace demands a response and that is

one of humility. And that humility is the dominant thread through the verses that follow in a series of commands. James calls us to submit; place ourselves under His lordship, obeying Him in all things. God must be supreme in my life. He requires total loyalty.

Then God calls us to resist the devil and that means that we refuse to bow to the devil, standing against and opposing him instead. Though the devil is a defeated foe, he is a persistent one seeking to tempt, deceive and subvert our allegiance to God but resistance is possible. We must take our stand against him and because he was defeated by Christ on the cross, the devil must flee.

Then God summons us to draw near to Him. John Blanchard writes, "There is only one more view more welcome than the back of the devil and that is the face of God!"³ It is incredible that the immediate and gracious response of God is to draw near to us when we draw near to Him in intimate fellowship. But we must never forget that the call to cleansing in James 4:8 is tied with the call of God to draw near, for coming to a holy God necessitates that we deal with our sin in repentance. We cannot have communion with God when our sin separates us from Him. James demands that we deal with our sin.

Have you ever confessed that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and repented of your sin? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you completely submitted to His authority in your life, demonstrated by your obedience?

Maybe you are in need of a serious wakeup call for you have departed from your godly attitude and behavior, led astray from your purity and devotion to God. (2 Corinthians 11:3) You are trying to be friends with the world and God, but that can't be. Because God is holy, only the pure in heart and hand can enter into fellowship with Him. James calls for a radical repentance; one that penetrates to the depth of our heart and outward, sinful behavior. You cannot dabble with sin and claim that you love God. Friendship with the world is hostility towards God. To be friends with the world is to oppose God and His ways. The call of God to draw near to Him is bound up with the demand for cleansing and repentance for this is your first step toward God. James calls us to repent and turn from our sin. God's grace has more sufficient power to save, redeem, purify and sanctify. *Draw near to Him; completely, obediently and humbly with a repentant and contrite heart and He will draw near to you!*

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.208.

²Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg.194.

³Blanchard, John, *Truth for Life*. West Sussex, England: H.E. Walter Ltd.,1982. Pg. 254.