



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Ten Commandments of James

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James 4:7-10

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Introduction

This portion of James is four verses long but packed with ten commands. We should read this paragraph and be struck with the necessity to do something. These actions are applicable to the one who is seeking salvation, and to the Believer who has drifted away, needs to repent, and return to a closer relationship with God. Let us take up each command.

1. Submit Yourselves to God

Who is your authority? All of life works best when clear lines of authority and submission are present. It is no different in the spiritual realm. God is the primary authority in every matter, and in all things we are required to submit to Him. We should happily remember that we are submitting to the One who is love, who is perfection, who is the creator of all nature, and who is our creator.

2. Resist the Devil

Resist the true enemy. The call to submit to God is intensified by the Hebrew parallel device of completing the whole idea—resist everything that is against God. The Devil is a real foe.

Moderns tend to either laugh at this idea or simply shrug it off as a mythological personification. Scripture does not hesitate to proclaim the actual person of Satan. He is an adversary who perpetrates lies, deceptions, and false accusations that we are told to resist.

3. Come Near to God—An Invitation to Fellowship

Even though God is our authority, He desires that we would love Him and enjoy Him forever. In the last lesson we were rebuked not to seek *phileo* (intimate friendship) with the world, but here we are invited to experience *phileo* with our Lord. Jesus prayed, *I pray also for those who will believe in me...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:20b—21).*

4. Wash Your Hands

This command to wash hands and the next to purify hearts is another Hebrew parallelism as is found in poetic verses like the Psalms. The ideas are connected and, in this use, similar.

Wash your hands is a reminder that sins stain our humanity, and it is necessary to cleanse our behavior by taking actions demonstrating repentance. But this is not the only dimension of personal cleansing. James next turns to the goal of purifying our hearts.

5. Purify Your Hearts

This parallel idea is also to clean up our internal thoughts and intentions. Changing behavior is insufficient if the heart is not purified. Jesus said, *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder,*

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adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander (Matthew 15:19).

6. Grieve (literally be miserable)

Much of the preaching and teaching of today stresses how we should be happy and personally fulfilled. This is a wonderful way to experience life, but the next few commands insist that our first necessity is to experience and understand our miserable condition when we live apart from God.

In other words, true and lasting joy comes after repentance. We do not conjure up joy by merely thinking positive thoughts or “changing scars into stars, making lemonade out of lemons, or seeking silver linings in dark clouds.”

James does not tell us to be miserable in order to be negative, but He knows that we need to shed ourselves of the sin that clings to us, to be free and fully to receive all of the goodness God has for us.

7. Mourn

Mourning deepens the feelings of repentance. Mourning means we experience a deep sorrow over that which is unrighteous and at odds with God’s desire for our lives. Mourning recognizes the personal dimension of our depravity, and our spiritual deadness apart from God.

*Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted (Matthew 5:4).*

8. Wail

Deep misery and mourning evoke expressions of wailing and crying. When we experience the depths of sorrow, audible cries and visible expressions of emotion are outward signs of an inward reality. Have we lost our ability to blush at sin?

9. Change Laughter into Mourning

Flippant laughter is addressed. Modern society seeks hundreds of kinds of surface pleasures that anesthetize or suppress underlying troubles. Layers of frivolity cannot heal calloused hearts.

10. Humble Yourself—The Real Solution

Humility is the remedy for sinful pride. James has previously and emphatically proclaimed that God is opposed to the proud. Know that the Lord stands against our pride, but welcomes the contrite. Our hope for the good life is to humble ourselves before Him.

Abundance is found in the Lord, but it is the result of repentance, seeking and receiving the forgiveness Christ has earned for us, and serving Him with a thankful spirit. Joyous salvation is received as a gift.

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).*

*Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy
(Psalm 126:5).*

I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy (John 16:20).