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In the last lesson we discussed the internal wars that people have with themselves and with God. Such internal strife leads to external strife between people, including in the church.

There are three enemies that attack us and seek to lead us away from God: the world, the flesh, and the devil. James gives us important instructions to follow so that we might avoid the strife and have true peace.

First, we read in *James 4:7* to submit to God. The Greek word used would have been understood as a term used in the military to act according to one's proper rank. We are soldiers in the Lord's army, and He is the Commander-in-Chief. Proper submission and obedience to God is imperative for us to enjoy true peace.

Along with submitting to God, we are to resist the devil (and he will flee from us). We should never give place to the devil, giving him a foothold (*Ephesians 4:27*) in our lives. We resist him by submitting to God.

David had a heart for God, but at times he was out of God's will and paid a price. Some of the Psalms he wrote were 'penitent psalms' (psalms of repentance and sorrow) because of this. The time following his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah was such a time that David lost fellowship with God. When we repented and submitted, his fellowship was restored, along with his joy and peace.

Verse 8 follows by instructing us to draw near to God. When we find ourselves further away from God, it is our doing, not His. God never changes. How can we draw near to God? We submit to Him, obey His word, confess our sins, and ask for the cleansing that only God can provide.

The more we are like God, the nearer we are to Him. A.W. Tozer wrote of this in his essay "Nearness is Likeness". God is gracious to us. He will draw near to us when we repent and properly deal with sin that keeps us out of fellowship with Him.

The double-minded, carnal Christian keeps greater distance between himself and God. Consider the difference between Abraham and Lot (*Genesis 18*). Abraham was a friend of God who "drew near" and talked with God about Sodom. Lot moved into that wicked city and missed out on God's blessing and the peace that comes with it.

The mature believer grieves sin (*v. 9*) because God is grieved by sin. James instructs us of the importance of humility before God (*v. 10*). Just as with children, God's children can outwardly be submissive while inwardly being spiteful and prideful.

God hates the sin of pride (*Proverbs 6:16-17*). He chastens his children for our own good, and He will chasten the proud believer until he is humbled. We should never be flippant about sin or treat it lightly. Sin is serious - Christ died to pay the price for our sins.

David prayed "*search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts*" (*Psalms 139:23*). In Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance after his committing adultery, he writes "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*" (*v. 17*). We should humble ourselves before God, confess our sins, mourn our sins, and turn away (repent) from them. This will allow us to draw near to God.

Memory Verse

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10)

James 4

Pride Promotes Strife

⁴ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that battle within you? ² You lust after something and do not have it, so you commit murder. You covet something and cannot obtain it, so you fight and quarrel. Yet you do not have because you do not ask God. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says without purpose that the Spirit that indwells us yearns (to be loved) with a jealous love? [Jer. 3:14, Hos. 2:19]

⁶ But God gives more grace. Therefore, He says:

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
[Prov. 3:34]

Humility Cures Worldliness

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 Grieve (*your sin*) 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.

Do Not Judge a Brother

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. But who are you to judge another?

Do Not Boast About Tomorrow

¹³ Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”. ¹⁴ But you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we shall live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ But as it is you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, anyone who knows what is right to do and does not do *it*, is sinning.

Memory Verse

*“Submit to God. Resist the devil
and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)*