

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

A Primer on Repentance

James 4:7-10

Keywords: Repentance, Drawing Near to God, Mourning, Resisting Satan, Worship, Reconciliation, Grace

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: Repentance. One man called it the first word of the gospel and he is right. It is not understood today in many churches because it is not carefully taught anymore. In this sermon Pastor Henry seeks to help his church understand what repentance looks like in preparation to continue on in 2 Timothy 2.

I. Introduction.

A. **Read the passage (James 4:1-10).**

B. Quick review of vss 1-6:

1. Notice that the source of our fights is a self-centered heart.
 - a. **We** want something. **We** want others to think we are wise. **We** want things that will make us happy.
 - b. James says that these fights arise because of this selfish ambition that puts us at odds with each other.
 - c. Pride is a great warrior who loves to seek out churches to split and destroy.
2. The result is potentially catastrophic in nature, murders and fights. The misery that comes from rejected prayers or prayerlessness itself.
3. Having shown us the true cause of the fights he then rebukes us by showing us the effects of this type of selfish attitude.
 - a. He called us adulteresses because we were cheating on God!
 - (1) Anyone who has had to endure the pain of finding out that their spouse was unfaithful understands this in a unique way.
 - (2) James says that though we claim to have a love for the Lord, in reality, the way we live shows that we are more happy with this world.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (3) He warns us that to become a friend of this world is actually a conscious decision to hate God and be His enemy.
- (4) How many have thought that it was a church or a parent or a spouse who was their enemy when in reality it was God due to their hard hearts!
- b. He also reminded us that we can't be ignoring the Scripture.
 - (1) The Bible clearly teaches that God does not share us.
 - (2) God is a jealous God, who will not tolerate children who let their hearts wander.
- c. And in this we see a measure of hope.
 - (1) We were told that God's grace is greater than this world or our sin.
 - (2) He shows us that pride does not only result in fighting among ourselves but that it causes God to fight against us as well.
 - (3) And then he gave some hope, God gives grace to the humble.
- d. And so, today we have the opportunity to consider true repentance.
 - (1) If you are in sin, if you are a friend of the world, if you have become an enemy of God what do you do?
 - (2) You repent.
 - (3) What do you mean repent?
 - (4) Well, that is exactly what James describes for us today.

Propositional Statement

This passage contains 10 commands that describe true repentance. God is calling each of us to consider these commands and apply them into our lives.

II. The first command is to put yourself in the proper relationship with God (vs. 7).

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- A. “Submit” is a common word within the New Testament. It is used to describe the slave’s response to his master, the citizen’s response to his government, and the wife’s response to her husband.
1. This term has become very unpopular in today’s society.
 2. We cringe when it is brought up, expecting hostility.
 3. The actual reason for this, however, is because we fail to see submission from God’s perspective.
 - a. We see it from man’s perspective.
 - b. Or, to be more accurate, we see it from a worldly perspective. The very perspective that James is saying causes fights, quarrels, and every evil thing.
- B. But the supreme response is to submit ourselves unto our God.
1. It is a voluntary and willful act in which you place yourself under the authority of another.
 - a. It is not a forced attitude.
 - b. Rather, it is to be done willingly.
 - c. The word comes from the military, referring to the placing of a person underneath the ordained authority of another.
 2. Why does he start with this command?
 - a. Because when you are one who loves this world too much, the first place to start is by **returning to God**.
 - b. Until our relationship with God is correct all other things within our lives are wrong.
 - c. God must be supreme. He must be first in our heart and mind and desires.
 - d. So he says, “submit therefore to God.”
 3. Remember also that the context says that their hearts were proud.
 - a. Submission is the place where the proud always stumble.
 - b. This world exalts the person who is self-reliant but the Bible says that God is opposed to him. For the self-reliant man sees no need for God, at least until things go bad.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

4. God desires the one who is utterly dependent upon God.
 - a. Psalm 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a **contrite** heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”
 - b. Isaiah 66:2 “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and **contrite** of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”
 - c. Beloved, submission to God is the first step in true repentance.
 - d. Without it all you can really do is give the appearance of sorrow, but no the reality.
 - e. True submission involves a heart of obedience.
 - (1) You cannot say that your heart is given to the Lord in a submissive manner if your actions are disobedient to His Word.
 - (2) Don’t tell people how much you love the Lord when you life tells them otherwise.
 - (3) The truly submissively person is one who is broken in his heart, seeing God as his only hope and strength.
 - (a) He doesn’t trust in his family.
 - (b) He doesn’t trust in his bank account.
 - (c) He doesn’t trust in his reputation.
 - (d) He only trusts in God and God alone.
 - (4) This is a person whose heart is repentant.
5. Having called us to submission James is ready for the next command (7b).

III. The second command is to resist the devil.

- A. The word for “resist” is interesting.
 1. It is also a military term.
 2. It literally means to stand against someone.
 3. It means to array your army across a battlefield, preparing to do battle.
 - a. It is active warfare.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- B. The object of our resistance is the Devil.
1. This word could also translate as “slanderer” or “accuser.”
 2. This reminds us of the primary weapons and methods of Satan, which are lies and deception.
 3. The Bible calls Satan the “god of this world.”
 - a. In fact, the Bible describes this entire world as comfortably lying in the lap of Satan.
 - b. Those who are proud of heart are described as being in agreement with the arrogance of Satan.
 - c. Remember back in 3:15 that the wisdom of this world was demonic, or of the devil.
 - d. At the heart of the fights and quarrels that they were having was selfishness and pride, the tools of Satan.
 4. Therefore, when he commands us to resist Satan in this passage, it is not some weird cosmic fight where we are running around trying to find the Devil to fight him.
 - a. Instead, it is to do battle against the attitudes and actions that are of Satan (cf 3:13-18).
 - (1) When we submit ourselves to God we naturally turn away from this world and Satan. But we must keep them in the right order.
 - (2) It is not enough to stop acting and loving the world.
 - (3) We must no longer tolerate the attitudes and actions that are worldly.
 - (a) We don’t make light of anger.
 - (b) Lying is no longer viewed as a creative use of our language.
 - (c) Arguing and fighting is not encouraged.
 - (d) We don’t accept immorality, we reject it, we stand against it.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. We resist him because we are fully submitted and committed to our Lord and God.
 - (1) Therefore, we actively stand against everything that has to do with Satan.
 - (2) Worldliness captures the very essence of who and what Satan is.
 - (3) When we resist and refuse to give in to these sick and self-centered attitudes we are in fact resisting Satan.
- C. James says that there is no such thing as neutrality.
 - 1. If you submit to God then you will naturally resist Satan.
 - 2. If you love this world, you actually love Satan and are an enemy of God.
- D. Notice the last part of the verse. God promises that if we resist Satan he must flee from us.
 - 1. If you are struggling with sin. If you are a proud man or woman, there is hope!
 - 2. Submit yourself to God, resist the ways of Satan and he must flee!
 - 3. Satan is a defeated enemy, when Christ died on the cross and rose again, Satan was defeated.
 - a. To be sure Satan is happy to help you hate one another.
 - b. He is thrilled to help us create divisions within our homes and churches.
 - c. He cackles with supreme pleasure to see churches split apart with fights, **for we are the Bride of Christ.**
 - 4. But do not be deceived,
 - a. He can only lead you into this divisive heart when you are submitted to him and his ways rather than Gods.
 - b. God is a peacemaker, but Satan is a roaring lion who roams the earth seeking those he can devour.
 - 5. Yet when we resist him from a life submitted to God, he must flee.
- E. The rest of these points are written with a uniquely Jewish flavor.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

IV. Having told us to submit he now calls us to draw near to God (8).

- A. This command pictures the priest approaching God.
 - 1. It is used in 1 Samuel 14 for the seeking of wisdom of God.
 - 2. It usually is used though for seeking of forgiveness.
- B. Notice that the sinning Christian is separated from God. There is a barrier between us and Him and the barrier is our sin.
 - 1. Why does sin separate us?
 - a. Well, the one key reason is that God is holy. As a result when hold sin in our life we cannot remain close to Him for we come under strong conviction.
 - b. Therefore we flee.
 - 2. Oh beloved, there is a great sadness that should overcome any of us when we see a brother or sister in Christ who no longer has a sweet, intimate walk with the Lord due to their sin.
 - 3. Your heart should ache as you see them bowed over with problems and chaos.
 - 4. You need to gently call them to repent, to turn away from their sin and to draw near to God again. Call them to once again have an intimate relationship with their Savior.
- C. Each of us must understand that when we are in sin, when we are disobeying God, it is our job to make the first move.
 - 1. Now that “move” is not only in word but in deed as well.
 - 2. Isaiah 29:13-16, “Then the Lord said, "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, 14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed." 15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us?" 16 You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made should say to its

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

maker, "He did not make me"; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

- D. The wonderful thing is that God promises that as we approach Him that He will draw near to us.
1. All of us have felt the pain of being separated from God. We all know the emptiness and loss of purpose.
 2. Perhaps some of you right now are in that situation, I can only call you to draw near to Him.
 3. Psalm 69:1-18 speaks of David's lamenting and in it he is drawing near to God and calling on God to draw near to him.

V. **Having submitted to God, resisted the Devil, and drawn near to God, we are now called to purify our heart and life (8b).**

- A. Notice the strong words he calls them. He is trying to pierce their hearts, to break through the hardness of their hearts, to cause them to become broken before their God.
1. "Sinners."
 - a. Their friendship with the world has so corrupted them that James acts like they are actually unsaved.
 - b. To be a sinner is to be a person who chooses to live against God's will.
 2. "Double-minded."
 - a. Literally this is two souled.
 - b. Their hearts are divided between God and the World.
 - c. But when this happens their lifestyle serves only the world.
- B. The idea of cleansing their hands points back to the priestly purifications.
1. They would go through a ceremonial washing so that they were able to approach the altar and offer sacrifices to Him.
 2. The hands represents our outward actions.
 3. He is saying that their actions are sinful and have polluted them; therefore, they need to cleanse themselves, wash away these actions.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- C. It is the same idea with regard to purifying their hearts.
 - 1. The heart refers to our mind, our will, and our intellect.
 - 2. They were friends of the world, as a result they are condemned as adulteresses.
 - 3. Therefore, their hearts need to be scrubbed clean of filthy thoughts, evil plans, and selfish attitudes. They need to devote their minds wholly back to God.
 - 4. They are to separate themselves from everything that is considered by God as unclean.
 - 5. When we have purified our hearts then it will be evident in our speech. Out of the mouth comes the thoughts of the heart.
- D. Surely the people were reminded of Psalm 24:3-4, Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart. . . .
- E. Isaiah 1:15-16 "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,
- F. I hope that this is clear to you. Do you see the serious way that God treats sin? Do you see that true repentance is obvious? Repentance is good for you, but it is not fun. It is not a time of rejoicing but a time of sadness, as you consider your sin and come back to the Lord with a broken and sad heart.

VI. In verse 9 the next four commands are related to one another. They could be summed up with the word “grief.”

- A. This is a key part of repentance. All too often this is where we show that we are actually not broken hearted over our sin.
- B. We fail to show grief over the fact that we have sinned against our holy, loving God.
- C. Notice the flavor of these commands.
 - 1. “Miserable” (grieve).
 - a. This is a strong, inner turmoil.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. It is a wretchedness due to the realization that they have sinned. Their heart is aching within.
- 2. “Mourn.”
 - a. This means exactly what it says.
 - b. It tells us that we are to have the same grief for sinning as we do when we lose someone we love.
 - (1) Most of us would have no problem weeping and grieving openly if we had a spouse or child die. It is natural.
 - (2) But how many of us react the same way when we have been sinning?
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. 2 And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.”
 - (4) Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
 - c. “Weep” (wail).
 - (1) This is not a quiet sob, but a tearing, gasping out-pouring of tears.
 - (2) It is used of Peter when he denied the Lord three times.
 - d. Turn your laughter and joy to gloom and sadness.
 - (1) James is not condemning happiness.
 - (2) But he is commanding them that a truly repentant person is not concerned about fun, laughter, and good times.
 - (3) Instead he is utterly focused upon the reality of his sin and how it was against his God.
 - (4) You are to be downcast, and full of grief. You are not to celebrate.
- 3. This leads us to the final command.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

VII. We are commanded to humble ourselves before the Lord (10).

- A. “Humble” means to make yourself low.
 - 1. It is not a forced humiliation, rather, it is voluntary.
 - 2. Matthew 18:4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
 - 3. To confess one’s deplorable, despicable condition.
 - a. As Paul cried out in Romans 7, Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
 - 4. We are to marvel, not at our goodness, but God’s.
 - 5. We are to echo John Newton’s words, “amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”
- B. To humble yourself is not a quick thing. In fact none of these we have looked at are quick fixes.
 - 1. It is an attitude that stays with you.
 - 2. It means to wait on the Lord.
- C. Notice that in His time, God will exalt you, he will lift you up.
 - 1. It will occur.
 - 2. Perhaps not right away, but it will occur.
 - 3. We need to be patient and wait on God. We should not get impatient and decide that it is time to get up from the ground and start to party.
 - 4. Matthew 23:12, “And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”
 - 5. 1 Peter 5:6, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time”
 - 6. We need to stay put, and wait on God’s hand to lift us up.
 - a. And He will do it.
 - b. In his time.

VIII. Conclusion.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- A. The call of repentance is not a one time event.
 - 1. It is the first word of the gospel of Jesus Christ, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”
 - 2. But it is a lifestyle for those pursuing righteousness and Christlikeness.
- B. A growing Christian is a repenting Christian.
 - 1. At first they are the obvious things.
 - 2. But there is never a point in time where there is no need to repent.
- C. Consider yourself before your Lord. Are you a man or woman who is marked by repentance?
- D. May we all encourage each other toward this discipline in that there is the assurance of forgiveness and blessing found within.

Small Group Questions

- **How does the church and the CG help or hinder you in repentance? What ways can we improve?**
- **What is the greatest motive for being quick to repent? Why?**
- **What have you found is the most common reason you are reluctant to repent from some sin? How have you overcome that?**