



## James Series #8: "Who's Driving" James 4:7-17 Pastor Tim Dodson - Jesus Fellowship, Menomonie WI May 11th, 2014

James 4:7 - 17 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. 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. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is*

*your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

Therein lies the ultimate battle! To "submit to God." Rom 12:1 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice — the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*

The fact is, He *is* Lord and God...in that there is no argument! The dividing issue ...that which separates the "sheep from the goats," is whether He is indeed *Lord* of **me** and **you**. If we *say* that He is our Lord and God, then we most assuredly allow Him that place in our hearts, minds, and living. Many folks however want to reject all human involvement and accountability. We think that "saved by grace" means I am free from any responsibility or participation in the actual walk of faith. This false doctrine is astonishing when faced with seemingly hundreds of scriptural passages that blatantly say just the opposite. This first verse is one of many, many such passages! We are being called here by James to "submit to God." The existence of such a directive would obviously mean that it is possible to *not* to...or at least *try* not to! The battle emerges herein...the fight to "die to self" and "seek first the kingdom of God."

Matt Chandler, in the book "To live is Christ and to Die is Gain" said "*One of the best ways to get grace wrong is to believe it means we don't work in the Christian life. But as Dallas Willard says "Grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning." Nobody stumbles into godliness, ever. It simply doesn't happen. There is no autopilot mode for the Christian life. We never see people in the Bible growing in godliness by coasting along.*"

1Pe 5:8 ***Be sober, be vigilant;*** because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1Pe 5:9 ***Resist him,*** steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to ***stand against*** the wiles of the devil.

1Pe 2:13 Therefore ***submit*** yourselves...

The list of such passages is long! Paul began his new life with such an understanding...right out of the gate he prayed “trembling and astonished, (saying), *Lord, what do You want me to do?*” Acts 9:6

As we mentioned last week, we can often seek God to bless our decisions, and empower all our efforts whether they are His plan for us or not. Thus again, our prayers end up being “*God, gimme...*” Our energies are exerted trying to get God on our train instead of doing battle against Satan and our flesh in an effort to get on Gods! So we have the simple direction from James here. No misunderstanding can be claimed as he clearly and simply states, “*submit yourselves to God.*” Period.

According to verse six, He *resists us*; or in translation “*opposes us*” if we fight Him over this sovereign position. Obviously such can be a dangerous place to reside! In Judges 2:1-3 we are told about how the children of Israel found themselves in such a place... “*Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out (their enemies) before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.*”

On the other side, in the position of “*grace to the humble*” there is literally no limit to what that believer can do.

The problem, you see, is the constant pull backwards into worldliness. And we need to realize that such is really far less ‘out there’ than we might think. It's a more dire problem than that. Because the power behind it all is coming from inside of us. The problem of worldliness, James says, is a problem that actually originates in the heart. We certainly see the results...the *fruit* of such in the world around us, but the cause is in here. In our selfishness. We really need to stop seeing the enemy as *out there* and start facing the fact that in truth it is *in here*.

The text has told us that God gives grace to the humble. He gives us a *greater* grace. And we need it! Because the fact is we are today surrounded by a world, a culture, that for many of us is prevailing. The world offers its stuff, and we like its stuff. The world offers us its thinking, its belief, its behavior. We like that thinking and belief and behavior to some measure and we want to have some of it in our own life. To make matters worse, the world has a way of saying to us that some of our ways are out of step, archaic...old school, and we begin to think we're somehow kinda squirrely, and so we begin to slowly and subtly abandon the ways of the Lord and walk in the ways of the world.

What's the answer here? What do we do with this? How do we “*resist the devil?*” What does that actually look like practically speaking? Does such mean we are to spend all of our time attempting to hang tough ...facing him down, and pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps? No...many have so tried and as many have thus failed! Here is position of victory in verse 8: *near to God*. We move toward Him and He meets us. We do this through prayer, meditation upon Him, and fellowship of service. It is a spiritual, physical, and mental move! But make no mistake! It requires our personal participation and affirmation.

Our success in this lies in the “drawing near to the Master.” The engulfing of ourselves in the Holy Spirit's presence, power, and activities, which is God's response to us saddling up close to Him. In doing this, we fight from the position of a victory already attained. Just like in the “Promised Land” of the Old Testament, we fight in the light of a victory not only assured, but in truth, already completed in Christ. Ephesians 6:10 says it best with “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord *and in the power of His might.*” Amen!

But it takes commitment, humility, and *time*. And again, it takes your grace driven effort. "*Cleanse your hands...purify your hearts...*". We must seek to unload all that causes communion between Him and I to cease. All that is not of or from God must be repented of and left behind. If I am willing, so is He. Most of us say "yes! I am willing!" But like the Father in Mark 9:24, we tend to actually approach the issue as he did..."Lord, *I believe; help my unbelief!*" That's called being "*double minded*."

The term "double minded" has in it the idea of "double souled." It speaks of the individual that has divided interests...a "divided heart." Regardless of the thousands who attempt to each day, we CANNOT have love for this world and for God. To say we *cannot* is not to say we *MAY not*, but rather that it is an impossibility! It cannot be done! If we try to do so, the winner is the world by default. It takes a conscious decision, and purposeful movement to walk in Christ. No one falls into holy living, a successful life, and abundant blessing by accident.

Notice again our personal involvement in the call to humility in verse 10. We are told to "humble yourselves..." It is a conscious decision...a purposeful action on our part. This only comes through a constant drawing near to God, and constant acknowledgment of who we are, what we are, and where we came from. Practically speaking, this happens only through engulfing ourselves in His Word, surrounding ourselves in fellowship with the body of Christ, and stepping out in service so He can interact with us through it. When we remain separated, we lose our perspective and start to think we are ok...that we are on some spiritual plane and fail to grasp the truth of who we are.

When we fail to stand in humility...when we thus fail to understand what and who we are in truth, it is not long before we start criticizing others around us. And when we speak evil of another, we in essence step into God's place, the place of judgment. There is a lifetime of attention that is demanded in our *own* walk with God! We never arrive at any point in our lives where we can set down the mirror and pick up the magnifying glass to scrutinize the standing of another before God. Only *God* gets to be God, and do "God things!" When we judge another, we go even beyond taking control of our *own* lives, we move into the audacity of seeking to control another!

Our perspective on this issue should be clear to us, as James points out that we don't even have control of our *own* lives. What makes us think we have the ability to call the shots for another? Understanding our mortality and our honest frailty should keep us on the correct path in this issue. We are nothing more than "*a vapor*" that will be here one moment, and gone the next. Therefore, what should be our future plan? How about "*that I might finish my course with joy*"? (Acts 20:24)

This does not direct us to live with no plans for tomorrow, or to simply live for the moment. Often this is how the world lives, and with no problem, for they live in a realm where each moment is all they have for sure. But we are on a mission and thus we should rightfully have a plan as to how we are going to fulfill that calling. But the fact remains that God alone is dictating this moment, as well as the next one, and the next. James has been driving home the point that GOD IS IN CONTROL...GOD IS CALLING THE SHOTS. For many of us this is a comfort and a joyous surrender. Yet for others, even His own children, it is a fact that is constantly struggled against. Will we choose to humble ourselves to His sovereignty or attempt to operate in a lifelong rebellion to our hurt?

The world lives as if they will always have a tomorrow. Yet the true believer lives in the light of the fact that *if* he or she has a tomorrow, it is in the hands of God. If you did not, would you have regret? Would you sorrow in the fact that you never got around to placing Christ first and doing anything to contribute to His glory and kingdom growth on this planet?

Our self-satisfied blind confidence is not only misplaced, but in reality it is *sin*. We not only *cannot* control even the least of life's dealings, but to attempt to do so is the way of this world; the way of the flesh, the way of sin and rebellion. James, as he has through his letter thus far, is calling us to take the next step of our faith. To move beyond the salvation grace so freely bestowed upon us, and move into "walking in faith." To actually place Him in the Lordship position of our lives and to allow Him that sovereign place.

By attempting to hold on to the control of a life redeemed by Christ is flatly and emphatically placed in the realm of sin. Not the politically correct terms in which we place it today. Not easy phrases like "backslidden" or "struggle" or "weakness." It is sin. Sin to be repented of. Sin to be denied. He desires to be *Lord* of your life. To not allow Him that place, is sin.