

**Men to Men Ministry**  
**Lesson Eighteen in the Letter of James**  
**Godly Purity**

Teacher: Just Larry

Phone: 916-337-2648

WEB: <http://theoinsight.com/just-james/>

Email: [ljmonson@hotmail.com](mailto:ljmonson@hotmail.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChnVaqrTKIZ9p7UljdvYOw>

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## James 4:8, 9,10 NASB

**7 Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

**8 Come close to God and He will come close 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 into gloom.**

**10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.**

## Introduction

I read a story about a man hunting turkeys in upstate New York. He was wearing camouflage and giving off his best turkey calls. He was too good at imitating a turkey- so good, in fact, that he fooled two coyotes! A state wildlife expert figured that they were foraging for food for their pups and moved in for the kill on a man doing his best to sound like a turkey. They must have mistaken him for the real thing. So they did what comes naturally to coyotes. Not to add any insult to this man's injuries, which could have been fatal, but this story is reminiscent of situations of people who claim to live one way and act another; who say they are Christian but their actions don't hold up; who say they resist the devil but by their actions are embracing him. The girl that stands strongly for saving sex for marriage but continually wears the most provocative clothing and is appalled when a guy approaches her. The man whose mouth is filled with really foul language, who continually blows his top in an explicative laced tirade. Someone laughed at him when he mentioned the Sunday School class he teaches. The point is that your actions will clearly show if you are resistant of the devil or if you are embracing him. Your actions clearly speak louder than your claims about yourself. To get back to the story of the turkey hunter; the moral of the story is that if you're acting like a turkey, don't be surprised by the responses you get.

As Christians, we are called to be different. We are called to a higher standard, a standard set by Christ. We are to resist the devil. We have a promise in James 4:7 that if we resist the devil that he will flee from us. The power is in our hands, not the devil's. If the Church is to be restored, we must resist the devil.

## Questions that must be answered

First, let us define what it is to be saved:

1. A person that believes in God
2. A person who believes in the personhood of Jesus as an embodiment of God.
3. A person who knows they have fallen short of God's will.
4. A person who knows the wages of sin is spiritual death.
5. A person who has repented from their attitudes and actions
6. A person who has confessed to God their failures.
7. A person who has accepted God's mercy to cleanse from all unrighteousness.
8. A person who has decided that any subsequent failures are to be also confessed to.
9. A person who has received Jesus into their life as an example and guide for life.
10. A person who if their life was lost this moment would go directly to heaven.

For the purpose of the following questions. The qualification of being saved is the present experience and not the idea that they can be saved as a future event. It is the **perfect present**.

Is it possible for you to be a Jew and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be poor and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be rich and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to not have joy in troubles and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to have no endurance and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to have no wisdom and be saved?	
Is it possible for you have doubts and be saved?	
Is it possible for you be mindful of social and economic status and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be tempted and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be deceived and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be slow to hear and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be quick to speak and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be quick to get angry and be saved?	
Is it possible for you be a hearer of the word only and be saved?	
It is possible that have filthiness in your life and be saved?	
It is possible for you to be proud and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to be double minded and be saved?	
Is it possible for you that your tongue could be injurious and spiteful and be saved?	
Is it possible for you to come before God with unclean hands and be saved?	
Is it possible to come before God with unpure hearts and be saved?	

## Who He's Talking To

### This is the who of this admonition.

Let's stay with the text. I don't think it is good to run away from texts that are problematic.

In James 4:4, he is talking to people who are adulterers. He says, "You adulteresses" — it is a feminine word, really — "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" He is talking to people who are finding their joy by using God as their so-called husband to get money and go out and make friends with the world. They are making a cuckold out of God. They are cheating on him, and those are the people that are being spoken to.

James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." So he is talking to proud people.

James 4:8 "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." And let's back up with these adulteress people. Half the time they are in bed with God, and half the time they are in bed with the world. They are double-minded. So that is the context when he says, "Let your laughter be turned to mourning."

In James 4:9 James points out those who laugh at their current relationship with God. This is not wholesome laughter. This is not godly laughter. This is the laughter of an unfaithful wife in a bar with her boyfriend. This is sinful laughter. They are laughing behind the backs of the employees and as they are being treated unjustly. They are not taking joy in God. They are not treasuring God. And that is why he calls them adulteresses and double-minded.

### The who of this admonition:

He is speaking of a number of people in the church. They would not be there to hear if they were not in the church. Again we must define a word for clarity. Church in Greek is Ekklesia meaning a gathering, a grouping of people, a congregation, a likeminded association.

- These people have the will to choose their association to God
- These people are characterized as Sinners (In rebellion)
- These people are characterized as double-minded- could not make up their minds between two alternatives.
- These people are not miserable – Going through life full of "Keep On and carry on attitudes
- These people are not mourning- no feeling of loss. No feelings of regret or guilt
- These people were susceptible for laughter and joy
- These people were not humble, they had it all together.

We must know and decide for all time the who was the who of James.

1. Either James is talking about the totally corrupted, willingfull enemies of God, the unsaved. The damned masses. If they died at the reading of this scripture they would go directly to hell and not pass go and not get \$200 dollars.
2. Those in the church we are living below God's glorious ideal. Living in graceful bliss but without wanting to go further. These could well be characterized as carnal Christians. Those who had made a decision for God but lived on the edge between heaven and hell.

There are times when the most immediate goal is to stop being happy in the world. Stop being happy in sin. Start weeping over dishonoring God by finding happiness in things. That is what the text is saying. Yes, right now, stop that happiness. Stop that laughter. Be brokenhearted. Don't rejoice. You are in danger.

What James is reminding these people that the chief goal at this moment that James is after is not their long-term misery. He wants them to start honoring God by finding pleasure in their husband. Get back in bed with your husband and stay there. Don't go cheat on God by finding pleasure in what he has declared to be sin.

### The goal of the process is the function God has designed us for.

James tells us in verse 8 to come near to God. For all the ways that we have access to God through His Word, prayer, worship, etc. we are at times very disconnected to God. We've lost a closeness with God. The irony in all of this is that God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be close to Him again. So we can an intimate relationship with Him. God doesn't just want an acquaintance type relationship with us, He wants an intimate relationship with us. He has done His part to re-establish that relationship, now it's our turn to do our part to re-establish a close, intimate relationship with God.

### The goals for these "who" people.

God wants us to be close to him. He is not an ethereal ghostly being afar off with no want to be close to you and I. James is saying there is a direct relationship between the want to be close to God and God's pleasure in being close to you. One of the problems in society is not the rejection of God but the rejection of an active, desirable, helpful God. Not a far off. The God as an a idea, Deism. Diesm is the idea that God made the world and all that it contains but then took a hands off approach. He is now God but he is also unknowable a nebulous Big Guy, the man upstairs with a lightning bolt in his hands ready to zap you. A God that does not want ot be close to his creation. He made it and that is good enough. He was there and I am here and I don't really need him to take an active roll in my life. This picture is found in V8 of chapter 4. **Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."**

Second goal is Exaltation. 4:10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you.** Exalt means to: to lift up on high, to exalt, to pull you up out of your

current place. To raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity. To exalt, to raise to dignity, honor and happiness.

So with the Who and the the Goal how do we get to the solution?

## What is the Method of this scripture

When I lived in Idaho among the great trees of the Clearwater their were men who called themselves Loggers. They were not lumberjacks because they did not make lumber they knocked down trees. I was told they were not fallers but fellers. Their job was not to make trees fall but to make them land. In Romans we are told we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. Unlike the fellers associating their efforts at the result, but the very act of the tree coming down – Fallers. It is the method of reaching the goals of nearness and exaltation.

How to do we get to the goal. What are the actions needed to come closer to God and to be lifted up?

### First Method

**Come close to God**, This is an intentional movement toward the presence of God.

It is more than 30 minutes of worship a week. It is more than keeping a bible on your table. It is more than an acknowledgment of the Big Guy up there. It is a purposeful project of movement toward the goal. If we are moving toward God, He moves closer to us. Mutual movement. While His Spirit already lives within those who believe in Him, it is evident that we can walk according to the world, the devil, and the flesh. As we focus less on ourselves and more on Him, we can be more submissive to Him. This seems to be the idea behind what it means to “draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). As we align our priorities, desires, thoughts, and behaviors with what He prescribes, we find that we are walking with Him side by side.

### So how do you get closer with God?

#### *The difference between ethics and morals*

The project plan the James is calling for, one to which he is demanding is first to **Cleanse your hands**. This is an ethical demand with moral intent. It is a requirement for worship and the very presence of God.

The Jewish understanding here is that clean hands were to make you fit for worship. It was an ethical demand, a law, it was something you did before entering the synagogue or temple. The Jews at the time of James were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. If you look closely at the history of the chosen people you will see an obvious pendulum between the ethical and the moral. At one end of the swing was the total lack of morals. Any thing that could be done was done only in the name of the law. The admonition of not traveling on the Sabbath was circumvented by having a few belongings stationed at a days journey so you could well travel from home to the stationed home. At the time of James the Moral swing was entirely ethics driven with little moral should. You did and nothing more.

**Moral pendulum.** Swinging back and forth. At this time it was primarily ETHICS driven with little morals. Did what you had to do and nothing more. Here James is saying the ethical is important, keep the ritual hand cleaning before worship but to the next step of a pure moral attitude.

While God has provided us with many details about how to walk with Him, James puts things succinctly when he encourages his readers to look deeply into our attitudes, what makes us tick. The why do you do things not the things themselves.

It is easy to get lost in the theological details and to dwell on the good and better, the should and could, need and want. To bring myself where I can justify calling myself a Christian. Being not so bad that you could call me good. Here James is saying our morals are as important or more important than our ethics. It requires a complete dedication to God, free from divided loyalties and with a sincere desire to follow His will in every aspect of your life;

*Miserable, mourn, weep, gloom*

Is there a place for joy in the church.... Yes. James is not calling for all of us to walk about with sad faces. He is not calling for us to deny joy in the association with a clean conscience and clean hands. He is not calling for us to reject a smile that comes from a purified heart. What James is saying is if you are not close to God, if your hands are still dirty with sinfulness, your heart is divided, you should be miserable, mournful, eyes full of tears, and Gloom in all you do.

*Humility with a repentant heart and spirit.*

The problem with the audience that James is addressing here in chapter 4 is that they oblivious to their condition. They believe that they are doing fine, they have much laughter and joy, when in fact they are not all right. James tells them to grieve, mourn and wail over their condition and to humble themselves before God.

If the Church is to get right and be restored, then we must honestly look at ourselves and realize that we are not doing fine. God and His will, His plans, His mission, His commands are not being completely obeyed. We must take ourselves from the position of pride and thinking we have all of the answers to a position of humility before God knowing that He is the one with all the answers, all the power, and all the control. We are God's servants and we must humbly serve God. Each of us must commit ourselves to having a repentant heart and spirit.

## Conclusion

As I said at the beginning of this study, I love the Church. The reason that I love the Church is because the Church is God's people. It's not a structure, not a building, it's people. The Church is family. The Church is what God has decided to use to bring people to Him. That's a high calling. That's a high responsibility. I want to be faithful to the task that God has given me a part of His Church. One day Christ will return and I want to be able to know with all my heart that we as the Church did our very best to serve God. Because of Christ's imminent return, the Church must continually operate under a sense of urgency. We do not have an unlimited amount of time to complete the task God has given us. We

need to work as hard as we can to serve God and bring people to Him everyday like that day will be the day Christ returns.

In order to be effective and relevant to our world the Church must be restored. It must get right. It's a big restoration project, but its definitely possible. It's possible if we have a renewed submission, a resistance of the devil, a re-established closeness with God, and a repentant heart and spirit.