

James the Just: Resisting Pride

How many of you have a relationship, with any person, that is perfect? Most everybody can get along with themselves. But do you know that once a second person enters the equation, it becomes exponentially more complex?

Now instead of you just doing what you want, pleasing yourself, there is another opinion in the room. There has to be compromise, issues have to be worked out.

I think of kids. When you put more than one kid in a room, there will be issues....arguments, bossyness, possibly fighting and crying. They each want the other to do what they want and to do it they way they want, when they want. And if they don't get their way....they are telling!

Kids like to get what they want. Those who have toddlers know that if the toddler doesn't get what they want, they throw a FIT. It's all about ME, do what I want and do it NOW. The challenge the parents, test the authority, see if they'll get their way.

You know adults are not any different....OH, we should be, but we aren't! You would think that by the time someone is an adult, they would realize the world doesn't revolve around them but for some reason, many don't.

Then some become Christians, the selfless faith, dependent on Jesus, giving up our desires for His. Yet they for some reason continue to think Christianity is like Burger King "Have it your way!" NO....have it God's way. Your way stinks!

It's because our way tends to be rooted in pride. It's about me and what I want....

Last week we looked at James chapter 3 where he lays out the wisdom from above vs the wisdom from below. The wisdom of this world is rooted in bitter envy and selfish ambition.

But Godly wisdom results in peace. And that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.

James transitions from that statement straight into addressing pride and the damage it can cause....This week's sermon is "Resisting Pride". When I say pride, I mean having a high opinion of importance or superiority. This is when a person thinks they are better than others and even worse, better than God.

James 4:1-3 (HCSB)

1 What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and

cannot obtain. You fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires.

Something to remember is that the letters in the New Testament are written to believers or churches. James is specifically writing to Jewish believers that have been dispersed throughout the area likely due to persecution.

But it's key to consider these things are written to believers. He begins with "What is the source of wars and fights among you?"

Even then, the church dealt with war and fights. War meaning disputes, strife, quarrels, and fights meaning contention. Do you realize that not everyone can have their way? And when they try to, what enters the church are wars and fights.

I'm confident that you will not find a church completely free of wars and fights. There will always be people disputing, stirring up strife, causing contention. People are different, they have different ideas and desires.....this is WHY there are wars and fights in the body, but it doesn't make them acceptable.

James challenges with the question "Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you?" He is trying to show that these desires come from the struggle of the flesh vs the Spirit that is constantly warring inside of you.

Don't you realize that strife and contention in the Lord's body is caused by people trying to please themselves? You desire things and you don't have them. So you cause trouble! This is not what the body is supposed to do.

Let's suppose your foot wants to hold the fork when you eat. It suggests this to the head, the head now has the option to approve or disapprove. It really does not matter if the foot likes the response. The head has a job to do, make the best decision for good of the whole the body.

Let's say the head says "No foot, that's not the best job for you to do. The hand has it covered". Does the foot then go and try to tell the elbow how the head made a bad decision, why they can do it better than the hand, or maybe they even try to convince the head it's wrong.

How would that work out if our body really worked that way? The foot pitting the elbow against the head and the hand. Now every time the hand wants to put the fork to the mouth, the elbow is causing problems for the hand. The foot has created strife and contention in the body.

People desire things that they don't have. And they will cause all kinds of trouble if they don't get them. James says that even murder and coveting will not help you obtain them. So you fight and war.....

You don't receive because you don't ask. And then if you do ask you don't receive because you ask with the wrong motives, so you can spend it on your evil desires.....First you may not receive because you don't ask....you try to manipulate or force your ideas or plans. Then second when you do ask if you don't have the right motives the answer is still NO!

Hmmm.....ask who? God! He is the head! He ultimately knows what is best for the whole body and He knows what is needed where and who is meant to do what!

If you desire to see a change, don't cause problems....talk to Jesus! Set aside your pride, you are not Lord, Jesus is. Ask Him, but make sure your motives are right.....

The main point here is that conflicts and disputes among Christians are always harmful and that we somehow fall into the trap so easily that we don't realize what is happening.

Galatians 5:14-15 (HCSB)

14 For the entire law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

Christians have got to stop trying to consume each other! True joy, peace, happiness, meaning, hope, and fulfillment in life come only from God. It requires submitting to Him and acknowledging your dependence on Him!

If you aren't getting what you want, maybe it's not what you need! What you need is less of you and more of Jesus! His plans, His thoughts, His desires!

James 4:4-5 (HCSB)

4 Adulteresses! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy. 5 Or do you think it's without reason the Scripture says that the Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously?

Ouch, that's a hard word James! How would you like it if I started a sermon like that? "Adulteresses!"

James is challenging the church. Are you faithful to God? Do you really want what He wants? Or do you just want what you want?

Ask yourself today.....Who is your Lord? Who are you faithful to?

If you have friendship with the world you are an enemy of God. That sounds frightening!

World - (Greek word kosmos) the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc, which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ.

If you are living for this world, if you receive the mindset of the world, your entire life is driven by personal gain and personal desires.....then you are living against everything that Jesus died on the cross for.

To even sit and desire the things this world can offer you, you lust after it is the same as pursuing it.

Matthew 5:27-28 (HCSB)

27 "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

This is as real with a man's lust for a woman as it is for the believer's lust for the world. It's all about your heart. Is your heart after this world and the temporary things it provides, or is your heart after the God who died for you and provides the things of eternity?

You can't have it both ways, you can't play for both teams, that person is double minded, unstable in all their ways, full of confusion, full of pride....

The Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously. You yearn is to pursue with love, to long after. In this war of the Spirit vs the flesh, God pursues us with love, He longs for us to choose HIM, not one time at an altar, but in every moment, in every decision.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (HCSB)

16 And what agreement does God's sanctuary have with idols? For we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said:

I will dwell among them
and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they will be My people.

He wants people to resist pride, to admit our need for Him. That we NEED to follow Him, His Spirit, instead of the flesh, in order to be His people. Resist the pride of this world, walk humbly before our God.

James 4:6 (HCSB)

6 But He gives greater grace. Therefore He says:
God resists the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.

Jesus gives a “greater grace”, a grace that is greater than the power of sin, the flesh, the world, even satan himself!

Romans 5:20 (HCSB)

20 The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more

God’s grace is extended to those who humble themselves before Him. But God resists or opposes, and even sends judgement to the proud because they have chosen the methods of the world, opposing Him, becoming enemies of God.

It’s pride thing when we deny our need for a Savior. It’s a pride thing when we try to exalt our desires above God’s, causing strife and contention in His body. It is a pride thing when we can’t even see our own faults. It’s a pride thing when we lust for the world above the things of God.

We HAVE TO resist pride. James gives us a ten step program:

James 4:7-10 (HCSB)

7 Therefore, submit to God. But resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, double-minded people! 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep. Your laughter must change to mourning and your joy to sorrow. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1. **Submit to God** - This literally means to line up under. This was the word used of soldiers under the authority of their commander. A willing, conscious submission to authority.

By submitting to God, lining up under His authority, you allow God to work His will in you! Submission to God’s will leads to obedience. If you don’t recognize Him as the authority, you certainly won’t obey His commands.....

2. **Resist the devil** - this is the exact opposite of #1, to resist means to set one’s self against.

You have to set yourself against the devil because submission to God is the thing the devil tries to hinder. He would prefer that we justify our actions and statements to pursue our own desires above God’s. If you can resist the devil, he will flee, he has been defeated!

Spiritual unfaithfulness was the result of the devil’s influence. The people in James’ day had drifted so far away from God that they didn’t even realize it. I think that is what happens to us when we don’t make God a priority in our life. When he neglect him on a daily basis, in the little decisions of our life.

3. **Draw near to God** - this means to join a thing together. Jesus made the first step by giving His life for us so that we may have life and life more abundant. When we draw near, we are responding to a call He has already made.

If your heart is distant from God, He is waiting for us to take that step and draw near to Him....

These first three things are how we respond to God. The next two are how we respond to self - repentance.

4. **Wash your hands** - the first in the call for repentance. Wash your hands symbolizes your outward actions..... Clean up your act. Change directions, repent of your sinful behavior!
5. **Purify your heart** - this is the call to repent of your inner thoughts and motives, and desires of the heart.

Psalm 24:4-5 (HCSB)

4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who has not set his mind on what is false, and who has not sworn deceitfully.

5 He will receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The call to repentance is followed up by the stages of true, genuine repentance of sin.

6. **Be miserable** - sounds nice doesn't it? It means to be afflicted, to be in a state of brokenness over your sin. To understand the severity of sin and how detestable it is to a Holy God!
7. **Mourn** - this is the inner response to this brokenness, a passionate grief.
8. **Weep** - this is the outward manifestation of that inner mourning over your sin. It's also a sign of the pain your sin has caused.
9. **Change laughter to mourning, joy to sorrow** - here James tackles the laughter and joy of indulging in worldly pleasures. When we realize the happiness and gladness that our sinful pride has provided was a fake, your inner response again will be grief and even shame and sorrow.

Then we have number ten which sums up the preceding nine commands.

10. **Humble yourself before the Lord** - humble - to make oneself low.

Notice it says you humble yourself before the Lord, if you do, the Lord will exalt you!

2 things I notice...it's not other people's job to humble you before God, and it's not God's job to humble you before Himself....it's your responsibility!

If YOU choose to make yourself low before God on high, HE will exalt you!

He will raise you up in honor, in dignity, in happiness. Because you will be reliant on Him for your position, your desires, His will becomes your will.....

True joy, peace, happiness, meaning, hope, and fulfillment in life come only from God. It requires submitting to Him and acknowledging your dependence on Him!

CHURCH, what are the source of wars and fights among us? The pride, the desires that war within each person. Today is the day to acknowledge that you are not your own, you were bought at a price, the price of the precious blood of Christ!

Your life is not your own. You don't live to please you but to please Jesus, because He is worthy! It can only come when you realize the severity of you sin....if you can even recognize your sin.....submit to Christ, resist the devil, draw near to God.

Repent. Humble yourself before your God and HE will lift you up.