



James 4:8b The Outworking of Humility Pt 4: Cleansing and Purifying Ourselves

January 3, 2016

Can you think of a better text for the first day of consecration? :)

Text: James 4:8b

KJV: Jas 4:8 *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.***

Thoughts:

- When last we were in James, we were discussing the KEY admonition in James 4: defeat **pride!** We were also working through a KEY imperative: **humble** ourselves as Christ humbled Himself.
- Beginning in verse six, James puts forward the key to overcoming the sins he has listed and rebuked: submitting to God in humility because **God opposes the proud.**
- James outlines at least five things we can do to see the increased Outworking of Humility in our lives in verses 7-10:
 1. Submit to God (4:7)
 2. Resist the devil (4:7)
 3. Draw near to God (4:8)
 4. Cleanse our hands and purify our hearts (4:8)
 5. Mourn and weep (over our sins, 4:9)

Drawing Near: A Review

James 4:8a calls us to draw near to God.

1. In context, to “draw near” is to “submit to God.” It is to humble oneself. It is to do away with quarrels and fights and selfish prayers and adulteries.
2. **May we NEVER lose our fear of the God we love. May we NEVER forget the holy nature of the sacrifice of Christ. May we NEVER treat His sacrifice as a common thing, but rather present reverence to Him and adore Him!**
3. Of course from the perspective of Christ's cross, for us drawing near is less **spacial** and more **relational**. God is omnipresent. There are no longer special places we have to go to commune with Him because of the blood of Christ!
4. Because of this great privilege, let us remember the call to pray! Let us be reminded of the honor of approaching Him in supplication! Let us draw near! (see Lk 18:1; Php 4:6; 1 Tim 2:8; Col 4:2; Heb 4:16)
5. Based on both the Old and New Testaments, I believe it is safe to conclude that "drawing near" requires at least two things:

Consecration (intentional, day to day purity)

Communication (insistent and passionate prayer)

Cleansing and Purifying Ourselves

Some Thoughts:

First, let us understand that this command is “to” *them* but also “**for**” *us*.

- Are we not the church?
- Do we not face similar temptations to be prideful?

- Are we not sinners?
- Do we not all exhibit double-minded (or vacillating, back and forth) behavior at times?

Second, let us not be put off by the **language**.

- If we aren't careful, the weight of James' apostolic rebuke can be either lost on us or offensive to us.
- As Dr. Baucham reminded us last April at *A Call to Battle*, we are by and large a people put off by strong preaching and strong words. We'd much rather have a "bent over, mealy-mouthed, apologizing" preacher rather than someone who "thunders forth" the Scriptures and "dares someone to disagree with God!" :)
- If this is true, this could also make us resistant to strong Scriptural exhortations.

Third, let us understand that this is a command that is meant to be **practical**.

- "Our hands" is often a metaphor for our daily living in Scripture; "our hearts" is often a metaphor for our thoughts and affections.
- The entire context of James indicates that the Holy Spirit is after practical, actual change in the Jerusalem congregation.
- William MacDonald writes that, "*Hands speak of our actions and hearts represent our motives and desires. We cleanse our hands and purify our hearts through confession and forsaking our sins, both outward and inward.*"
- Matthew Henry writes on this verse:

He who comes unto God must have clean hands. Paul therefore directs to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting (1Ti 2:8), hands free from blood, and bribes, and every thing that is unjust or cruel, and free from every defilement of sin: he is not subject to God who is a servant of sin. The hands must be cleansed by faith, repentance, and reformation, or it will be in vain for us to draw nigh to God in prayer, or in any of the exercises of devotion.

The hearts of the double-minded must be purified. Those who halt between God and the world are here meant by the double-minded. To purify the heart is to be sincere, and to act upon this single aim and principle, rather to please God than to seek after any thing in this world: hypocrisy is heart-impurity; but those who submit themselves to God aright will purify their hearts as well as cleanse their hands.

So the issues for us are the same as we reviewed. Are we willing to **communicate** honestly with God our sins and failures, and are we willing to truly **consecrate** ourselves...to forsake thoughts and actions that displease Him?

Friends, if James is starting to sound redundant, that's because it is! James repeats the same theme different ways throughout this epistle because He desires a simple result: an **obedient**, holy church.

When we taught on Drawing Near to God, we submitted a few questions to you. They are still relevant for Cleansing and Purifying Ourselves...

1. Although our actions cannot save us, we know that practical holiness pleases God. We've been commanded to be holy in all our conduct because He is holy (1 Pet 1:15-16). How often do you consider living a consecrated life?
2. How does this thought play out for you day to day? Is there a desire (and the matching effort) to walk in righteousness?

3. Like a wife who strives to please her husband (even though that striving is not the basis of his love), do you strive to please the Lord? There is no sense in pretending we can be intimate with Christ without such a heart.
4. How is your prayer life? Do you desire to communicate and commune with the creator of the universe daily?
5. As you consider the Gospel of Jesus...His perfect life, undeserved condemnation, suffering, and shed blood for our sins, are you pulled to your knees with a heartfelt desire to worship Him, adore Him, please Him and make Him known?
6. If prayer has become a bit dull for you, what are you willing to do to recapture your passion for drawing near? Remember, James is issuing practical commands. Salvation is assumed. Do you WANT to be in His presence?
7. Are you willing to rise early, rearrange your day, and otherwise suffer in the flesh to sit with Him, read His Word, and worship Him?

Let us be exhorted by the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*Isa 1:15-20 - When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. **Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.** "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Emphasis mine)*

In keeping with our 2016 goals, during our three weeks of consecration in January, let's do it a bit differently to develop different habits...

- Sunday - View the day differently. See it as the Lord's day. Come to prayer at 9:30 am. Bring someone with you.
- Monday - Friday. Rise early to pray and study Scripture. Aim for at least 30 minutes. Then engage in family worship. Come to corporate prayer on Thursday from 7-8 pm (Care Group Time)! The church will also be open from 12-1 pm Mon-Fri for quiet prayer.
- Shut out worldliness and engage in some form of food fast. How you do that is up to you.
- Arm up with tracts and prayer. Engage in some kind of evangelism weekly...daily if possible!
- Consider how you might be more generous and help your church serve more people. Get back to budgeting!
- Select a place to volunteer in your local church and serve!
- Select a place to volunteer in your neighborhood or community and get rolling!

New mercies this year!

New joys!

New goals!

For **Christ!** Amen!