

## James 4:7-8: 'The Double-minded Man Or Woman'

Last time in James we looked at verses 4-6 of chapter 4, in a sermon I called 'The Friendship Of The World'. V4 translated from the Greek: "Adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is constituted an enemy of God?" Yes, that powerful accusatory statement by James, that certain people among the brethren were committing spiritual adultery against God! Their desire to be, let's say, friends with everybody and so turning their backs on those things and those ways that made them distinct from the unsaved world. This desire was in effect playing the harlot for another lover, forsaking their true husband, Almighty God! Who had even proven His love for them by the offering of His own Son as the bride price!

In v17 of chapter 3 we saw that the "wisdom that comes down from heaven," (from God) that believers possess "is first of all pure." It is chaste, unadulterated. Exodus 20:1-6: "You shall have no other gods before me." But these people were seeking to play both sides of the spiritual fence, both God, and fallen humanity. They had slidden back into their old ways. Like those people in the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5: "They had forsaken their first love;" God. But He will not accept divided loyalties. And these were not people merely struggling with sin: "*boulethe*" they had in effect made a decision to walk away, and return to being an enemy of God!

V5, that difficult verse: "Or do you think the scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" But not the Spirit of God when we are born again, but the spirit of fallen humanity that wages war within the saved person! Romans 7:15-25: "Wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The old nature that continues to be part of who we are, through Satan's whispers and our own natural lusting's, calling us back to take the easy road, and to put on that old coat of our fallen nature that fits so well!

V6: "But God gives us more grace. That is why scripture says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Not that we need more grace to be saved, but God's continuing favour to overcome the remnants of our fallen nature. Those bits of hell that remain in us. As with Noah, God's unmerited favour. His free gift to sinners. He calls it Grace!

And so on to v7-8 of chapter 4 "The Double-minded Man Or Woman!" After saying in v6: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" v7: "Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." So clearly brothers and sisters, we can see that this is a spiritual battle which is taking place within the believer. There is that tug of war described in Romans 7 which is taking place. To not be aware of such things is to fall into the devil's trap. And the message may I suggest is twofold. For the believer, it is a dire warning to continually sit under the authority of His Word the Bible!

But for the wanderer, the backslider, it is a word of judgement and condemnation! There's a famous line in a Hollywood movie that says, "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing people that he doesn't exist." But of course better put by Paul in Ephesians 6:11-12: "Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." And from the original: "Be ye subject therefore to God." Because unlike that other kind of submission in v17 of chapter 3, (which means

being prepared to see the other person's point of view without compromising our faith) this word in Greek "*hupotagete*," brings with it the idea of being placed under something. Yes: "Be subject" to the authority and Will of God as it is found in His Word the Bible!

We saw how in v4-5, that these people were committing spiritual adultery against God. By being "friends," yes being in love with their former ways, of the world. That fallen world of humanity, which is of course opposed to God. Giving into that spirit which "envies intensely" of v5, that wages war within us! But don't give into that, James is saying. Rather, "be subject to," sit under, acquiesce in, the Mind and the Will and the Word of God!

The Psalmist put it this way in Psalm 119:105-112: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; preserve my life, O Lord, according to your word. Accept, O Lord, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws. Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end." Yes: "My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end." He goes on to say in v113: "I hate double minded men but I love your law."

That's what James is addressing. That doublemindedness of the backsliding professor of Christ. As I mentioned last time, they have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." But "*boulethe*," they have made a decision (while maintaining a verbal profession) to basically walk away from, and to again become the enemy of God!

The writer continues in v114-120: "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. Away from me, you evil doers, that I may keep the Commands of my God. Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed. Uphold me, and I will be delivered; I will always have regard for your decrees. You reject all who stray from your decrees, for their deceitfulness is in vain. All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes. My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws." The whole of the 176 verses are about the Psalmist putting his trust and hope in the Word and will of God. Yes, every day and night he focuses upon "the precepts" of God. Whatever the situation, whether it be in comfort or in difficulty, God's Word is his rock and his foundation. And he has chosen to be subject to it. Even as unto the very voice of God himself! And he has no time for double-minded men, Let alone, that he would ever become one himself!

Once again, that is what James is saying: "Be ye subject therefore to God." Just as King David calls Him and says of Him: "O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer, my life's foundation and my Saviour!" Yes, "Be ye subject therefore to God." Brothers and sisters, can we really say that this is who we are and what we do? Can we who profess to be Christian, honestly make this claim? That we are governed by, yes that we are "subject to God?" What is it that we listen to first and foremost, in each and every situation that we find ourselves in? Whose governance do we heed? Is it Google Earth? Is it the latest bit of "wisdom," in inverted commas, that has come out of the world? Maybe the papers or the nightly news? Perhaps the latest bit of hearsay, or even slander and gossip? Dear friends, if any of these things are the case, we are being governed, indeed we "are subject" to something, or someone else: "Be ye subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Now brothers and sisters, I've always found this a very challenging and confronting piece of scripture. Now why do I say this? Well if it's true, (and of course it is) that if we "resist the devil he will flee from us," then the truth which flows from this, is that the responsibility for our sin, falls solely upon

our own shoulders. No there is no one else to blame. Not our upbringing. Not our parents. Not our current circumstances. Only ourselves! Satan is the tempter, the whisperer, the accuser, but if we reject him and “resist” him, he “flees” from us. This word for “resist” here in Greek is “*antistete*” and it is not like holding back on having that extra bit of cheesecake, or trifle or lemon meringue pie, no. It means to stand in opposition against. Be opposed to, to do battle with. As did Jesus during those 40 days in the wilderness after His baptism!

In Matthew 4:1-11 we read: “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “Throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: do not put the Lord your God to the test.” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “If you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me Satan. For it is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.” Luke's account in chapter 4:13 says: “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him for an opportune time.”

And from Luke's account we also learn that it was not at the end of those 40 days was Jesus tempted by Satan, but for all of those 40 days, and nights may I suggest. Satan was relentless: “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him for an opportune time.” Beloved as we have seen so many times over the years, 1 Peter 5:8: “Beware your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour.” No Satan never sleeps!

But we are told to do battle with, yes we are to “Oppose” the Evil One! Again from Ephesians 6:11-12: “Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

But friends as with Job, this spiritual battle and our enemies, may and do, take on earthly forms. But they are driven by spiritual forces of evil, be not mistaken! Why are people with their anti-Christian forces, raising their hands against God's people today and in an ever increasing measure? Because there is this spiritual battle which is taking place between God, and the Evil One's legions of hell!

But how do we “resist?” Yes how do we “oppose?” How do we do battle with such spiritual forces, that come against us in physical forms? “Away from me Satan.” “Get behind me Satan.” “Begone Satan, for it is written.” “It is written.” “It is written.” “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Be ye subject therefore to God. Oppose the devil and he will flee from you.” Literally meaning: that he will stand a ways off in fear, and take flight! v8: “Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

Now Brethren, there is wonderful imagery here. Firstly, it's the idea of being within arm's reach. Who of us as a parent or grandparent or even great grandparent, doesn't remember when our children we're really little and just learning to walk? That we would chase along behind them or beside them, staying just within arm's reach. So that when they took those first unsteady wobbly steps, we would be right there to catch them, just before they hit the ground? Well that's the kind of imagery which we have here before us. God is telling those who have wandered off into the world,

(those who have made that verbal profession) 'you have gone too far.' If we could put it in purely human terms, (only human terms) we might say something like this: that they had almost gone beyond the Father's reach. And if they continued in that direction, not only would they be beyond the point of no return, but also they would prove themselves, to be impostors. And not the children of God at all! But the message for the true follower of Jesus is very different. And it is that we are always within arm's length of our heavenly Father. No we are never beyond His reach!

Psalm 119:151: "Yet you are near, O Lord, and all your Commands are true." Psalm 73:28: "But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all of your deeds." Psalm 73:23: "Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand." Philippians 4:4-5: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." And perhaps the most amazing evidence of all of God's nearness to His children, to us. These words from Isaiah 49:16a: "See, I have engravened you on the palms of my hands."

So Beloved, not only are we never beyond the reach of our heavenly Father, but His Son, our Saviour, has "engravened us on the palm of his hands" at the cross. Hallelujah, what a loving Saviour from our loving God! Yes those who draw near to God experience His ongoing "grace," even His never ending favour! Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me (shall pursue me) all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever." That never-ending blessed favour of God. We might even call it Amazing Grace!

8b: "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded." After speaking of needing to be near to God, James shows us what separates us from Him. As he again addresses those with a profession on their lips, and yet that is all they appeared to have of Christ in their lives. And he uses a very particular word, and we've seen it once before in chapter 1:8, it's the Greek word "*dipsuxoi*" and it means that two hearted, or two souled man. Even that double-minded person. Who is seeking to have a foot in both worlds. And he begins by saying: "Wash your hands you sinners."

This takes us back to Exodus 40, where Aaron and his sons were to be perpetually anointed, (were to be ceremonially washed) for service in the Tabernacle and the Temple. It symbolised, that they came not only with a clean outside, but a clean inside. A cleansed heart! We've seen this before from Psalm 24 as David writes in v3-5 and ask the question: "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol, or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from God his Saviour."

Well James is saying: you double minded man, you two hearted, you two souled person: "wash your hands, you sinners," and "purify your hearts." When you come before the Lord, first examine the whole person! Now whether this is to the lost soul, the wayward believe or those walking in step with the Holy Spirit the application is basically the same. Because if there are things within our lives, that are clearly in breach of the teachings of Christ's Kingdom we need to cleanse ourselves, we need to rid ourselves of those things. And this really is a process that occurs over our whole lives! And for some of us, those things, are far more evident than in other people's lives. And again, some of those things might cling to us like a foul stench for the better part of our whole lives. But we are to continue to wash our hands, to do battle with those things as we bring them to the Lord in confession and repentance!

As difficult as that is, that's the easy part, because we can become very good, even experts, at fooling those around us of our good lives. Even of our Christianity! But James says, "wash your hands." And

“purify your hearts.” Now of course this is to be throughout the whole of our lives in general, but may I suggest, that we need to apply this particularly when we come before the Lord in worship.

Of course it is all about, (as we saw some weeks ago) the intention of the heart! Beloved, we can hide our double-mindedness, our two-souledness from those around us. But in 1 Samuel 16:7: “For the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” How does our sin really affect us? Do we concern ourselves with those things for which Jesus had to die, that yet remain in our lives? Not that we should allow Satan’s whispers to rob us of the hope, the joy, and the assurance that we have of forgiveness in Jesus, no.

But our sin should never be inconsequential to us, as James explains in v9: “Grieve, mourn and wail” he says. This word that he has here for “Grieve” is a mouthful, it’s “*talaiporesate*” it’s that same word which Paul uses in Romans 7, as he has his battle within his thoughts over his own struggles with sin. v15: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.” 22-23: “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body: waging war against the law of my mind making me a prisoner of the law of sin.” v4: “*talaiporesate, wretched*” “wretched man that I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Now remember, this refers to that macabre punishment where a corpse was bound to a living prisoner, and entombed, and the two would eventually morph into one. “Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body” of sin, that clings to me, Paul says. Yes “Grieve.” No sin was not a small thing for Paul, nor for James, and it shouldn’t be for us! Next he says “mourn,” as at a funeral over our sin, he says. In Matthew 5:4 Jesus said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” And yet Jesus was not talking about any kind of funeral here, but about that mourning over sin. You see, a blessed confession and “mourning” over sin by the repentant sinner, (as God looks at the attention of the heart) is met by the Great Comforter, God the Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” So we must “mourn,” that which placed Christ upon the Cross! And finally he says: “wail” or weep. It really does paint the picture of a funeral doesn’t it. Almost a funeral procession. “Grieve mourn and wail.” But this is not a wailing over the dead, no. This is a lamenting over those things, that continue to live in us and plague us, as though we were one of those “double-minded,” those two hearted, those two souled people! Tears that are shed because of a sincere remorse over sins Beloved are sweet in the sight of our God!

For the sake of time, that’s where I’m going to leave it today! Friends, we must “be subject to God.” We must “submit” ourselves, yes we must come under the authority of the Will and Word of God! We must “oppose the devil.” We must cast aside his temptations and accusations. We must “come near, yes we must stay in arm’s reach of our heavenly Father! We must be concerned for the inside, as well as the outside of our lives! And finally, sin, any sin, should not rest easily upon our shoulders. “Grieve, mourn and wail.” “Wretched man that I am who will rescue me from this body of death?”

And then Paul breathes a blessed sigh of relief. v25a “Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Beloved, by His Grace, we are not the double-minded person. Though we fall and fail, we have eyes only for Christ!

Let’s pray!