



5/5/26

I thought of a song while going through today's passage. It's called "Wait for Me" by Zach Williams. Our God is so good that He waits for us to return to Him when we're stuck in the passions of our flesh. And He always welcomes us back with open arms. If you'd like to listen, here's a link... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm-bT_N36a8&list=RDdm-bT_N36a8&start_radio=1.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

James 4:1-12

It's moments like this, when I approach this passage in James, that I struggle. I have vs. 1-10 memorized. I would love to say that means I do all the right things here. I don't get into conflicts. My motives are pure. I submit to the Lord and humble myself before Him. I don't judge others. I WISH I could say that!!! But I don't think there's a time I go through this passage (which is every other week because I know that if I don't go through the scripture I've memorized, I'll forget it) when I don't have something I need to confess to the Lord. So... here I go... walking through this passage yet again and asking God to transform my heart.

Vs. 1 ~ "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?"

O Lord, how many times have I blamed others for the conflicts??? "If that person would just _____, then there would be no problem." But that's not what Your word says. I can see this clearly when I ask myself this... "If that person treated Jesus the way he/she is treating me, would JESUS fight and quarrel?" I can't be responsible for what someone else says or does, but I am responsible for what I say or do.

O Lord, please reveal the passions of my own heart, which wage war against my soul, and help me not to justify or rationalize them, but help me to surrender them to You.

Well, what ARE the passions of my flesh?

Vs. 2-3 ~ "You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

I want something that I'm not getting from another person, and so I punish them... either by attacking or avoiding. I may only internally resent the person, but I'm not seeking unity. 1 John 3:15 says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Yikes!!! How much do I minimize disunity in relationships??? The closer the relationship, the more a person has the ability to hurt me... so I distance myself rather than pursue unity. This is not what You desire, Lord.

I desire something that someone else has, so I fight either with that person or the person who has the power to take it from the other and give it to me. I may never say a word, but what is in my heart?

Here's the bottom line... When it says, "You do not have because you do not ask," it's not the person I should be asking. It's the LORD! Ultimately, I realize it's not the person I have a problem with. It's the Lord. Nothing happens without His sovereign hand either allowing, disallowing, or making it happen. If God is withholding, before I point any fingers, I need to look at my own heart. First of all, have I even brought it to the Lord? And secondly, He knows my motives. Is He withholding because my motives are truly about my own passions and not about honoring Him?

I remember how steeped I was in frustration because God would not give me what I wanted with music. I fought with Him... "You gave me a voice! Why won't You let me use it???" Then I was hurt by the people who I thought stood in the way of Him giving me what I want... of course, telling the Lord I wanted it for His glory. But did I?

The thing is, what I didn't see is that it was God's mercy that allowed me to sing at all!!! I praise Him that He pried my fingers open to release it to Him! The joy I now have as I sing for His glory is exponentially greater than any satisfaction I ever felt before! O Lord, whatever You need to pry from my fingers to help me no longer live for selfish desires, please... the moment I sense You even touching my finger, help me to open my hands and surrender!!!

Vs. 4 ~ "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Father, let me not be deceived!!! Wanting to satisfy my selfish desires IS friendship with the world. It IS spiritual adultery. Anyone who has felt the destruction of adultery knows the pain that radiates from the sin. Help me to see how horrific it is to choose things that look good by the world's standards, feel good to my flesh, and are about showing me off rather than being a reflection of Your glory!

There is beauty in reflecting Your glory. The moon has no light of its own. It only reflects the glory of the sun. How incredibly bright is the sun that it can make the moon shine so brightly! O Lord, let me find joy in being a reflection of Your glory and not seeking my own. Let my loyalty be first and foremost to You. Let me see that friendship with You is exponentially greater than friendship with the world. Help me to see that I choose one or the other, but I can't have both. I either "deny self OR I deny Christ" (Andrew Murray). Let me deny self. Being with You is so much better!!!

Vs. 5-6 ~ "Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us'? But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

Whoa... God yearns jealously over me... He is NOT jealous OF me. He is jealous FOR me. He wants me to give up the passions of my flesh for HIS honor and glory. And the beauty that He brings to human relationships is far better than anything I could have if I'm trying to serve SELF and not God.

I look at this, and I cry out, "O Lord, how can I possibly overcome the selfish desires of my heart??? To fight them off in my own strength is to lose. My own strength IS all about self." I love what James says next. It is my hope... "BUT He gives more grace." My selfish desires are many, BUT He gives more grace. My passions are many, BUT He gives more grace.

So what do I need to do to experience that grace? I need to humble myself!!! The only thing that keeps me from experiencing God's lavish grace... His favor poured out on me... is pride. Proverbs 16:5 says, "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Be assured. He will not go unpunished." Pride is arrogance on one side of the coin and shame on the other. Pride either says, "I'm awesome," or "I SHOULD be awesome and I'm not."

I used to joke and say, "I'm so humble. I'm proud of my humility." That just shows how little I saw pride as the horrific evil it is. Would I joke by saying, "I'm a murderer and I think that's so cool"? Would I joke, "I love to cheat on my husband"? Even writing those words gives me a pit in my stomach!!! Lord, let me be just as horrified by the pride of my heart!!! Please take ALL arrogance AND shame from me! "Being occupied with self, even to the point of hating yourself, can never free us from self. It is only by the revelation of God, not by the law condemning sin, but by His grace delivering from it, that will make us humble... Not to be occupied with your sin, but to be occupied with God, brings deliverance from self" (Andrew Murray). Father, I will be occupied with You. Please deliver me from me.

Vs. 7 ~ "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Therefore, since it is the Lord who lavishes me with grace, and since He is the source of all I need... let me submit first and foremost to HIM! I submit to my husband because I first submit to the Lord. I submit to my boss (which is also my husband) because I first submit to the Lord. Ephesians 5:21 even says I need to submit to all believers... we need to submit to

each other because we are ONE body in Christ. I submit to others as I first submit to the Lord... seeking to serve them because I'm so secure in the Lord's love that I CAN serve them and not NEED them to supply my happiness. God is the source of my happiness. O Lord, please make this so in me!!!

It is so important that I see that I cannot resist the devil without first submitting to the Lord. First of all, the devil is a liar and a deceiver. He is perfectly fine letting me think I'm all about living for SELF. It's only when I submit to the Lord that I even recognize that the devil is trying to take me captive. He's not afraid of me, but he IS afraid of the Lord. As I submit to the Lord, he runs the other direction... always looking for an opportunity to come back.

Vs. 8-9 ~ "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom."

First, why does James tell me to draw near to God and THEN He will draw near to me? What is He doing if He's not drawing near to me? Is He abandoning me? No... but when someone is fighting for their own passions and seeking their own desires, they do not see God's presence as a good thing. So Isaiah 30:18 tells me that God is waiting for me to turn to Him. And He's not waiting so that He can wag His finger at me and tell me what a loser I am. It says, "He waits to be GRACIOUS to me and exalts Himself to show MERCY to me." When I draw near to God as He says in Hebrews 4:16, I "receive mercy and find grace to help in my time of need."

Does the devil grant mercy and grace? No way. He uses every opportunity to draw me in and then crush me in pieces.

Instead of laughing about my sin, Lord, please help me to be repulsed by it. Help me to repent with weeping and mourning over how I've grieved You when I chose self over You. I know You will NOT leave me there in my ashes. But Isaiah 61 says You give me beauty for ashes.

Vs. 10 ~ "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

This is what repentance is... not trying to earn my way to You, but humbling myself before You. This passage started out by saying that the conflicts and fights I get into are because I fight for SELF. Now, here, I see that I don't have to. YOU lift me up. YOU give me the glory that comes from You... which is far better than any glory I could get for myself. In John 5:44 Jesus said, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" O Lord, the only glory that matters and lasts is the glory that comes from You. Please let that be my view in all things.

Vs. 11-12 ~ "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against 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 only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

O Lord, please help me to recognize that when I sit in judgment on others, judging their motives or condemning their actions because of how it affects ME, I am ultimately judging You. It's not that I'm never to look at the fruit of someone's life and pretend sin doesn't exist... but I am not in the place of the One with the gavel. I am called to come alongside them in love and speak truth. I am NOT to compare myself to them and use myself as the standard of what their behavior should be. O Lord, I can't be humble before You, submitting to You, and seeking You while sitting in judgment on my brothers and sisters. Please help me to stop trying to wear Your robe!!! Please help me to view us all as one body in Christ. Just as I would do everything I could to stop my body from turning on itself and destroying my cells, let me be faithful to loving and caring for Your people as we are all members of Your body.

Let my loyalty be to You. Let my heart beat for You. Let me open my hands so that You can remove anything that would feed the passions of my flesh... all for Your glory. How awesome it is that the God of the universe yearns for me... gives grace to me... is friends with me... loves me. Let me never take that for granted.