

How To Get Right (When Your Life Is Wrong) – James 4:6-12

Turn to James 4:6-12

We've been studying the book of James in order to Get Serious about our walk

 In order to get serious about how we conduct our lives so as to live in a way that most honors God

I think we'd all agree that there are times in our lives when we simply don't do that

 We either intentionally rebel against God; Or stumble because we weren't vigilant/alert

 Or just float along with no focus

One way or another, there are times when our lives are just plain wrong – true?

And James reaches pinnacle of his letter in ch 4 to say – “here's how you make it right”

 Instead of just telling us what's right and what's wrong

 He tells us how to *get* right when our lives are wrong, starting in v6 . . . (James 4:6-10)

When your life is wrong and you need to get right . . .

Go to God's Word and seek the truth (v6)

V6 starts with the word *but*; Why the word *but*?

 Because he just said in v1-5, that we make God our enemy when we cozy up to ways of the world

But, God keeps extending more grace to us – more compassion, mercy, favor

 Even when our life is not right

No wonder we sing Amazing Grace

 And – Grace, grace, marvelous grace; Grace that will pardon and . . .

When our life is wrong, *God gives more grace*

Then he writes – *Therefore it says* (6b)

 What says? The Bible says; He quotes part of Prov 3:34 accordingly

 In so doing so, he uses the word *therefore* to communicate a very important truth – that the Bible reflects God's character/heart

 God is gracious (*he gives more grace*), *therefore* the Bible says it, and explains it

It's just like that children's chorus – Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so

 IOW God is loving, therefore the Bible reflects it

 And God is gracious, therefore the Bible explains it

So these 3 little words, *Therefore it says*, add great weight/validity to the book you hold in your hands, because James is telling us that it reflects the *truth* of God

 And there's nothing like the truth of God as contained in his Word, to set us right when our life is wrong

 That's why James goes there, and that's why we must as well

When your life is wrong and you need to get right, go to God's word and seek the truth

 Because that's where you're going to hear what u need to hear, even if u don't want to

 And that's when you're going to see what you need to see, even if you don't like it

Drop your pride and receive God's grace (v6,10)

Read v6b,10 – the issue is grace, and the means to receive it is humility

God's grace, God's unmerited favor for life to the full, is free – there's nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it; if there was, it wouldn't be grace

It's free, but it's conditional on our humility – extended only to those who are *humble*

Humility is prerequisite to receiving God's grace

 Without it, we're actually opposed by God

Which takes us right back to the enemy thing of v4

One of the first steps to making things right when your life is wrong, is to drop your pride

 Which means, acknowledging . . . That *God* is in control of your life, and you aren't

 That God alone has the power to sustain your life, and u don't

His wisdom and your need of it; That *his* way is best and yours isn't

That's what it means to drop your pride

 It means to stop acting like you deserve more than what God has given you in life

 Because you don't

When your life is wrong – drop your pride

 Because that's when God's *grace* kicks in

 That's when *he* exalts you (10); When *he* looks out for you; When *he* blesses you

 That's when *he* gives you strength, wisdom, guidance for the journey

The result of humility is grace

 And as high a calling as it is to follow Christ, and as rigorous his demands in doing so, his grace is sufficient – but you must drop your pride to receive it

 No humility, no grace

Submit to God and resist the devil (v7)

V6b-7a – submission is the proof of humility

 And it's one of those things that looks good on paper, but when it comes to real life, it's harder than it looks

 Because to submit means to yield to another person's authority or will

 To defer to their knowledge or judgment; To follow their lead

But who better to submit to than God? The omnipotent, omniscient, everywhere present supreme being of the universe

 Seems like a no-brainer, doesn't?

Then why don't we do it? Why isn't everybody doing it?

 Or why do we do submit sometimes, but not others?

 Why in some things, but not all things?

I think one of the reasons is that (**5 Reasons We Don't Submit**) . . .

1. We don't believe God is real

If you don't believe God is real, submitting to him would be like submitting to Mickey Mouse – a likable character, but nonetheless imaginary

Fortunately, most people don't have this issue because the evidence is overwhelming to the contrary, and they can't ignore the facts

But for those self-proclaimed atheists who do . . .

 It's usually not for intellectual reasons, but emotional and spiritual ones, like a lack of *trust* in God . . .

2. We don't trust God

We're not convinced he's good – we see too much pain in the world for that to be the case
How can that be if God is so *loving*?

And we stop right there, instead of wondering how come there's not more pain in the world if God is so *just*
Or why there's not more suffering if man is so *depraved*
Or why there's not more hardship if the world is so *fallen*
We get so focused on our hardship that we lose our objectivity
So focused on our loss, that we lose sight of our blessing

But more often than not, it's not a mental issue, but an emotional one – we don't trust God because we're mad at him
Maybe your life has been shattered by an accident; Or your trust has been betrayed by another person; Or a loved one was born with a birth defect . . .
And if you trusted God, you'd lose an excuse to be mad at him
You'd lose an easy scapegoat on which to take out your frustration
God's big enough to handle your frustration, but don't let it keep you from trusting him – he loves you, and he is good (this I know, for the Bible tells me so)

3. We don't trust the Bible

Now, we've never read the Bible – but no matter
“I know enough; I've heard plenty of things about it”
“And really, with all the other religious books out there, who says the Bible has a lock on truth? Seems kind of arrogant, don't you think?”

So, being too proud to ask what it says, and too lazy to find out for ourselves . . .
We just continue to muddle through life, making it up as we go
Suppressing the thought that we might be wrong

4. We like our life the way it is

Here's where we start touching some nerves
We believe and all, no problem there
But when it comes to fully submitting to God and following his way, *all* the time . . .
That's a different story

We sing “I Surrender All” but in our heart of hearts . . .
We're not about to tithe – I like my money the way it is, thank you very much
We're not about to give up our time to be in church every week – this isn't the only game in town u know
We're not about to take sacrifice our reputation to spread the word – I have appearances to keep you know
“No, I like my life just the way it is, thank you very much; Nothing more is needed”
And we miss out on *God's* best because we refuse to submit *our* best

5. We don't want to stop sinning

We don't want to give up our sinful pleasures
If you could just break out of your rebellion even for a moment, and somehow look past the surface of those who've been there, done that . . .
You'd see that you are flirtin' with disaster

You'd see short-term pleasure and long-term pain
You'd see scar upon emotional scar; Trauma upon trauma
And in some cases irreversible destruction
There is no escaping it – choose to sin, choose to suffer

Don't wait for God to put a submission hold on you in order to make you cry
“uncle” – give up your sin, and submit now; Make the choice
And while you're at it – resist the devil; *Submit* to God, and *resist* the devil

- Read v7 – submitting to God and resisting the devil are two sides of the same coin
They go hand in hand – if you're doing one, then by definition you're doing the other
If you're submitting to God, then you're for sure resisting the devil
If you're resisting the devil, then you're for sure submitting to God because that's exactly what God wants you to do

The beauty of it, is that Satan *flees*
He actually runs when you don't do what he wants you to do
When you don't succumb to the temptation he throws your way
All of which means, we have nothing to fear if we simply resist and submit

Spiritual warfare is *that* simple . . .
Despite those who see a devil behind every bush, and demon on every shoulder
People who advocate such things are not only unbiblical in their theology, but prey on people's fears and open the door to the very thing they're trying to prevent . . .
Complete with false hope and empty promises

Our best weapon in fighting spiritual warfare, our best weapon in resisting the devil, is submitting to God
If we spent as much time doing that, as we do worrying about Satan, we wouldn't know what to do with the grace and freedom that comes as a result

Get with God and repent of your sins (v8-9)

Read v8-9 – 7 imperatives in these verses, the tense of which calls for *immediate* response
Which means there's nothing to pray about; Nothing to think about
Nothing to consider; Nothing to talk about until 2 in the morning

If your life is a mess because you've drifted from God – the time is now to get with him and repent of your sins
Right now – not tomorrow, not later, but now

To draw near to him with the assurance that if you do, he will draw near to you
To *cleanse your hands* – to purify your deeds
Asking forgiveness and committing to holiness when you walk out of here

The time is now to repent of your *double-mindedness* – of trying to love God and the sinful pleasures of the world at the same time . . .
To *purify your hearts* – to come clean, and chose you this day whom you will serve
To be done with the sinful pursuit of self-gratification that brings at best, *temporary* laughter and joy . . .

And instead, to repent in godly sorrow, turning from your sin in brokenness and mourning and weeping if necessary

[Read v8-9 again, and comment]

When your life is wrong, the *only* way to get right with God, is to fall on your knees before him, and repent of your sins

In a few minutes, I'm going to give you an opp to do that

Stop playing God and worry about yourself (v11-12)

This is problem – if your life isn't right, the last thing in the world you should be doing is critiquing someone else's

Unfortunately, it's often our first recourse – instead of worrying about ourselves and our *own* issues, we turn to our neighbor and play God with theirs

It's like the husband who has signed, sealed, and delivered the verdict on his wayward wife, while refusing to address his *own* issues in the matter

- James will have none of that (read v11-12)

Do not speak evil against one another

Don't say bad things about somebody for the purpose of putting them down and exalting yourself; For the purpose of marginalizing them in the eyes of others
That's the kind of judging James is talking about here

He's not talking about exercising the wisdom God has given us to discern the heart of a person and come to a right decision re our association with them

Like in **Jn 7:24** where Jesus says – *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*

Have the mind of Christ and discern the heart/motive as best you can

Or in **1 Corinthians 5:12** where Paul, talking about those who continue in sin, and whether we should associate with them or not, says – *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*

There *is* a place for discerning right and wrong in people, and making God-honoring judgment calls when necessary

But not for the purpose of speaking evil of them, or condemning them – that's God's place, and his place alone

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. (12)

And when we pass judgment on someone by speaking evil of them, we take his place—we play God

- Not only that, but we sit in judgment of the law itself – *you judge the law* (11)
Speaking not of the OT Law, capital L – since we're not bound by it
But rather, the principle behind the law, as summarized by Jesus when he said *love your neighbor as yourself*
So when you speak evil against someone, you not only *judge* them, but you violate God's law, because you're not loving your neighbor as yourself

Worse yet, by acting as if his commands don't apply to you, you place yourself outside of the law, or above the law . . .

No longer are you *a doer of the law* (11b), under it's authority, but a judge of it – determining its validity, or lack thereof

Bottom line? When we speak evil of someone, not only are we law breakers, but we set ourselves up as lawgiver, judge, and jury all in one – IOW we play God

If I can just state the obvious here, God never intended that for us

He never intended for us to be the morality police

To go around making sure everybody's living right

To make sure everyone is being good for goodness sake

Who are you to judge your neighbor? (12b)

Stop playing God and worry about yourself

Especially when *your* life is wrong and *you* need to get right

- If that's you – if your life is wrong and you need to get right . . . [**Summary Slide**]

Drop your pride and submit

Resist the devil and repent of your sin

Worry about yourself for a change

And receive God's marvelous, amazing grace, grace that . . .

I want to give you an opp to do that – to get right with the Lord, right where you sit

As we go to prayer – take a few minutes in the quietness of your own heart, and draw near to him

When time is right, I'll close us in prayer

Whatever u do, if your life is wrong these days, don't leave here w/out making it right

Pray

God's grace is enough – stand and worship him for it

