

RESTORE
YOUR MORAL INVENTORY

Monday, May 25

Reading: James 4:1-10

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts...**10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.

The New Testament book of James is a very practical book. “There are enough needles in this haystack to prick the conscience of every dull, defeated, and degenerated Christian in the world. Here is a “right stirring epistle” designed to exhort and encourage, to challenge and convict, to rebuke and revive, to describe practical holiness and drive believers toward the goal of a faith that works.”¹ In chapter 4, James deals with being friends with the world and the sins that come from living by the world’s standards. Then he gives us the solution. Notice the order of these commands:

(1) GIVE UP! The word “submit” is a military term that means to rank under as when soldiers voluntarily submit to their superiors. The only path to victory begins, not when Satan’s plans are thwarted, but when we surrender our will to God.

(2) STAND UP! The word “resist” is also a military term and means to stand up and be ready for battle. The Apostle Paul tells us to “be strong in the Lord...put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:10-11). Jesus has already won the victory and we can rely on His power to help us have victory in our daily lives.

(3) GROW UP! To “come near to God” is accomplished as we grow in our faith and become more like our heavenly Father. As we come to God, He draws close to us and transforms us into the image of Christ.

(4) CLEAN UP! To “wash your hands” pictures the Jewish priests who continually washed their hands as they went about their work in the Temple. It was a picture of cleansing and purity. It was a symbol of the inward change that occurs as we purify our hearts before God. This is a daily decision to live for Christ and get rid of the ‘dirt’ of sin that our hurts, habits, and hang ups can cause.

(5) SOBER UP! We must be serious about dealing with sin in our lives. Our hearts should be grieved when we see sin the way God sees it. Paul reminds us that “godly sorrow brings repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:10). We should not be laughing when we should be repenting! We cannot take our sins lightly. Our hearts should be broken as we realize how our sin breaks the heart of God. Only when we have mourned over our sin can we experience the joy of the Lord.

(6) BOW DOWN! When we realize we are in the presence of the holy God we cannot be anything but humble. Instead of trying to ‘pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps’ we recognize that when we submit to God He will lift us up in His time and in His way. “Not only does the Lord graciously and righteously forgive; He also restores...As soon as sin is confessed it is forgiven, and the person is lifted up to start again.”²

On Day 17 in his book *Restore*, Vince Antonucci talks about owning your past. He encourages us all to take a “moral inventory” and make a list of sins and their consequences in our lives, our relationship with God, and with others. This is what James is talking about. And the first step is to admit your past, deal with the present, and move forward in God’s strength for the future.

¹ J. Ronald Blue. “James” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 815

² G. P. Waugh. *Acts & James* (What the Bible Teaches series), p 320