

## Drawing Near, Jas. 4:7

LH – Sept. 13, 2009

### Introduction:

1. I hope – when we assembly like this – we have thoughts of sincere gratitude and praise to God.

- A. What a privilege to have a Bible.
- B. What a responsibility to open it and use it, to learn of God, and to come to believe in Jesus Christ and obey Him.
- C. We are a privileged people and those blessings we have come from a God of love and grace.

2. What we do here is – *preaching and teaching from the text of Scripture* – so . . .

- A. Open now to James chapter three, reading from chapter three into chapter four.
- B. I'm going to read the last part of James three, into chapter four.

2. **Jas. 3:13-4:10.**

- A. We're going to talk about **submission to God, and drawing near to Him – with special attention to verses 7 & 8 in James four.**
- B. I hope this study will add another dimension of learning in our efforts to live right.

3. Now here's a concern I have on my mind right now.

- A. **Doing a lot of things – but not getting any closer to God.**
  
- B. I hope we are not in that kind of rut –
  - 1. Where we pray regularly.
  - 2. Attend all the services.
  - 3. Contribute into the treasury.
  - 4. Use our talents and resources to participate in the work of the church.
  - 5. You do things to help people out.
  
- C. You do these things over and over, many years – **but you realize you are no closer to God than you were when you started!**
  
- D. I'm not making this up; this is real; people have confessed to me – that is exactly their feeling.
  - 1. They have been so busy doing things.
  - 2. Right church, Right doctrine, Right Worship, Right living –
  - 3. **Yet, a nagging sense that you are not drawing near to God.**
  
- E. I want to hit that with as much clarity as I am able to apply to the matter.

F. That's first on our agenda.

Body:

- I. I want to say something you all know – but this may be a good time to say it again: **Being A Christian Is Not Just About Doing What The Book Says!**
  - A. Now, I really need your attention here; I want to be understood – **Being a Christian Is Not Just About Doing What The Book Says...**
  - B. **It is about knowing the Author!**
    1. Now, to know the Author, you need to read the book and become engaged with the instruction in the book.
    2. But it is more than just reading a book, and doing what the book says.
    3. We must direct good thought and focus on **KNOWING THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.**
  - C. Let me illustrate.
    1. You can read what the New Testament says about baptism – and submit to that command, without ever really letting Christ in you heart.

2. You can read what the New Testament says about the Lord's Supper – and eat those elements every Sunday, and yet never entertain appreciative thought about who Christ is and what He did.
3. You can read what the Bible says about singing – and sing, perhaps in tune . . . yet without praising God and being edified.
4. Just reading what the book says, and complying with a list of dos and don'ts will not make you a godly person . . .
5. **Unless you do these things with good focus of heart on the One who wrote the book, and the One who died for you to be saved.**

D. Maybe this will help → **It is necessary to do what you do, with the underlying attitude that it is about YOU AND GOD!**

1. When you obey the gospel, you are responding to God – not just words on a page!
2. When you take the Lord's Supper, you are remembering the Savior – not just obeying the apostolic pattern.
3. When you pray, it is not just the repetition of words; it is **you talking to God!**

- E. Do you see what I mean?
1. If you haven't been thinking in these terms – **It is time to change your focus!**
  2. **You and God!**
  3. Being a Christian means – you have entered into a relationship with your Creator, through the activity of your faith in Jesus Christ, who made it possible.
- F. Yes – there is a book; there are rules; there are instructions to be taken seriously - - - **but if you don't know the Author, *it is sheer legalism, that will leave you empty and vulnerable.***
- G. Let us do what the book says – but let us do it unto God.
- H. Let us follow the instructions given by the apostles of Christ – but with love for Him, and a desire to be with Him forever.
- I. Here's what I want for me, and for each of us, in James 4:8 – **Drawing Near to God.**
- II. How can we do this? *How do we become engaged in obedience that is truly unto God?*

[ I want to draw from this passage, four things that could help us. ]

A. ONE → Do your works “in the meekness of wisdom,” (3:13).

1. One reason we have a relationship with rules but not God is – we think so highly of our great obedience.
  - a. We can even boast of what we have done – *we resisted a tempter; we got some false teacher told; we did all these great things.*
  - b. If you obey the rules – so you can boast about your obedience, that’s a contaminated obedience.
  - c. Boasting is really ruled out.
2. Let’s see this in **Eph. 2:8-9.**
  - a. That settles it.
  - b. And right here where we are in James – listen please: **Jas. 4:6.**
  - c. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”
  - d. We ought to be people who glory in Christ, who boast about God’s grace – and who do what we do, as a response to God... *not to earn a merit page or put a trophy on the shelf.*

3. The phrase here in Jas. 3:13 is – “works ... done in the meekness of wisdom.”
4. Jas. 4:10 – “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.”
5. Humility and meekness of heart – reverent submission to God will bring us closer to Him – and with that inner spirit . . . following His rules will have richer meaning.

B. TWO → Make peace, not war (3:17-4:2).

1. Listen to the end of James 3, into chapter 4 - **Jas. 3:17-4:2.**
2. I’ve known people, and you have known people – considered sound in doctrine, punctual in attending every service, following all the rules it seems - - **but contentious, in love with battles and controversy.**
  - a. Some people think – if there’s not a battle or an issue, something must be wrong.
  - b. If there is no war, let’s start one.
3. I understand the genuine battle between truth and error ~ but I’m talking about an inordinate love of fighting. ***A taste or appetite for conflict.***
  - a. You cannot form and nurture a relationship with God, with that spirit.

- b. It is not in harmony with Him.
- 4. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”
- 5. And James tells us – this love for war comes from a selfish, covetous, inner spirit – that can only be defeated by submitting to God.
- 6. Drawing closer to God requires that we do our works in the meekness of wisdom – and that we make peace, not war.

C. THREE → Don't befriend God's enemies (4:4).

- 1. I don't care how many prayers you pray, services you attend, fruit of the vine you drink, or sermons you preach - - - if you are flirting with the world, **you cannot draw near to God.**
  - a. Some people want to walk down through life – straddling the line, with one foot in the world and one foot in the church.
  - b. The appearance of church involvement seems to impress people – but their heart is not wholly committed.
  - c. They cannot renounce the world.
- 2. What am I talking about specifically?

- a. Lewd entertainment.
  - b. Alcoholic recreation.
  - c. Immodest dress.
  - d. But also – the desire to please the world; the vain drive to be popular, to be accepted by everybody, and to be caught up in the materialistic.
3. One reason many never get close to God is, **they remain too close to the world.**
  4. James says it plainly – **“Friendship with the world is enmity with God.”**
  5. To that you can add the warning given by John, in 1 Jno. 2:15-17 - where he said, “do not love the world, or the things in the world.”

D. FOUR → Purify Your Hearts (4:7,8).

1. To purify something, or cleanse something, Jesus said – **You must clean the inside first.**
  - a. Did you know Jesus gave lessons on how to clean dishes?
  - b. But it wasn't a lesson in domestics, or home economics.

- c. Let's just read the passage, and see what He said: **Matt. 23:25-26.**
  - d. Effective cleansing must begin on the inside.
2. Now this was directed to the scribes and Pharisees – men who were obsessed with externals . . . with a show of religion.
- a. These men had it all backwards.
  - b. Their concept of religion was – a performance . . . outward show.
  - c. **Jesus was responding to that kind of empty religious practice.**
  - d. He said – “...first cleanse the inside...”
3. The pure and undefiled religion of Jesus Christ – must begin inside.
- a. If there is not sincere devotion of heart to God – there cannot be effective, valuable external service to Him.
  - b. So what each one of us need is, good heart exam.

4. It ought to be – when you come in this building to worship, to listen to preaching, to study the Bible – **you use all of that to examine who you are inside . . . YOU AND GOD!**
5. If you never get to that level of who you are – you never get to God . . . though you may be very active.
6. Here's the way James says it: **Jas. 4:7,8.**
7. You may know a lot . . You may do a lot . . You may be good friends with model Christians . . You may have the most expensive Bible . . You may give more money to the church than most . . . You may be a skilled communicator of the gospel . . . .
8. **But even with all our works and gifts and victories – we are not advantaged before God – UNTIL WE COME TO THE CROSS, TO BE PURIFIED FROM THE INSIDE OUT.**

Conclusion:

1. There is no substitute for an abiding love for God in your heart – that produces all the good activity.
  - A. Submitting to God because you really want to.
  - B. Serving Christ, because He served you.

- C. Drawing near to God, because He reached out to you through the gospel.
- D. Therefore – cleansing your life, from the inside out.

2. I've enjoyed through the years – reading the works of A.W. Tozer, who once said this:

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world's greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little beside ourselves.

A. W. TOZER (1897–1963)

3. Listen again: **Jas. 3:13-4:10.**

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