

Reviving the Saints

Satisfied!-Part III

James 4:7-10

Some time ago I came across a story written by an author whose friend—a pilot—was in desperate trouble. He was flying his single-engine airplane toward a small country airport, and he was behind schedule having left later than he'd wanted.

By the time he finally reached the small airfield where he planned to land just as he flew in overhead, the sun had dropped behind a mountain at the close of the day. It was as if someone turned the lights out.

By the time he maneuvered into position to land, he couldn't make out the runway from the field below. He had no real lighting on his plane and there was no one on duty at this small airfield.

He circled the runway for another attempt to land, but the darkness had now become even more impenetrable. For two hours, he flew his plane overhead that country airfield, around and around as the darkness of the night grew deeper and his need grew more desperate. He knew that he probably faced certain death when his fuel ran out.

Just as panic began to overwhelm him, a wonderful thing occurred. A man who lived near the airfield had heard the continuing drone of a plane engine and eventually realized the predicament of this pilot.

This gracious man ran to his car, raced to the runway, and with his high beams blazing, drove his car back and forth on the runway to show the pilot the location of the airstrip. He then, parked his car at the far end of the runway and let his lights cast their illuminating beam down the runway.

The pilot landed the plane safely and his life was spared.

The Apostle James has been that gracious man for us—passionately showing us the lights along the path that leads not to destruction, but satisfaction.

He's not only shown us where to land, but how to live.

For the casual Bible reader who treats the Bible like a magazine in the doctor's office—flipping through the pages, reading the titles and skimming the pictures then tossing it aside—to that reader, James' advice has been too hard hitting . . . too in-your-face.

James has been deadly serious because he knows the issues at hand are deadly serious.

Not only does James not want you to run out of gas and crash, he doesn't want you landing on the wrong airstrip either.

So he's lined the path with inspired, God breathed, state of the art lighting managed by the Holy Spirit who is never off duty.

What James will now do is deliver ten imperatives—ten verbs that end with an exclamation point.

Consider them ten brilliant spotlights to illumine your walk with Christ.

They appear in rapid sequence, beginning at ***James chapter 4 and verse 7. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. 9. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.***

Someone might easily say, “James is obviously not writing to Christians, but to the unconverted. James is showing people the path to salvation.”

A believer—they contend—cannot be addicted to pleasure—verse 1; he can’t be a murderer—verse 2; or a spiritual adulteress, hostile toward the will of God—verse 4 and so on.

There’s just no way a Christian could ever be condemned on those terms! So, they say James is writing to unbelievers.

Nothing could be further from the truth. This is not the language of redemption; this is not an invitation to the cross; this is not a description of the atoning work of Christ alone for salvation.

James is not talking to unbelievers who need to be redeemed; he’s writing to Christians who need to act like it.

By the way, as you interpret the scripture, one of the critical questions to answer is to whom is the author writing? That can determine so many things. The average Bible study in America reads a verse and then asks, “What does that mean to me?” You can’t figure out what it means to you until you know what it meant to them!”

James is writing to Jewish Christians who understood the references to ceremonial cleansing.

James isn’t telling an unconverted person to submit to God. They have no relationship with God to begin with; you don’t tell an unconverted person to draw near to God. They are running from God. How or why could they ever draw near to God without having first believed the gospel of His Son?

Millions of people today are trying in their own way apart from Christ and His cross-work to merit their justification.

An unbeliever cannot wash his hands and purify his heart because he has not been plunged into the flow of Christ’s redeeming blood.

James 4 is not the language of justification; it is the language of reformation.

One author correctly said that you could refer to this paragraph as the language of revival.ⁱ And keep in mind that revival is not for unbelievers, but for believers. An unbeliever is spiritually dead, Ephesians 2, tells us. You can’t revive a corpse – you need a resurrection for that. You revive an unconscious person or sleeping person who’s already alive. So revival is not for the spiritually dead; revival is for the spiritually delinquent.

James is holding the smelling salts of truth under our noses. He’s saying to the apathetic, the undisciplined, and the wayward ones—wake up!

The original construction makes it crystal clear—these are ten imperatives—these are things we are to do. And everything we are to do as Christians follow what we have become—Christians.

The last thing you want to do is tell someone – listen, if you’d like to become a Christian, you need to do what James says here in verses 7-10.

They will simply do what many people are doing today, and I’ve talked to many of them who have turned over a new leaf, but have yet to come to life through faith in Christ alone.

Listen, don’t write down these commands from James and say, “I’m going to do all ten . . . maybe then God will accept me. I’ll give it my best shot . . . maybe I’ll get into heaven.”

No, these imperatives are for those already redeemed who need to turn their faith into life.

James is writing to Christians who need to be reformed and revived and that would mean 100% of us who know Christ personally. We all need to receive what James is about to deliver.

The first imperative James delivers to us is to. . .

1. Fall In

He writes in *verse 7, Submit therefore to God.*

The word “submit” used by James here is a combination of two Greek words—the word for “under” and the verb “to station or to place”.ⁱⁱ

It was a military term in James day that literally meant “to rank under”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The person submitting was someone who was falling into rank, under the authority of their superior. We are to rediscover daily our rank under God.

No wonder we have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds which takes a lifetime and more (Romans 12:1-2).

And by the way, James is delivering the idea of voluntary subordination to God and His will. The reviving believer is not coerced, but cooperative.

You ever had somebody twist your arm behind your back in a wrestling match and tell you to give up and say what? Say Uncle! Every summer I would travel north with my family for that family reunion in Minnesota. There were cousins by the truck load and a number of boys about the same age, and we would almost immediately begin to race or wrestle. When you’re wrestling out in the backyard, the loser finally gives up by saying, “Uncle.” I don’t know where, “Saying Uncle” came from; that particular relative got called on a

lot during the summer. Say Uncle! I'm not going to say Uncle . . . say Uncle . . . okay, Uncle.

That's not the kind of submission James is talking about. He's referring to you and me voluntarily and willingly falling into line.

The kind of submission James refers to here is the revived believer's adventure and great delight.

This kind of submission is demonstrated on the job by the employee who doesn't just submit to the letter of the job description: "I'm not going to do that, it's not in my job description. I'm not going to take that on because that's beyond my purview . . . that's outside my cubicle".

No, this person knows his company's goals and desires, and he will take initiatives to see them accomplished.

This is the athlete who runs during the off season without his coach telling him. He knows it will please his boss or his coach and that is his highest objective.^{iv}

This attitude transcends your immediate authority and tracks all the way to your heavenly authority.

Like the Apostle Paul who said, "***It is my ambition to be pleasing to Christ.***" (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Howard Hendricks, one of my favorite professors, once sat on a plane that was delayed for take-off. After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated and vocal in their complaints. Hendricks noticed that one particular flight attendant remained gracious as she spoke with irate and upset passengers. After the plane finally took off, he told the flight attendant how amazed he was at her gracious spirit, and said he wanted to write a letter of commendation for her to the airline. The stewardess said, "Thank you" but then added that she didn't work for the airline company, but for Jesus Christ. She said, "In fact, my husband and I prayed earlier today before I came in that I would have an opportunity to represent the Lord well."^v

You see, you are not just submitting to someone you can see. You are submitting to Jesus Christ whom you will one day see.

So, James is not referring to the believer who says, "Alright . . . Lord, I'll say Uncle . . . if I have to." He's saying, "Lord, I will submit to You because I want to. How satisfying to know You are my authority and I will gladly fall in."

The second imperative is to . . .

2. Stand Strong

Notice *verse 7 again, Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

The word, resist, is once again a military term which means simply to, "take a stand."^{vi}

His use of the definite article "the devil" makes it clear that James does not buy into the superstitions of his generation and ours that the devil is some kind of mystical force or some kind of evil power.

James thinks of the devil as a personality, a being, a person, and a fallen angel who wanted to be greater than his Creator God (*Isaiah 14*).

The name "devil"—and he has many—literally means accuser, which is one of Satan's chief functions to this day—accusing you to God and accusing God to you. Job serves as the classic exposure of Satan's accusing role.

Furthermore, we learn from scripture that Satan works by deception and delusion; constantly engaged in seeking to subvert the allegiance of God's people by leading them to live self-centered, worldly lives.^{vii}

In this way he cuts off genuine worship God deserves. It is worship that Satan most envies. That is his chief desire in his pride and it became his downfall.

And he's read the end of the book, by the way. He knows how it ends. But he so hates Christ and he so hates the church that until his final and eternal incarceration in Hell, he will attempt to do all he can to diminish the worship of Christ and harm the name and reputation of Christ and His followers. James says to those revived believers who wish to submit to God get ready to take your stand. Resist him; which isn't, by the way, to engage in name calling and blustering and incantations and special prayers known only to the Christians who went to the seminar or read the book.

In fact, the greatest way to resist him is to follow the next imperative draw near to God . . . we'll get to that in a minute.

The Puritan pastor and author, Thomas Manton reminds us, "The devil cannot force you, he can only try to persuade you."^{viii}

He is like a dog that stands looking and waving his tail ready to receive something from those who sit at the table; but if nothing is thrown to him—an angry word; an unclean glance; gestures of wrath

and discontent—without any of that being thrown to him by those seated at the table, he goes away.^{ix}

Listen, he cannot lead you into sin without the consent of your will. He is a defeated foe who now has no power over the Christian except the power of seduction. And he [and his demons] are relentless with it—returning again and again.^x

He is our accuser, but Christ is our advocate. Now we're told to be on the alert—to stand firm against the schemes—the methodeia (μεθοδεια) of the devil—from which we get our word, methods. Ephesians 6:11 and Paul goes on to describe in Ephesians chapter 6. Be alert to his methods, his schemes, and his strategies.

I like the way one author put it which I've mentioned before that Satan is a student of our lives. He has game film on us, and he studies it like a football or basketball coach will study it along with his players. He knows who he's up against. He knows your weaknesses and your strengths, and he has a playbook to use both to his advantage.

He knows what you like to do; how you respond to certain things; what you like to talk about; the place you like to go and the people you like to hang out with.

So what you do is get up to the line of scrimmage and your coach calls a different play and you carry it out. That messes the enemy up—ruins what he had lined up against you.^{xi}

You dribble the ball and take a shot the enemy hadn't planned on.

So fall in; stand strong, and third . . .

3. Draw near

James writes, *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

This is the positive side of resistance. You resist the devil; you relish your relationship with God. This was the prayer of David, the Psalmist when he wrote;

When you said to me, Seek My face, my heart said to You, "Your face, O Lord will I seek (Psalm 27:8)

Or, This one thing I desire of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord . . . to behold the beauty of the Lord. Psalm 27:4

This is the deliberate action of the believer to worship God. It's a verb used of the priests who approached God with their sacrifices in the Old Testament Tabernacle system.^{xii}

This verse places the initiative on the believer—did you notice that?

Someone might say, "Well, if God wants me closer, why doesn't He draw near to me, and then I'll draw near to Him."

James is emphasizing the actions of the believer who wants to live a satisfied life.

- God isn't going to pull you out of bed and into the word.
- He isn't going to keep your computer from turning on until you've prayed.
- He isn't going to set your radio dial or CD player to Christian programming and music throughout the day and make sure all the other stations just give you static.

These are your decisions. Do you really want to be close to Him or not?

While serving as a missionary in Paraguay, Stuart Sacks wrote of an Indian named Rafael who came one day to sit on his porch. Stuart wrote, "I was eating at the time and went out to see what he wanted. He responded, "Ham heneck met." Again I asked what I could do for him, but the answer was the same. I knew what the words were, but I didn't understand them until I later shared the incident with a local missionary. He explained that this was Rafael's way of honoring me. The words he said, "Ham, heneck met," means, "I don't want anything from you—I have just come near . . . I don't want anything from you—I have just come near." The veteran missionary went on to say, this Indian was showing you that he found satisfaction just being near you."

How convicting is that. How many times do I go to God only because I want something, or I need something. I want Him to fix something or want Him to step in and do something! And everybody lines up to get their miracle.

I loved this story I came across just the other day— Big Ed went to the local tent revival and listened intently to the preacher. After a while the preacher asked anyone with needs to come forward to be prayed over for their miracle. Big Ed got in line. When it was his turn, the preacher said, "What's your name?" "Folks call me Big Ed," he responded. Well, Big Ed, what do you want me to pray about?" Big Ed said, "I need you to pray about my hearing." So the preacher put one hand on Big Ed's ear and the other hand on top of his head and began to pray and holler and shake. After a few minutes of that, he removed his hands, stuck a

microphone up to Big Ed and said, “How’s your hearing now?” Big Ed said, “I don’t know preacher . . . it’s not until next Wednesday at the courthouse.” I love that story . . . on so many levels!

Where’s the lineup just to draw near? I see the long line waiting for the miracle . . . the answer . . . the gifts. Where’s the line for someone who just wants to come near?!

Would you stand in that line? Can we say, “I have found satisfaction in You O God, and I really only want to come near.” Whether you fix my hearing or not!

And did you notice the wonderful promise given by James? ***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.***

In other words, whenever you want to draw close to Him, He’s receptive.

We’re not that way. Someone wants to get close to us and we might not want to return the interest . . . we might want to be alone; we might not care for company at the moment.

Let’s take a quick survey: how many of you ladies at some point in your lives were asked out on a date and you turned him down?

How many of you finally gave in and ended up marrying the guy?

Someone was interested in you and you didn’t respond in kind. Somebody wanted to get closer to you and you said, in effect, they were already close enough.

Here’s the good news . . . are you interested in getting closer to God? He’s interested in the same thing too.

You want to worship God . . . He is always ready to return your desire for fellowship!

- You never have to get out of bed and wonder if it’s too early for Him;
- You never have to wonder when you pray if He’s listening;
- You never have to make a decision to honor Him without Him knowing every detail;
- You can never have to face a challenge and wonder if you can cast that care on Him too.

You draw near to God and He will always respond. That’s James’ point.

Fall in!

Stand strong!

Draw near!

Here’s the fourth point –

4. Clean it up

Notice the middle part of *verse 8, Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded, be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.*

You’re probably thinking, what kind of Christianity is this? To the Jewish reader —James primary audience—they would immediately pick up on the language of ceremonial cleansing.

To cleanse your hands was the washing with water whereby a man would be ceremonially fit to approach both the worship of God and service to God (*Exodus 30 and Leviticus 16*)^{xiii}

In fact, they ceremonially washed their hands before they ate (*Mark 7*). But James isn’t just talking about rituals; he’s talking about morals.

To cleanse the hands is a reference to external behavior; To purify the heart is a reference to internal attitudes.^{xiv}

In other words, if you truly desire to draw near to God then you have to deal with sin.

This is daily cleaning by means of daily confession in fact, we live lives, Martin Luther, the Reformer said “of continual confession.”

You can’t approach God with your hands behind your back holding on to things you shouldn’t be holding.

James is saying, “C’mon . . . He knows what’s in your hands . . . he knows what’s in your hearts. He knows who you are. You might be one of His sheep, but you can’t pull the wool over His eyes.”

Clean it up!

I recently heard the funny—no doubt apocryphal—story about a tough old woman who was in court for breaking the law. The court appointed defense attorney put her on the stand and then asked her, “Do you know who I am?” She said, “Course I know who you are. You’re John Morrison and I know you’re a no-good lawyer who’s cheated on your taxes and cheated with clients and you’ve cheated on your wife two different times. I wouldn’t trust you if you were the last person alive.” The attorney was shocked . . . he pointed over to the prosecuting attorney and asked her, “Do you know who he is?” She snarled and said, “I sure do! That’s Billy Becket and he’s a no good lazy loafer who never amounted to anything; he doesn’t take care of his business or his wife and three kids; in fact, he’s having an affair right now with your wife.” Both lawyers were beside themselves at this

point when the judge called both of them to approach the bench. When they got up there he said in a low voice, “If either one of you asks her if she knows who *I* am, I’m sending you both to the electric chair!”

Imagine standing in the presence of God . . . do you want to know Him? He already knows you . . . everything about you.

Little wonder then that James says if you want to get serious about your relationship with God, you have to get serious about every other relationship and activity and desire.

James writes again, in *verse 9, Be miserable and mourn and weep*. Three imperatives one after another that reveals genuine repentance and confession.

These are not the tears of a criminal caught in a crime; these are not the tears of a politician or a preacher caught on tape; these are not investors crying after being found guilty for insider trading...^{xv}

These are not tears from people who excuse their sin by explaining their weakness; their problems; their mistakes; their bad choices; their issues.^{xvi} These are not those crocodile tears. These are for real.

You want to travel the road to satisfaction and you want to be revived again?

God effectively says through James, “Don’t deal with sin as if it isn’t serious . . . don’t brush it off as if it’s no big deal.”

James writes, “*Be miserable*”—this is translated from the word for grief. Literally, be wretched. Are you kidding? Be wretched? Yes. This is the same word for recognizing how wretched we are as sinners.

This is Paul confessing, “*Oh wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this body of death?*” (*Romans 7:24*)

This is the Apostle Peter’s threshold to genuine growth finally just outside the Garden after denying His Lord he wept bitterly (*Luke 22:62*).

This is George McDonald, the Scottish pastoring and writing in the 1800’s who wrote,

“Lord, in thy Spirit’s hurricane, I pray,

Strip my soul naked—dress it then thy way.

The words James uses for *mourn and wail* refer to funeral like grief that result in the overflow of tears.

Surely this isn’t for Christians. We’re supposed to get up in the morning and claim our victory, think happy thoughts and go get our miracle.

No . . . get real with God . . . and come clean. In Tim Challies book entitled, *The Next Story*, he writes, “In 2006, America Online made an epic misjudgment. As part of a research project the search history of 650,000 users over a three-month period was released to the public. Before AOL released the data, they changed all the user names into anonymous user numbers, but it didn’t take long before those numbers were linked to real names. America Online realized its mistake and withdrew the data, but the search histories had already been copied and uploaded on the Internet. Challies writes, “It was now possible to reconstruct a person’s [private] life, at least in part, from what they searched for over a period of time. One user went from searching for preteen pornography to searching for games appropriate for a church youth group. Others, spurned by their advances, searched ways of exacting revenge, while others dealt with how to cheat on their spouses. [Their] searches became a window into [their] hearts.”^{xvii}

So, James, who knew nothing about internet search engines, knows a lot about the great Searcher of hearts.

“*Search me O God and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there by any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. (Psalm 139:23-24)*

This is the transparency of heart and mind and soul that says, “Lord you know everything about me and that means there needs to be cleansing of everything about me so that I can resist the evil one, draw near to you, and have clean hands and a pure heart.”

These are the commands for those who want to find genuine, lasting satisfaction . . . not trivial or shallow, but deep and lasting.

Fall in!

Stand strong!

Draw near!

Clean it up!

5. Keep low

James writes in *verse 10, Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you*.

And you almost have to smile and say, “James, after what you’ve just put us through, could we do anything other than humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord?!”

The words *humble yourselves* come from the

Greek word, tapeinothete (ταπεινωθητε) which means to make low or to make oneself low.^{xviii}

And He will exalt you—literally, he will lift you up. The picture is of someone prostrate before an Eastern monarch. The monarch comes down from the throne and lifts the petitioner’s face from the dust.^{xix}

Stuart Briscoe writes of traveling many years ago to Poland for several weeks of ministry. One winter day, he wrote, my host drove me in the dead of night to the middle of nowhere. I walked into a dilapidated building crammed full with young people. Through an interpreter I preached from John 15 on our walk with Christ. Ten minutes into my message, the lights went completely out and it was pitch black. My interpreter urged me to keep preaching. Unable to see my notes or read my

Bible, I continued on. After I had preached in the dark for at least twenty minutes, the lights suddenly came back on, and what I saw startled me; everyone in the audience was on their knees, and they remained there while I finished my sermon. The next day I commented on this to someone who was there and he said, “After you left, we stayed on our knees most of the night in prayer. Your message challenged us, and we wanted to make sure we were walking closely with Christ.”

What passion . . . commitment . . . growth.
What a way to walk toward genuine, deep,
satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

This is the path of revival!

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 03/06/2011 by Stephen Davey.

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iii John MacArthur, James (Moody, 1998), p. 204

iv Daniel M. Doriani, James (R & R Publishing, 2007), p. 146

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vi Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 737

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viii Thomas Manton, Crossway Classic Commentaries: James (Crossway Books, 1995), p. 251

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xiii William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster, 1976), p. 107

xiv Phil Newton, Expository Notes: James (South Woods Baptist Church, 2005), p. 91

xv Doriani, p. 150

xvi Evans, p. 164

xvii Tim Challies, The Next Story (Zondervan, 2011), p. 176

xviii Rienecker/Rogers, p. 737

xix Hiebert, p. 240