

Message Title : **Draw near to God**

Passage : **James 3:13 - 4:10**

James 3:13-18

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 4 :1-10

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble."

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, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

OVERVIEW

James was writing this letter to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered among the nations. James' message was straight forward to the churches that they are losing focus on God.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect

law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. **James 1:22-25**

Our faith in God should be accompanied by our deeds.

He stressed on us to endure and trust God during trials, ask God for wisdom, tame the tongue, visit orphans and widows, and don't play favourites.

James is asking the church to repent and come back to God.

Two kinds of wisdom

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:13-18

Points to reflect:

- Two types of wisdom available— Godly wisdom & earthly wisdom.
- Wisdom of man that is "*earthly, unspiritual, demonic*" and full of "*envy and selfish ambition.*" (Verse 15)
- Wisdom of God, "*the wisdom that comes from heaven, is first of all pure...*" (verse 17)
- Both wisdom has power in it, but the effect and consequences are contrast - it can either break or make the people / situation around us.
- What sets the two apart is humility.
- The only person who walked in complete humility and meekness in the face of trial, persecution and unfairness is Jesus. Jesus embraced humility and there was goodness, sincerity and pure love that flows from his life to people around him.
- The earthly wisdom is motivated out of selfishness, bitterness and evil desires and it does not come from God neither it promotes the values/ characteristics of God. It promotes the virtues of this world – power, position, status and etc and focuses on self-seeking
- When we harbour bitterness, envy and selfish ambition, what lies beneath these is our pride
- Pride exalts against what God has ordered and setup.
- Godly wisdom according to the Scripture is;
 - Pure, Peace-loving, Considerate, Submissive, Full of mercy, Impartial & Sincere.

Worldly desires in us

*"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." **James 4:1-3***

Points to reflect:

- The believers are not living as children of God, and their deeds were not reflecting on the faith they have in God.
- "Self" is exalted, promoted and seeks glory for itself instead of giving glory to God.
- The atmosphere in the church was toxic as all that the people cared was about themselves, their agendas and their motives.

Enmity with God

*⁴ "You adulterous people,^[a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" **James 4: 4***

Points to reflect:

- **1 John 3:1-3** *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*
- God has called us His children and His bride and He will come again for us. We are called to be set apart and not to live as the world lives.
- If we began pursuing worldly desires & being one with the world, then we are living in enmity with God.
- In **1 John 2:15-17**, ¹⁵ *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. "*
- The bible uses the word "adulterous people", "friend of the world" & "enemy of God" to refer us when our deeds are not in direct correlation with the Word of God.

The Jealous God longs for us

⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud "

but shows favor to the humble." **James 4: 5-6**

- Bitterness, jealousy and worldly desires is pride. Pursing them is living in enmity with God.
- Proverbs 16: 18 says, "Pride goes before destruction....."
- God longs for us to return to Him. God wants to "repair" and "cure" our hearts.

What does God want us to do?

I. Submit to Him

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

James 4:7

Points to reflect:

- Submit to Him means surrendering ourselves to God in total humility.
- When we say we submit to God, we will come before God daily to hear Him, so we can obey Him.
- It's daily laying aside to please "self" and glorify God in all that we do.
- We need to read His word and be sensitive to what He is telling us and obey Him.
- This is the message of James to the church, that we should not be listeners only but doers of the word too.

II. Draw near to God

*"Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom." **James 4: 8-9***

Points to reflect:

- This is an invitation from God, to draw near Him in repentance
- We need to respond to God's invitation
- We need to repent from the earthly wisdom in which we have been living and ask for the Godly wisdom.
- In **2 Chronicles 7:14**, ¹⁴ *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*
- **Revelation 3:16** says, "So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. "

- God is calling us into an intimate relationship with Him. He wants to be our highest and only prized possession.
- **Exodus 33:11** says, *The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.....”*
- Moses had an intimate relationship with God and walked closely with God. He drew near God and submitted to His voice
- **Hebrews 11:24-26** says, *“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”*
- Moses didn’t live as one the Egyptians or as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. It would have been selfish from him and he would be seeking to live on his pleasures.

Conclusion

- We have a choice to make every day, either to live and pursue Godly wisdom or earthly wisdom.
- In the wider road is the current world where it follows it’s own ways, doing something which has no regard for God or others. “Self” is glorified and every unspiritual motives and deeds are pursued.
- The narrow gate is for the children of God, children who hear the voice of their Father and follow His ways. We take this path when we in humility seek Him in repentance and walk in Godly wisdom.

Prayer Points

- We will seek God in humility and pursue Godly wisdom
- Repent and turn away from worldly pleasures
- Seek God to cure our pride

Church

- God will continue to speak to us and will transform our lives through His Word
- To be steadfast in our pursue of God's call over our lives
- We will continue to be His witnesses wherever He has planted us – marketplace, schools, family and etc
- Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth, Worship Team & Church Leadership

Physical Healing & Salvation

- Jayden
- Rita (Praise God for healing) & family (full recovery from Covid)

Covid 19

- Healing & recovery for those who are infected
- Frontlines & our healthcare system
- Pray for wisdom & protection as more SOPs are relaxed with double doses of vaccination
- Recovery of economy & unemployment
- Education for the school children
- Mental health of people

Nation

- Leadership issue will be resolved soon and peacefully
- Racial Reconciliation
- Revival in churches