

“The Path to True Glory”
(James 4:6-10)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. James warned us against spiritual adultery:
 - a. It’s symptoms:
 - (i) Quarrels and conflicts among members of the church.
 - (ii) Unanswered prayer: individually and corporately.
 - b. It’s causes in the heart:
 - (i) Self-interest, lust, envy.
 - (ii) Love for the world.
 - (iii) In a word, sin.
2. Spiritual adultery is the abandonment of God.
 - a. It is to forsake our covenant with God, at least in some degree.
 - b. It is to allow another love in our hearts: the world.
 - c. It amounts to hatred of/hostility against God.
 - d. It is enmity against God.

B. Preview.

1. But James also gave his readers hope:
 - a. These sources of their conflicts, were waging war in their members: which means that at some level, they were fighting against them.
 - b. The fact that they were called adulteresses meant they were breaking a covenant they were in fact in.
 - c. The earnest of God’s inheritance – God’s engagement ring, if you will – was apparent in their lives: God’s Spirit jealously/zealously desired them, moving them to turn back from their sins to their husband, Christ.
2. This evening, James shows them of the proper way – the godly way – to achieve what they were after.
 - a. What exactly were they after?
 - (i) We’re not told specifically, though it may have been position in the church: Possibly that of a teacher, for that is what he was speaking of earlier in chapter 3.
 - (ii) Possibly they wanted that because they thought it would give them some measure of honor or prestige in the eyes of others.
 - (iii) The way they went about achieving this, however, was all wrong.
 - b. How are we to obtain honor in God’s kingdom?
 - (i) Not by lusting, envying, being resentful of others, ambitious for our own gain, putting ourselves forward.

- (ii) But by humbling ourselves.
- c. This evening, James gives us the remedy to this morning's problem of spiritual adultery and again reminds us of the path to true glory: humility.
- d. We'll look at two things:
 - (i) We must humble ourselves before God.
 - (ii) If we do, He will exalt us.

II. Sermon.

- A. If we are to obtain the glory that comes from God, we must humble ourselves before God.
 - 1. First, we need to understand what will happen if we don't: God will oppose us. "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (v. 6).
 - a. Our Lord tells us the same thing: we can't expect to use the world's methodology to obtain honor in God's kingdom.
 - (i) "And He *began* speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor *at the table*, saying to them, 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, "Give *your* place to this man," and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, "Friend, move up higher"; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"' (Luke 14:7-11).
 - (ii) Jesus noticed the same problem among His disciples (they also had the world in their hearts to some degree): "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.' And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"' (Matt. 20:20-28).
 - b. The more we attempt to put ourselves forward, the more the Lord will turn us back.

- (i) God is faithful to discipline us.
 - (ii) He won't let us succeed in obtaining anything through pride.
 - (iii) For the Christian, humility will pave the way to honor, while pride will pave the way to disgrace.
2. "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (v. 6).
- a. If we exalt ourselves, we will be humbled.
 - b. But if we humble ourselves, for Christ's sake, and become servants, we will be exalted.
 - c. What specifically does James tell us to do?
 - (i) We must humble ourselves by submitting to God (v. 7).
 - (a) Pride and self interest move us to go against God's commandments.
 - (b) We need to humble ourselves and submit to God's way of doing things.
 - (c) We need to subject ourselves to Him.
 - (ii) We must humble ourselves by resisting the devil's advances (v. 7).
 - (a) Where do you think much of this temptation is coming from?
 - (b) Consider what is in the world that is under his control: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:16-17).
 - (c) Sound familiar? These things come from the devil, the world (which is largely under his influence), and our flesh (which shares the same nature).
 - (d) We must stop thinking we can fight the devil in our own strength: we can't – we need God's strength.
 - (e) And so we must humble ourselves and seek it from Him.
 - (f) If we do and stand our ground against him, we will successfully repel the enemy: he will run from us.
 - (iii) We must humble ourselves by drawing near to God (v. 8).
 - (a) We must draw near to God in our hearts.
 - (1) Spiritual adultery is drawing away from Him to the world.
 - (2) Spiritual fidelity is drawing away from the world and near to Him.
 - (3) As Christians, this is the basic desire of our hearts: to get closer to God.
 - (b) If we do – in essence, if we repent and draw near to God – He will draw near to us.
 - (1) In salvation, God initially draws near to us, converts our hearts, gives us love for Him.
 - (2) After conversion, we have the power to draw near or away from the Lord.
 - (3) It is our constant responsibility to draw near: and so we must.

- (4) If we do – if we seek Him – He will be found by us.
- (5) And so we must humble our pride and draw near to Him as our greatest good.

- (iv) We must humble ourselves repenting of our sins (v. 8).
 - (a) “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”
 - (b) We must wash our hands of the things that defile us: our sin.
 - (c) We must purify our hearts of our corruption, so that we will no longer desire two things: we can’t do this perfectly, but to the greatest degree we possibly can.
 - (d) This requires humility, because it means we must confess and forsake our sins.
- (v) Finally, we must humble ourselves by mourning our sins (v. 9).
 - (a) “Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.”
 - (b) We must acknowledge our sins, grieve over them in our hearts, and humble ourselves before the Lord, calling on His mercy for forgiveness.
 - (c) Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).

B. If we humble ourselves, God will exalt us (v. 10). “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

- 1. He will give us honor.
 - a. This is the honor we should all seek: “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God? (John 5:44).
 - b. The honor that comes from man ends here, but the honor we get to keep forever.
- 2. How much honor will He give us?
 - a. That is in God’s hands.
 - b. We must not be jealous or envious.
 - (i) Not everyone has the gifts and call of an apostle Paul, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, George Whitefield, or Jonathan Edwards.
 - (ii) We have the calling He has given to us.
 - (iii) If we are to obtain the honor that comes from that calling, we must be faithful, and we must be humble.

C. How can we do this? How can we humble ourselves, when our hearts are so given to selfish ambition and bitter jealousy?

- 1. We can’t.
 - a. Left to ourselves, we are selfish, self-centered, self-seeking.
 - b. We lust after power, recognition, prominence.

2. But God can: He gives a greater grace.
 - a. He can break our hearts, wean us of ungodly desires.
 - b. There is hope that our sinful jealousy and ambition can be overcome.
 - (i) That our jealousy will be replaced with desire to see others excel (Rom. 12:10).
 - (ii) That our selfish ambition will be replaced with ambition to give glory to God.
 - c. By His grace, we can humble ourselves.
 - (i) Either willingly, by His grace.
 - (ii) Or unwillingly, by His gracious discipline.
 - (iii) Either way, He will humble us.
 - d. We can inherit glory, but we must do it God's way and in His strength.
 - (i) If we try to become visible, God will make us invisible.
 - (ii) But if we humbly serve the Lord as He calls us – not displaying ourselves before men, but before Him in secret – then He will honor us, if not in this life, then in the life to come.
3. And so examine your hearts this evening.
 - a. Be honest with yourselves.
 - b. Be ready to confess your sins to the Lord.
 - c. Receive His forgiveness.
 - d. But receive from the Lord also a greater grace that is able to humble the pride of your heart and make you a useable servant.
 - e. This is the path to true greatness in God's kingdom. Amen.