

With Submission
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Allen Power

James 4:6-17

Our friend (and the former teacher of our class) Steve Brock used to say something to the effect of, “*the Christian life is not about commitment to God, it’s about submission to God.*” That’s the problem we sometimes have trying to live the Christian life. We think if we could just be more committed we will please God. The question isn’t “am I committed?” it’s “have I submitted – to God’s will?”

The word “submit” James uses in 4:7 means *to place or rank under, to subject, mid. to obey*:—put in subjection.ⁱ Think of the military, or any organization with a chain of command. Someone has to be in charge and others have to agree to submit in obedience to those who “rank” higher in the structure.

Why does the term submission prompt emotional responses? How can submission in the right circumstances be advantageous to the one submitting?

The Big Idea: Believers should be committed to living out God’s will for our lives; that commitment begins with obedient submission to God.

- There is more in James chapter four than we can cover in just a few minutes in class I encourage you to study it on your own.
- In our text we’ll look at this theme of submission to God.

⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves 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 wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

- Verse six: God gives more grace; that’s encouraging! Humility is the key.
- Prov. 3:34: “*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*”
- C.S. Lewis said, “*Pride is the mother hen under which all other sins are hatched,*” says C. S. Lewis.ⁱⁱ **How did pride give birth to all sin? Why is it true in our lives today?**
- Wiersbe: “*Pride is Satan’s great sin, and it is one of his chief weapons in his warfare against the saint and the Saviour. God wants us to be humble; Satan wants us to be proud.*”ⁱⁱⁱ “*God wants us to depend on His grace while the devil wants us to depend on ourselves. Satan is the author of all “do-it-yourself” spiritual enterprises. He enjoys inflating the ego and encouraging the believer to do it his own way.*”^{iv}”

- So, James, how can we defeat our tendency to pride? Verses seven and eight have the answers: submit, resist, and draw near.
- Submission is not complicated: Doing what God commands in His word.
- **The concept is simple; why is living it out so difficult?**
- We said, as believers we should be committed to living out God's will for our lives and that commitment begins with obedient submission to God.
- In verse four James makes a shocking statement: "...*friendship with the world is enmity with God...whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*"⁴ **What does he mean by "the world?"**

1 John 2:15 (ESV) John writes: ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Romans 8:7 (ESV) Paul writes: ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

- The battle lines are drawn, if I try to live the Christian life disobedient to God's will and his word, he will allow me to suffer the consequences.
- David's adultery with Bathsheba is a prime example of a godly man who indulged in ungodly conduct and paid a high price.
- To avoid that, resist the devil! Satan is not someone to play with, but when we call on God for help we find that Satan is a coward and will run away.
- The problem is we think we are strong enough to "manage" Satan – that's a lie. The Holy Spirit living in a believer WILL enable us to RESIST him.
- Verse eight says, "*draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*"
- A convicting question, "Is Sunday the only day I draw near to God?"
- Do I daily draw near in prayer, in scripture, in thinking about what I read?
- When faced with a problem do I draw near and seek God's wisdom?
- Submission means yielding to God's authority and putting Him in charge of every part of my life. It means I don't make a move without checking with Him. "I have decided to follow Jesus – no turning back!"
- Though I want to draw near to God, there's the issue of "everyday sin."
- The reality is we humans begin to resemble whomever we hang out with.
- The more time I spend with God the more I'll begin to resemble Jesus.
- Conversely, the more time I spend with things opposed to God the more I'll begin to look like, think like, and act like them. What happens in Vegas doesn't stay in Vegas – it comes home in your head and your heart.
- Before we can really draw near to our holy Heavenly Father we need Him to scrub away the grime of sin we all pick up from living in this world.
- James says confession of our sins is serious business: "*Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*"
- **Does James mean we should never laugh? What does he mean?**
- Sin in our lives is no laughing matter.

- It's true if I'm saved then Jesus has paid for all my sin and my eternity in Heaven is secure. However, if something doesn't feel quite right when I try to draw near to God, I should ask Him to reveal any unconfessed sin that might be causing "static" in my connection with Him.
- For example: We love our kids but if they've been playing in a mud puddle we'll send them in for a bath before we snuggle in the bed with them.
- In verses eleven and twelve James warns us about evil speech against our brothers and sisters in Christ. Who are we to judge? God is the judge.
- In verses thirteen through sixteen James again steps on our toes about prideful boasting about what we plan to do in our own power.

¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

- Before I make my plans do I consult God? Do I seek His will through time in His presence, His word, and through godly counsel of other believers?
- Life is short and I have to ask, is it God's will or MY will? His plan or mine?
- Finally, in verse seventeen James warns us about another kind of sin:

¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- It's not enough to avoid blatant, obvious, egregious "tabloid-type" sins.
- There are also sins of "omission." When God prompts us to do the right thing and we ignore it, that's a sin too.
- The Life Application Study Bible: *"It is a sin to lie; it can also be a sin to know the truth and not tell it. It is a sin to speak evil of someone; it is also a sin to avoid that person when you know he or she needs your friendship. You should be willing to help as the Holy Spirit guides you. If God has directed you to do a kind act, to render a service, or to restore a relationship, do it. You will experience a renewed and refreshed vitality to your Christian faith."*^{vi}
- Verse seventeen can also apply when God has clearly revealed His will for our lives and we resist His plan.
- How many followers of Christ will get to Heaven one day and face the painful reality that they missed a tremendous opportunity to be a part of God's plans because they thought they had a better plan?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- Believers should be committed to living out God's will for our lives; that commitment begins with obedient submission to God.
- If I've truly trusted Christ as my Savior and Lord, then I made a decision to make Him the "boss" of my life. The problem is my natural, human tendency to pride and the desire to run things based on my ideas.
- I love the Lord but I want to control the steering wheel! Instead of "Jesus take the wheel" it's Jesus, give ME the wheel!

- James has given us the plan to live in God’s grace every day:
 - Submit to God in obedience recognizing His authority.
 - Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
 - Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
 - Cleanse away that grimy “sin buildup” through heartfelt confession.
 - Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
- Now we know the plan for accessing God’s grace. Let’s do it this week!

ⁱ Thomas, R. L. (1998). [*New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

ⁱⁱ As quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Grace: A Journalist Explores the Evidence of Transformed Lives*

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 369). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} *ibid*

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jas 4:4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vi} Tyndale. *Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size)* (Kindle Locations 177508-177511). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.