

Practicing Biblical Humility Part-5

James' Message: Salvation, Humility & The Sight of God

James 4:6-10

God wants to pour His grace upon us more and more.

His grace is reserved for the humble.

The humble are those who bow before the Majesty of God, bowing low, realizing how great God is, and how great I am not.

God is great, I am not great.

God is everything, I am not everything.

Life is about God, not about me.

He must increase, I must decrease.

When I am clothed with Christ's chosen attitude of humbleness, I become a target of grace. When we practice humility we are doused with grace.

What Was the First NT Book the Early Churches Read?

When God wanted to get the early church back on the pathway to Christ increasing and them decreasing, He chose a very humble man named James.

Most likely, the very first Epistle that circulated the early churches was written by James.

James was reminding them of the clear commands Christ had already given them.

What had Jesus already asked for them to do, and taught them through their pastor's ministry of the Word to them?

Look at James 4, probably from the first book of the New Testament written and circulated among the churches. Please stand as we listen to the humble, brother of Christ, who pastored the early believers in Jerusalem

Getting Humbly Doused with Grace

James 4:6-10 (NKJV) But He gives more grace. Therefore, He says: " God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble"⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Pray

We are looking at how God asks us to be Practicing Biblical Humility. Over the last three weeks we are seeing how this vital truth is communicated to us in God's Word.

Humility Taught by Peter, Paul & James

There are three key chapters about humility we will study. Last week we spent our time in the Word looking at:

Peter's Message: Be Clothed with Humility (1 Pet. 5:5)

Last week we looked into Paul writing from prison as he sent a letter to the church he had never visited. We will look at the entire book of Colossians to see the setting for what Paul taught those embattled saints about their new life in Christ.

Paul's Message: Put on Humility (Col. 3:12)

This week we go all the way back to the first New Testament church in Jerusalem, with the first New Testament pastor, and the first New Testament epistle. It was the earthly brother of Jesus named James that wrote that first epistle, pastored that first church, and gives us the amazingly practical epistle named James.

James' Message: Humble Yourselves in the sight of God (James 4:6)

Humility is seen as the final element in James' description of what a saved person looks like.

As we start this study of the first New Testament church instruction on humility, open with me to the first verse of the book of James. Notice the humility of James. He was a bondservant of God and Christ.

No airs about his big brother, and bragging on how he knew Jesus better than others. Just a blanket statement of humility.

James embodied the humility God always loves to bless.

To best help us see how God humbled James, we can piece together all we know about James and the New Testament world he lived in. Here is the way I would describe this humble author's life who wrote the Epistle of James

The Humbled Author of the Book of James

A Possible Biographical Sketch of James, Brother of Jesus

"Good morning my brethren in Christ Jesus our exalted Lord and King. My name is James. I am a servant of God and of my big brother, Jesus Christ.

While He was on earth, I was not always such a follower of Christ. Let me tell you my story.

"I grew up in a devout Jewish home with a saintly mom, a sickly dad (who died when I was young), three brothers, two sisters, and a perfect half-brother.

What a difficult thing it is to live with the Son of God.

I never got along well with my oldest brother.

He was always right; always good, always patient; and always kind.

He was never wrong, never bad.

He was never mischievous or impatient.

He never argued, stewed, or fought.

He was kind, humble, generous, and hard working.

Living with God's Son Was Hard

He seemed to never sleep whether or not He worked late in dad's carpentry shop.

He always was up before the family. In fact, He would come in just before breakfast each morning from outside. We could tell He had been out there quite a while. Mother always would just look at Him with such wistful and wonder-filled eyes.

"When He spoke, which was seldom compared to us whose words filled the small house in Nazareth, His words seemed to sweep all of us along.

When we sat at the table so well made by Jesus my big brother, He would say amazing things that defy explanation.

He was so profound and yet easily understood.

All of us boys would leave the table saying, 'Yeah, that's just what I would have said.'

Although we could not resist His wisdom, we hated His words. The older we got they pierced our souls and irritated us to the bone!

That Last Day at Home

"I remember the last day He was home.

It was the day the small door leading to the carpenter's shop closed for the last time.

Gone would be the hours of wonder-filled talks the local folks had enjoyed with the kindest man they ever had met.

No more would the wide eyes of children be seen looking wistfully off as stories from the Scriptures of David and Elijah and Moses came alive.

When He taught it seemed to all of us that He had been there and had witnessed those events Himself and knew those heroes of our faith personally.

"On that last day of living with Jesus, our meek and lowly Carpenter brother headed toward the Jordan winding His way through the crowds, our cousin John the Baptist was preaching at the river's edge to people gathered from all over the land. A group of scowling Pharisees stood off to the side as John's fiery words aimed at them told of their utter viper-like lack of contrition that was excluding them from his baptism of repentance.

John Baptizes Jesus

Looking back at the crowds John was struck by the serenity of One confidently striding to the water's edge.

As he looked into the eyes of my brother, he experienced what we had growing up with Jesus.

It was the first time John had seen such purity, and such holiness and living truth in any man. To us watching it was almost funny. Immediately the same lips of the Baptist that denied the wicked and proud Pharisees now were disqualifying himself.

In the presence of Jesus, John saw his own sinfulness.

Yet by the persuasion of Jesus, John yielded and baptized the Christ.

"After Jesus was baptized, there was a loud unusual noise like thunder.

My brother was never the same. Looking into the distance He headed straight into the barren desert of the Judean wilderness. He disappeared for way over a month. It was like His life at our hometown and in His little carpenter's shop was done. We wondered why He left Mom all alone.

"When He finally returned, we picked on Him mercilessly because He was still home with Mom. We all fell in love with our childhood sweethearts. He never dated or even looked with anything but kindness and respect upon women. Many would have longed for such a man as a husband, but with His work supporting Mom and those long early morning

walks He did every day, marriage was never an option.

No One Else was Ever Like Jesus

"When I was growing up at home, those early walks Jesus had always taken had intrigued us boys. We even used to try and find Him, and once we did. I will never forget that morning. When we came up on Jesus, He was looking straight up into the sky talking in such a wonderful way to someone we never saw. He called Him Father—He must be really missing Joseph or something we thought. After that we never tried to find Him on His walks again.

"Let me get back to the story. After Jesus returned, we hounded Him to go to the Feast at Jerusalem and show Himself as if He were a prophet or something. And you know what? He went. He started to walk up and down through Jerusalem. Soon crowds in the hundreds, then into the thousands, and finally into the tens of thousands were following Him hanging on every word.

We were told that He had fed them all from a tiny lunch basket, that He healed blind and crippled folks, and so much more, but we didn't believe it.

Stories have a way of growing.

Stories about Jesus my big brother were legendary.

The Day Jesus Came Home to Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30)

"Time flew by, three years or more. I was married, we had our first child. It was during that time period that Jesus came to speak in His hometown of Nazareth. None of us ever moved far away from Mary our mother. We stayed there working in Nazareth. When Jesus first came back everyone loved Him again, just like when He worked in the carpenter's shop.

It was kind of neat to have all the town excited that my strange brother was coming, but all that soon changed.

You see after He read from the Scriptures He began to speak to us as if He had written those words.

We all became quite uncomfortable.

There were murmurs and finally some of the less inhibited of the town jumped up.

They actually grabbed Jesus and in a frenzy of rage half dragged and half carried Him up to the edge.

Our home town has a spring-fed well and an edge of a cliff that falls so far that we all were warned to never get near it. They were going to kill Him. I cried out 'Stop!' But their fury was unstoppable. Then it happened before my very eyes.

He serenely looked at me with eyes of sadness and then just kind of evaporated. The mob was shocked, I ran to tell mom; and what do you think? I saw, it was Him, walking far down the road headed to Capernaum.

Shaken by Christ's Words

"I could not shake the sermon He said or that strange power He wielded so gently. I started following at a distance. Never like one of those hot-headed fishermen James and John and Peter and Andrew. No, I was not a disciple yet.

"It was a few weeks later just before Passover, and Mom said she had to go

to Jerusalem. I could not let her walk alone. So, I left my wife and little ones with the family and set out with Mom. My younger brother Jude came too (Mk. 6:3). Mom said we had to hurry something awful was happening.

She said Jesus told her He was going to die.

"Well, the rest is unforgettably etched upon my soul. Each step along the hard packed paths of the hills and then up to Jerusalem were filled with sights and sounds of my brother. It all started to fit. Dad's stories to us about angels and wise men following a bright star, shepherds who saw lights and listened to angels, and mom's first child flooded back to my mind.

Joseph always spoke to Jesus differently, never as a son, almost as a best friend.

Then there was the temple story when Jesus was twelve, the baptism when Cousin John shouted that Jesus was the Lamb of God, and now Mom saying He was going to die at Passover.

"We arrived in time to see it all. Jesus was in Jerusalem preaching when the religious leaders hatefully attacked Him. Next thing I knew, I saw Him bound by the Romans. He was horribly beaten and made to stagger through the streets. They used the dreaded death machine on Him, the cross. He was crucified, bleeding and gasping for air. I watched it all. It runs together now in my soul.

"However, let me finish. I am no longer just His little brother. You see, at the cross I too believed that He was the Son of God. After He rose the Scriptures record, He appeared to Peter, the Apostles, and to James (1 Cor. 15:3-7).

That's me, and now I am James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

A Summary of the Book of James

Do you want to grow in your spiritual life?

James takes us to the heart of the life we are to live in Christ.

Listen to just a summary of the topics he, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, teaches about:

confession of sin, prayer, wealth—right and wrong usage, temptation, swearing, murmuring, patience, judging, submission to God, worldliness, the origin of strife, rich versus poor, wisdom, joy in trials, heavenly wisdom versus earthly wisdom, tongues, teachers, faith and works, justification, God's Law, liberty, impartiality, true religion, and regeneration.

James presents to us an unvarnished pioneer account on classic Christianity.

He is right to the point. In his short letter of 108 verses, there are no less than 50 commands.

James is the visible leader of the Jerusalem church.

Remember that the Book of James was written by Christ's earthly brother, one of the children of Joseph and Mary. James became a strong believer after the Resurrection, and went on to be the pastor of the First Church of Jerusalem.

There are only 108 verses in the small epistle of James, but in those 108 verses there are 54 imperatives. In just verses 7, 8, 9, & 10 there are TEN commands from the Lord. Just let me list them for you as a direct request from Jesus to each of us this morning.

What James taught his congregation, and all others since was that authentic Christians separate from sin unto God (James 4:1-10).

So, here is how James described to those authentic, first generation believers.

James' Description of True Believers

Let's take a quick walk through this book and see an overview of what James has to say about those who possess true saving faith:

True Believers are enduring trials (James 1:2-8).

True Believers are understanding and overcoming temptation (James 1:12-18).

True Believers are receiving the true Word (James 1:19-27).

True Believers are seeing like God does: impartially (James 2:1-13).

True Believers are living like Jesus did: doing good (James 2:14-26; Acts 10:38).

True Believers are taming the tongue (James 3:1-12).

True Believers are receiving wisdom from above (James 3:13-18).

True Believers are separating from the world and submitting to God (James 4:1-10).

True Believers are patiently waiting for Christ's timing (James 5:7-12).

True Believers are Humble

MY pride prevents My spiritual growth

Remember James said in v. 6a "But He gives more grace." Therefore He says: "God resists the proud". The word "opposes," or "resists," is *antitassetai*, a military term meaning "to battle against."

What does a humble believer act like? James says it is made up of ten conscious choices in chapter 4 verses 7-10.

Note these ten imperatives crowded into such a short space. This is the character of the preaching, nurture and discipleship that grew such Spirit-empowered servants of the Lord as we see in the Book of Acts.

Submit to God v. 7a = a constant daily choice to hear and submit to what God wants from His Word.

Resist the Devil v. 7b = a daily choice to say no to the world, my sin, my flesh and the Devil who stirs them all up.

Draw near to God v. 8a = a personal choice to chase after God in prayer, thoughts, meditation and through His Word.

Cleanse your hands v. 8b = a conscious changing of our mind about any known sin, which leads to a change of behavior (this is repenting);

Purify your hearts v. 8c = as we seek the constant cleansing of Christ's blood;

Lament v. 9a = we begin to practice (*talaiporein*) is a word for an army without food and shelter exposed to the ravages of stormy weather. James uses it as a call for voluntary abstinence from the luxuries of life. Much like the concentration of study that makes a scholar; the rigorous training that produces the athlete; and this is the chosen way of life under the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-discipline that produces the spiritual giants to live for Christ in a wicked world.

Mourn v. 9b = John Wesley saw the white streaks formed as tears coursed down the blackened faces of Kingswoods miners in the 18th century, so James says to his 1st century luxury living, unconcerned and unmoved church goers - let God rend your hearts until you mourn over your sins.

Weep v. 9c = These are the tears of sympathy that move us to action welling up from a compassion filled heart. No longer unmoved and uncaring, the heart mourning before a Holy God soon becomes filled with the compassion of Christ.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. v. 9d = James tells

them to sorrow as often over the gravity of their sinfulness as they were able to rejoice over the greatness of their pleasures and happiness.

Humble yourselves v. 10 = an internal awareness that all that matters is God, not me. Choosing to put on a humble mind about life.

Humble in God's Sight

God wants to pour His grace upon us more and more.

His grace is reserved for the humble.

The humble are those who bow before the Majesty of God, bowing low, realizing how great God is, and how great I am not.

God is great, I am not great.

God is everything, I am not everything.

Life is about God, not about me.

He must increase, I must decrease.

When I am clothed with Christ's chosen attitude of humbleness, I become a target of grace. When we practice humility we are doused with grace.

Appendix

Which James?

(Note that the apostle James dies in Acts 12:2.) “But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, ‘Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.’ And he departed and went to another place” (Acts 12:17).

James was a part of the commissioning of Paul to his missionary journeys: “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do” (Galatians 2:9-10).

James was the shepherd and pastor of the Jerusalem church at the Council to determine what to do about Gentiles coming to Christ: “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: “After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.” Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath’ ” (Acts 15:13-21).

James was the most prominent member of the Jerusalem church to whom Paul reported after his Third Missionary Journey: “On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present” (Acts 21:18).