

## **“God’s Grace Is Enough, Part 2”**

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Scriptural Foundation: James 4:6-12, ESV

### **Warning Against Worldliness**

<sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

<sup>11</sup> Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

We have been learning from James 4 that authentic faith rejects conformity to this world’s values, mindset, priorities, passions and ambitions and that a true-faith love for God is not fickle, it is not fake, and it is not double-minded, but true-faith love for God is like the North Star; it is an ever-fixed mark. It is not time’s fool, but rather it is enduring, lasting, and permanent.

James 4 tells us,

<sup>4</sup> Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

God calls us to make a lifelong choice. We must choose to love God or we will choose to love this present world. We cannot love both! That is an impossibility. We cannot flip-flop back and forth. The true, authentic believer in Jesus says, “I choose to live my life for Jesus. I choose to have my life conformed to the image of the likeness of Jesus day-by-day by the power of the Holy Spirit working within me.” What we need in order to be successful in our commitment to live like Jesus, and our commitment to live holy lives is God’s grace, because we cannot accomplish this transformation on our own, in our own strength, in our own resolve, and not in our own personal discipline. We need God’s grace; grace which not only pardons us from our sin, but grace which empowers and purifies us from our sins, grace which binds us to God even when we feel our hearts beginning to stray from Him.

We cannot overcome the enemies which stand against us: the Devil, our own flesh, and this present world. We cannot overcome the pull they have upon our lives apart from the grace of God. Even my best works are like filthy rags in God’s sight, for our best works, our best deeds, and our best spiritual accomplishments are mixed in their motives and they are imperfect in their execution. We need God’s grace if we are to win the battle. The big question facing us is this: can I get enough grace to overcome the gravitational pull of the temptations this world places upon my life? Can I obtain enough grace to forsake my love for self and pursue actively a love for God?

An artist painted a picture of the Horseshoe Falls on the Niagara River. The artist was overwhelmed by the sight of 600,000 gallons of water flowing over those falls every second. As he was painting he was marveling at the amount of water flowing over those falls. When he had finished his painting, he entitled it, “More to Follow”.

In the previous study, we studied James 4, and we took special note of the statement James makes in Verse 6, and what an encouraging statement it is to us because it gives us hope: “But He gives more grace.” What a great promise to us! Regardless of how hard the tempter presses against us, He gives us more grace. Regardless of how painful the trial we are enduring, He gives more grace. Regardless of how long a sin habit has enslaved us, He gives more grace.

Regardless of how much grace God has already imparted to us in Jesus, there is always “more to follow”. Like the volume of water rushing over Horseshoe Falls, we are impressed by the amount of grace we presently see pouring over in our lives, but the truly amazing truth about God’s grace is that there is always much, much more to follow.

The Apostle Paul was so impressed by the abundance of God’s grace that he writes in 2 Corinthians 9

<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.<sup>1</sup>

Is that not a great truth? God is able to make grace abound in our lives. Again, in 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul is wrestling with this “thorn” in the flesh, a thorn weighing him down and making him feel as if he is not able to serve God to the capacity he should be serving God, and he calls out for God to remove that thorn. God says, “No, I will not remove that thorn,” but here is what God says,

<sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.<sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul understood that if he is to live his life to the glory of God, it will not be in his own strength, but it will be in his weakness which connects him to the grace of God. It will be, as he humbles himself, he will receive more and more of God’s abundant and sufficient grace.

Look at Verse 6 again,

<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

All is lost if God Himself opposes our lifestyle and our choices. What a horrible thing it is to be opposed by God. Often people ask the question, “Why is my life so hard?” If we ask ourselves that question, we ought to first ask whether or not we are living in pride, because perhaps our life is so hard because God is opposing us. To be proud means we are living outside of God’s rule, of God’s authority, and of God’s provision. To be proud means we are deciding to live by our own rules and to make a life for ourselves, and the text in Verse 6 could not be more clear, “God opposes the proud.”

Perhaps life is hard in the workplace. Perhaps life is hard in your marriage. Perhaps life is hard in your relationship with your children. Perhaps life is hard in the sphere of your finances because God Himself is opposing us. If we are resisting His authority and His right to rule over us, we can expect Him to oppose us.

If your life is hard, you might be like Job and that is also a very sure possibility. Job was a very humble man who walked with God and God still allowed painful trials. He gave Satan the ability and authority to enter into Job’s life and to press him sorely with painful trails. It is possible life is hard because God is gracing you with trails. Hardship does not necessarily mean we are proud and we are living life independently of God and that God is opposing us, but we have to acknowledge the truth as well: if God is opposing us, then life will undoubtedly be hard.

Proverbs 13 says,

<sup>21</sup> Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.

<sup>15</sup> Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> New International Version (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> NIV

<sup>3</sup> NIV

Life is hard for those whom God opposes, but God, in love, extends grace to us even while we were yet sinners and enemies of God. While we are yet proud, God still extends grace. How can we receive this favor from God we need? We read the answer in Verse 10,

<sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Verses 6 and 10 are like two covers of a book: a book about humility and a book about grace. The front cover, Verse 6, tells us, “God gives grace to the humble.” The back cover says, which is the action point, says “Humble yourselves underneath the mighty hand of God.” Verses 7 through 9 are the contents of the book and they are rapid fire commandments which reveal to us what it means to humble ourselves so that we might receive God’s grace.

In the previous study we discussed five actions through which we humble ourselves before God so that we might receive more grace. We looked at the first three of those. In this study we will look at the last two and we will add an appendix in Verses 11 and 12.

We considered the grace principle of submission: Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. One way we receive grace is by submitting ourselves, putting ourselves, under God’s authority. In the grace principle of resistance, we know we have an enemy who wages war against our soul and we are going to resist him and not let him have his way. In the grace principle of worship, if we draw near to God in worship, God will draw near to us.

Let us look at the fourth grace principle – the principle of purification, as we read in Verse 8,

<sup>8</sup> Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

This is a call to a radical change of life. No one can draw near to God without clean hands and a pure heart. That is what the Scriptures tell us. No one can add Christ to their lives without subtracting sin, because when Christ comes into one’s life, He changes it.

Notice the assumption James begins with: no one naturally possesses clean hands. He does not say, “Keep your hands clean,” he says, “Cleanse your hands you sinners!” That is who we are by nature, and then he says, “Purify your hearts you double minded.” We all need purification and we all need cleansing and it is God’s Gospel which is God’s means through which we can obtain such cleansing. We cannot “work” to make ourselves clean. It is the Good News that Jesus Christ became a man and He lived a perfect life, fulfilling all of the Law on our behalf, and then He died upon a cross as a sacrifice for sin, offering forgiveness through His blood and the atonement which was made in Him so that everyone who believes in Jesus would have their sins forgiven.

This same Jesus rose the third day, proclaiming Himself victor over sin and over death so that when we connect to Him we can live in that same victory. If we are to clean up our soul and clean up our hearts we will not be able to do it in the strength of our own person. We need a Savior and a Savior has been provided for us. When we place our faith in Jesus, Jesus comes in and everything changes and we become new creatures. Genuine faith in Jesus leads to genuine life change.

Remember the story of Zaccheus? The Lord said, “Zacchaeus, you come down. I am coming to your house today.” They had a meal and Jesus talked to Zacchaeus and at the end of the meal, Zacchaeus stands and says to Jesus, in Luke 19

<sup>8</sup> ...“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house...”

Jesus is saying, “Zacchaeus, there is proof your faith is genuine because your heart has been changed. From the time I entered into your house to the time I will leave it today, something radical has happened to you. Your heart has been changed.” I ask you this question: has your heart been changed by Jesus?

This transformation does not mean the Christian never sins, but it does mean the Christian's relationship to sin is instantly and permanently changed. Jesus makes a difference in the way we live, yet, sadly, poll after poll reveal little practical difference between the way Christians relate to this world and the way unbelievers relate to this world.

Listen to what pollster George Gallup writes, "There's little difference in ethical behavior between the church and the unchurched. There's as much pilferage and dishonesty among the church as the unchurched. And I'm afraid that applies pretty much across the board: religion, per se, is not really life changing. People cite it as important, for instance, in overcoming depression--but it doesn't have primacy in determining behavior."<sup>4</sup> When you read a statement by a man who has looked at many, many surveys, and he says, "It makes no difference whatsoever," one has to ask the question, "Is there genuine faith in this land? Is there the kind of faith which rescues from sin, because if there is no life change, then there is no real faith?" That is the teaching of the Scripture.

Friends, this must not be true of our personal lives. If it is true of our personal lives then we have a right to fear our future, for the Gospel once received brings a transformation which changes us more and more each day into the image of Jesus, which is why James writes, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners. If you have genuine faith, cleanse your hands and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

In his book I Surrender, Patrick Morley writes that the church's integrity problem is in the misconception "that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior. It is revival without reformation . . ." We really cannot have a change in belief without a change in behavior, not biblically, not genuinely, and not authentically.

What needs cleansing? James tells us, both our actions and our attitudes. Our hands become symbols of our actions, so the command "cleanse your hands and look at the actions of your life. Look at what you do throughout the week and wherever you find your hands and your actions getting dirty in this world, because of your friendship with the world, it is time to get some 'grace-soap' and wash those hands."

It is not just actions, but it is also the deep attitudes of our hearts when James says, "purify your hearts and those attitudes." Are we gentle? Are we loving? Are we patient? Are we joyful? Are we kind? What attitudes permeate the way we think, the way we talk, and the way we live? James asks if we want change in our lives, then change has to happen at the behavior level and at the attitude level.

How do we cleanse your hands and purify your hearts? There are three biblical steps I would encourage you to take. First, take inventory. The unexamined life is seemingly clean life. In other words, we do not know the dirt is there until we start looking around. David, in Psalm 139, says,

<sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! <sup>24</sup> And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

David is saying, "Lord, I want you to take inventory of my life and I want to take some time to allow you to do that for me."

We do not know how dirty the closet is until we open the closet door, and we say, "As long as I can forget it, I do not have to clean it. As long as I do not look up at the ceiling fan, I do not have to dust it." It seems pretty clean as long as our eyes are down here. Take inventory. Think deeply. Spend some time everyday and say, "God, search me. I want to know where my actions are unclean and I want to know where my attitudes are off of kilter. I need to take inventory and I need you to help me with this, Lord."

Step two is: confess your sin as sin. 1 John 1 says,

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<sup>4</sup> George H. Gallup, "Vital Signs," *Leadership*, Fall 1987, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We need to bring those sins not just at the gut, emotional level where we say, “I feel bad about them,” but we need to bring those sins up to God.

Finally, step #3: put those actions and attitudes to death. Colossians 3 says,

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Our plans regarding pursuing sin or allowing sin are ripped up and thrown away when we say, “I am putting those things to death.” We become merciless in the face of the sins we find. We do whatever is necessary, when God reveals actions or attitudes, to put our foot, by God’s grace, on the neck of those sinful attitudes and actions and to crush them, intending never to have them rise again in our soul.

The fifth grace principle, in order to receive more grace, is repentance, as we see in Verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

James is making a call to deep, inner grief. Last month when my dad passed away I experienced a deep kind of inner sorrow. James calls us to that kind of grief over our own sin. This grief is a grief only the Holy Spirit can produce within us. The lack of purity makes a genuine believer mourn over their own sin. When we become aware, fully, of the grievous nature of our sin, of the sinfulness of our sin, we mourn over our own lack of holiness. The natural man does not and cannot grieve over sin, but the natural man possesses a giddy, frivolous attitude toward it. In Joel 2, we read,

<sup>12</sup> “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him....?

The people of Joel’s day were very religious, perhaps the most religious of all the time throughout Old Testament history. They were going to church and they were ripping their clothes in repentance, but God said, “No, do not do that any more because it does not mean anything. Instead, rip your heart open and weep and mourn over your own sin.”

Such mourning is not a sorrow over the consequences of sin. This is not a sorrow over the shame of our sin. This is a sorrow over sin itself. Everyone mourns on Judgment Day, the day those who are without Christ will give an account of their life to God and give an accounting of their sin. Everyone who is left in their sin will mourn on that day. There is no spiritual blessing attached to the kind of mourning that expresses the pain from the consequences or shame of sin. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in Hell, but there will be no grace offered to those living there. Judas wept over his betrayal of Jesus, but it was a weeping that led to self-pity rather than to true repentance. Be wary of the kind of repentance that is little more than self-pity and has no spiritual benefit.

There is the kind of grief from Peter when he denied the Lord three times. He went out and he also wept bitterly over sins, but his sins were an outward expression of his brokenness of his heart. Has your heart ever ached over your own sin so much that you wept?

Michael Cocoris writes these words, “The sure test of the quality of any supposed change of heart will be found in its permanent effects. ‘By their fruits you shall know them’ is as applicable to the right method of judging ourselves as of judging others. Whatever, therefore, may have been our inward experience, whatever joy or sorrow we may have felt, unless we bring forth fruits meant for repentance, our experience will profit us nothing. Repentance is incomplete unless it leads to confession and restitution in cases of injury; unless it causes us to forsake not merely outward sins, which others notice, but those which lie concealed in the heart; unless it makes us choose the service of God and live

not for ourselves but for Him. There is no duty which is either more obvious in itself, or more frequently asserted in the Word of God, than that of repentance.”<sup>5</sup>

I quote Michael Cocoris speaking so brilliantly about repentance because his words are a warning to my heart, and I trust they are a warning to your heart. Why are they such a warning? It is not only because of the truthfulness of those words, but because of happened to Michael Cocoris. Here is a man who wrote books on repentance and understood it well. He talked about the permanence of genuine repentance and he walked away from God.

Friends, let us cleanse our hands and purify our hearts and let us cry out to God, and mourn and weep over our sin and over our own tendency to rebel against the Living God because only in God’s grace will we be restored to joy which is permanent and lasting.

Here is the paradox: it is through weeping and mourning we find happiness and we find joy.

William Carey is known as the father of modern missions. In 1793, William Carey gave his life to missions in India. There he translated the Bible into forty languages and dialects. He was an amazing man of faith and selfless obedience to Christ, and yet, on his seventieth birthday he wrote these words to one of his sons, “I am this day seventy years old, a monument of Divine mercy and goodness, though on review of my life I find much, very much, for which I ought to be humbled in the dust; my direct and positive sins are innumerable, my negligence in the Lord’s work has been great. I have not promoted his cause, nor sought his glory and honor as I ought. Notwithstanding all this, I am spared till now, and am still retained in His work, and I trust I am received into divine favour through him.”

Happy are those who mourn for they shall be comforted!<sup>6</sup> What do we need to receive God’s grace? What we need is to humble ourselves and we humble ourselves by submitting ourselves to God, by resisting the Devil wherever he pops his ugly head up to tempt us away from Him. We humble ourselves as we worship and draw nearer to God. We humble ourselves as we take action to cleanse these hands of actions and to purify our hearts of attitudes. We humble ourselves when we weep and we mourn over our own sins.

Here is the promise: if you and I humble ourselves before the Lord, He will exalt us. That is an awesome promise from the Living God.

I ask you the question: have you humbled yourself before the Lord to receive, first, salvation? Then, everyday, after that day of discovering God’s life and of receiving God’s grace, do you humble yourself to receive more, because He gives more grace and we need more grace?

I close with the words of a song, one of my favorite hymns from Annie Johnson Flint.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,  
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;  
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;  
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Cocoris, Evangelism, A Biblical Approach, Moody, 1984, p. 65

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:4

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure.  
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!