

Sermon Outline

THE GREAT INVITATION: JAMES'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

James 4:6-10

Introduction

James' in his Epistle gives several tests of true saving faith:

- *Chapter 1*: how a true saving faith handles trials and temptation, responds to the Word of God, and is concerned with purity of life.
- *Chapter 2*: how a true faith is concerned about people in need and is no respecter of persons. How a true saving faith is a living faith that produces good works.
- *Chapter 3*: how a true faith is manifested in the use of our tongue and in our wisdom dealing with our lives.
- *Chapter 4*: how a true believer must separate himself from the world.

His objective: *“My brothers if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins”* (James 5:19,20)

1. The call to come and receive God's grace.

Commandment #1: Submit yourselves to God.

- (a) It means accepting God's will for our lives no matter what the cost (Mat 16:24).
- (b) It means to accept God's providence as the best provision for our lives.

The commandment is for everyone: true believers, non-believers and professing Christians.

Commandment #2: Resist the devil.

- A pretty sure sign of the existence of God's grace in our hearts is the experience of temptation and the attacks of Satan.
- A godly life is characterized by its conflicts with sin.
- You are either under the lordship of Satan (John 8:44) or under the lordship of God.
- Submit to God does not make us passive. It is not about “let go and let God.” We are to resist or make a firm stand against Satan.
- What is the primary attack of Satan? To make us proud (see Adam and temptations of Christ), hence the command to be humble.

Commandment #3: Draw near to God.

- Resisting the devil and drawing near to God, follow each other.
- Man in his fallen state, dead in sins and trespasses, will not draw himself near to God. God sought us through His Son even when we were still His enemies (1 John 4:19).
- God sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to take upon Himself our sin, so that we being justified by faith might be able to enter into the presence of God (1 Pet 3:18).

- It is faith of God implanted in our hearts through the operation of His Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to draw near to God.
- What does draw near to God mean?
 - In O.T, those who drew near to God were the priests (Exo 19:22).
 - But later generalized to refer to anyone who came to God (Heb 10:22).
 - When a person comes to God, it isn't just a matter of submitting to Him as Lord, it isn't just exchanging the old master, Satan, with the new master, but it is the longing of the heart to *worship* God.
- When we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.
- It is the picture of the prodigal son coming back to the father's house.

2. The call to conform to God's holiness.

How can we draw near to God and worship Him?

Commandment #4 and #5: Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts.

- Origin: the practice of the priests washing their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle (Exo 30:19-21 and Lev 16:4).
- Later man understood that God required much more than an outward washing; and so the phrase came to symbolized moral purity (Ps 26:6; Isa 1:16).
- Why hands? Hands are the organs and symbols of ethical actions.
- It means to recognize that we, personally, have committed moral sin and the fact that God will not accept any offering that we bring to Him with dirty hands.
- Conformity to God is the ground of communion.
- Lord Jesus says, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (Mat 5:8).
- How could we clean our hands without a fountain? The fountain is Calvary and the means of cleansing is the blood that was shed by the Son of God on Calvary.

3. The call to sorrowful repentance.

Commandments #6,7 and 8: wretched (afflicted), mourn and weep have to do with sorrowing.

- It is an evidence of repentance.
- If repentance is a shallow emotion and is not accompanied by deep contrition of heart, there will not follow the joy of the Lord.
- "Be wretched" means "to endure hardship and troubles." A burden-carrying individual, as John Bunyan conceived him, and the burden of sin is toilsome.
- The evidence of repentance is to recognize how heavily laden we are with sin (Rom 7:24).
- "Mourn" means "to lament for the dead." Weeping suggests any loud expression of pain or sorrow as one lamenting the dead.
- Mourning is an indication that someone has died.
- When we realize our sinfulness, we become aware that we are dead in our sins and trespasses.
- No one will keep mourning but will seek refuge and comfort (Mat 5:4).

- He will stretch forth the hand of faith and grasp the outstretched hand of God (Mat 11:28).

Commandment #9: turn your laughter to mourning.

- Our enjoyments prove our nature. The worldly people enjoy the worldly pleasure, the sinner enjoys sin.
- When a person's heart has been touched by the Spirit of Christ, the laughter of his sinful life ought to turn to mourning and the joy of his sinful life to gloom.

4. The goal and purpose of the invitation.

Commandment #10: be humble.

- Even after we received the grace of God, we must remain humble.
- We should tell the Lord it is all the work of His grace.
- The final purpose of the invitation: God will exalt us.
- Ephesians 2:4-6 says, *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

Conclusion

Have you put your life up against the tests and be sure of your faith in Christ?

God does not believe or repent for you; you have to believe and repent yourselves. Cry and pray now if you have not submitted yourself, “Save, Lord, or I perish!”