

Commands To The Enemies Of God

My beloved these 4 short verses contain 10 commandments given as imperative verbs. These commands give one of the clearest calls to salvation found in the Bible. So vital are these 10 commands that we will study them over two weeks - the first five this week in part 1 and the last five in part 2.

The main theme of James' letter is for professed Christians to test their faith and by the testing know if one's faith is genuine or false. James desires no one to be deceived, but to know without doubt if they are saved or not. Just like our Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 13, verses 24 to 30 showed the need to expose the tares among the wheat. Jesus said, **"Let both (*tares and wheat*) grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the weeds (*or tares*) first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'**" (v. 30) There are both believers and unbelievers within the church.

James makes his goal for his letter clear in the final two verses, **"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,²⁰ 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) James' goals were the same as his Lord and our Lord, who said, **"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."** (Matthew 18:15) To save a person's soul from death is to guide them to salvation found only in Christ. My beloved, do you know anyone who calls themselves "Christian" but whose life truly belongs to the world? I would venture to say we all know people like this and they have the same spiritual problem as

those James is concerned about in the Jerusalem church 2000 years ago. We need to call them back to Christ.

Let's step back to James chapter 3 for a moment, turn back to chapter 3 in your Bible. Beginning in verse 13 James warns against worldly wisdom saying in verse 15, if "... wisdom *does not come down from above, then it is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.*" In verse 16 James continues teaching that the wisdom of the world creates "...jealousy and selfish ambition exist, *and there will be disorder and every vile practice.*" James indicates in chapter 4, verse 4, if one possesses the wisdom of the world and "... wishes to be a friend of the world *it makes himself an enemy of God.*" Now we come to verses 7 to 10 where James offers unbelievers an invitation to saving faith. These verses include cautions to believers, as well, to put away any remaining remnants of their former lives of the world – for it is the remains of the world that damage ones spiritual life and causes one to give into sin. I believe James primary focus in these verses is toward those who claim to be saved but in truth are not.

This brings us to a paradox found in the Bible. However, it a paradox because of men's thinking and it is not a paradox for God who is sovereign. God through his Word is clear that he chose people for salvation in Christ. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "... ~~he~~ God chose us in ~~him~~ Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he **predestined** us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." (Ephesians 1:4-5) Paul continued this line of thought in his letter to the believers in Rome, "For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30) So we understand, God chooses or predestines those he saves and brings

their dead souls to life. However, the Bible also teaches one must choose Christ as their Savior. In the Old Testament God spoke through Moses and said to the people, "... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore **choose** life, that you and your offspring may live,²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days..."

(Deuteronomy 30:19-20) God also spoke through his prophet Isaiah, "**Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;**⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly

pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7) In the Old Testament God called people to choose him over the world. In the New Testament, the new covenant, Jesus taught, "**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

³⁵ **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.**" (Mark 8:34-35) Jesus spoke to John in The

Revelation saying, "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.**"

(Revelation 3:20) God predestines, but we must also choose. We see these two as incompatible, but if they were exclusive of each other, God would not have put both in the Bible.

God's gracious gift of salvation is a wonderful mystery to us. We are called to accept what the Bible teaches - God calls and we are to respond. In James 4:7-10 he lists 10 commands that God requires of people in response to His gracious and sovereign call. The Lord Jesus' divine provision of salvation demands a person to respond. Directed by God James demands unbelievers, in response to Jesus' divine call to submit, resist, draw near, cleanse, purify, be wretched, mourn, weep, laughter turned to mourning and humble yourselves. These 10 commandments are key to salvation and living for Christ. This morning we will study the first five.

SUBMIT

James begins his command to unbelievers in verse 7 saying, “**Submit yourselves therefore to God.**” Submit means to voluntarily surrender oneself to the authority of another. When Jesus’ parents could not find him as they traveled back to Nazareth they returned to Jerusalem and found him in the temple. Jesus left the temple with his parents and we read in Luke chapter 2, Jesus “**came to Nazareth and was submissive to them, his parents.**” (Luke 2:51) Even though Jesus was the Messiah he chose to submit to the authority of his parents. Paul wrote, “**Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.**” (Romans 13:1) Christians are to give “...thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ **submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Likewise “**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**²³ **For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church ...**” (Ephesians 5:20-23) Proper submission is an important part of a Christian’s life and no one, no one can be saved without submitting to God. One must come under the authority of the Lord and follow the teachings he has given in the Bible no matter the cost. As Paul opened his letter to the Romans, verse one states, “**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...**” I disagree with the translation of this verse – my Bible says “servant”, yours might say “bond-servant” but both are wrong. The Greek word is *doulos* or slave. Paul says he freely choose to become the slave of Christ. Paul is then owned by Christ, lives to serve Christ and is obedient to his Master, Jesus Christ. To be saved by Christ and receive the gracious gift of salvation, one is called to nothing less than, like Paul, choose to be a slave to Christ and submit their life to his authority.

RESIST

To submit one's life to Christ is to resist the devil. The Greek word translated here as "resist" literally means "to stand against" or "to oppose." One cannot submit to Christ and have middle ground or neutrality. James had just made clear that to have friendship with the world, Satan's domain, is to be an enemy of God. Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus of their past before salvation in Christ. Paul wrote, "You were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." (Ephesians 2:1-3) This is what it means to be of the world.

As the crowd listened to the teaching of Jesus, God's voice from heaven spoke that he is glorified in Jesus. Jesus told the crowd, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:30-32) Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and through his resurrection. Satan could no longer hold a sinner against their will and he cannot lead a believer to sin without the consent of that believer's will. This is why a believer must daily put on the whole armor of God as found in Ephesians chapter 6 and through the power of the Holy Spirit be ready to resist and do battle with the world.

DRAW NEAR

Verse 8 calls people to "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." To experience true salvation one must "draw near to God" or have fellowship with God. To have fellowship with the living, eternal and almighty God is a unique privilege

of being Christian. Having fellowship is a mutual relationship that flows in both directions. Drawing near to God begins with submitting our lives to him and through his Holy Spirit giving the power to resist the devil and the world and this allows one to come into fellowship with the living God. Jesus says we must ask in order to draw near, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:7-11) It is through Christ that one draws near the Father. It was important to Jesus that believers draw near to the Father for he said, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) King David understood this principal for he wrote; “The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.²⁰ The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.” (Psalm 145:18-20) David was calling people to submit to God and draw near to him and they would then experience fellowship with God. Jesus said it is through him that one may draw near to God.

Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman at the well that things were now changing, that people could experience God and have a relationship with God. Jesus explained, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24) My beloved, the hour is here - one only has to seek, ask, submit and resist, and they will draw near to God. The redeemed heart longs to be

in communion with God. Jesus knew and so told those who were his, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**” (Matthew 22:37) and this will bring one close to God.

CLEANSE

As we continue to move through this passage of scripture, the middle of verse 8 says, “**Cleanse your hands, you sinners...**” The fourth invitation to salvation is to “**Cleanse your hands.**” Remember James is writing to the Jerusalem church whose members are converted Jews and there are non-believing Jews in the church. The background of verse 8 is Jewish ceremonial practice of the priests cleansing themselves before they were allowed to come before God and perform temple rituals described in Exodus and Leviticus. The prophet Isaiah said in a concise manner, “**When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil...**” (Isaiah 1:15-16) The apostle Paul knew spiritually clean hands were the outward sign of a spiritually clean heart, writing, “**I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling...**” (1 Timothy 2:8) The fact that James addresses this command to sinners, “**Cleanse your hands, you sinners...**” is evidence that James is addressing the unbelievers within the Jerusalem church. It was common terminology in the Jewish culture that sinners referred to unbelievers. The Book of Psalms begins with “**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers...**” (Psalm 1:1) As believers we are to cleanse our hands of the corruption of the world as a sign of our spiritually cleansed hearts.

PURIFY

We close out our study this morning with the fifth command found at the end of verse 8, “**purify your hearts, you double-minded.**” This saying corresponds to the preceding “**Cleanse your hands, you sinners...**” Purify your hearts is the inward of the outward – the cleansing of ones hands. “**Double-minded**” is the condition of the unbelievers in the Jerusalem church – claiming Christ and yet, holding onto Jewish tradition and engaged in the sins of the world. King David asked questions concerning those who are double-minded, “**Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?**” David now gives the answer it is “**He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.**” What is the result of having clean hands and a pure heart before the Lord? Reading verse 5, “**He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**” (Psalm 24:3-5) Jesus said his mission for coming to the earth was; “**I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.**” (Luke 5:32) James is echoing Jesus by calling sinners to repentance and believers to stand firm against all that is unholy in the world.

Paul brought these two ideas of sinner’s need for repentance and believers need to live righteously into focus in his letter to the Romans, writing, “**God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ... For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s **obedience** the many will be made righteous.**” (Romans 5:8 & 19) Paul wrote to his spiritual son, Timothy, “**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.** ¹⁶ **But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.**” (1 Timothy 1:15-16) We are, like Paul, to be examples to the unsaved.

My beloved, as believers we are to live for the glory of Christ by our submission to his authority, resisting the devil and the evil of this world, seeking to draw near to Christ through the study of God's Word and prayer and live with cleansed hands as the outward example of our purified hearts. By living this life we are able to call sinners to Christ and choose to live a life as slaves of Christ thus receiving Christ's gift – Jesus said to those who truly believe “**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**” (John 14:27) This is the gift of Christ to those who are his *doulos*. I desire this gift – how about you? May we live to bring Christ glory!
Amen!