

Spiritual Wholeness “Repentance”

Introduction: This text is a sharp and harsh transition and contains one of the strongest calls to repent found anywhere in the New Testament.

Several Issues

- Departure from the very Greek style moral exhortations (no partiality, godly speech, no envy, jealousy, dissensions)
- Replaced with language that mirrors the Old Testament prophetic denunciations of Israel
- Calls them to turn from their worldly ways and submit once again to their gracious but jealous God
- Gathers all the previously discussed issues into one all-embracing demand to repentance

Underlying Truth

- Without a life of repentance we cannot be spiritually whole

Repentance—Metanoia—Me-ta'noi-a

- A change of mind or direction from what was done or thought before
- Not merely confession, apology, or sorry for being caught
- Turn away FROM and TOWARD something
- A theme of great significance in scripture

When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Mark 2:17 NKJV

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2:4 NKJV

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 NKJV

NOTE: 3 specific movements in the text

I. We are reminded of the peril of flirting with the world.

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4 NKJV

A. Sudden change of address

1. “Brothers” (6 times) “beloved brothers” (3 times)
2. Now—“you adulterous people”

B. Feminine (adulteress) in the Greek

1. Some translations (NKJV) use both in an attempt to get rid of the feminine focus
2. Actually in light of the Old Testament it makes some sense to use the feminine form

For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. 6 For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused, "Says your God. Isaiah 54:5-6 NKJV

Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the Lord. Jeremiah 3:20 NKJV

And story of Hosea—marry prostitute to reveal Israel’s infidelity

C. James labels his readers as unfaithful people of God

1. Friends of the world—committing spiritual adultery
2. Ancient view of friendship in Hellenistic world “involved sharing all things in a unity both spiritual and physical.”

(LT Johnson)

3. That kind of connection with the world makes one an enemy of God

D. It was not overt disclaiming of God to follow the world

1. Imitated world by showing partiality
2. Their bitterness, envy, and jealousy was worldly
3. Their speaking negatively about one another—worldly

E. God will tolerate no rival—friendship with world makes one His enemy

QUESTION: How do we flirt with the world today?

- When we pursue and honor success defined by the world rather than by Scripture
- When we congratulate, legitimize, and normalize sin
- When the applause and recognition of the world means more than the approval of God
- When our resources, time, and energy are saved primarily for worldly and temporary pursuits rather than godly or Kingdom aims

PERILOUS TO BECOME A FRIEND OF GOD

II. James discusses the jealous/yearning—spirit/spirit—and the grace of God.

Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." James 4:5-6 NKJV

A. Difficult passage to interpret (one of the MOST difficult)

Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? James 4:5 NKJV

Several Issues

1. Spirit or spirit (pneuma) is reference to the Holy Spirit or man's spirit? NOTE: James nowhere else references the Holy Spirit.
2. Pneuma is neuter and can function as the subject OR object of the verb "epipotei" which translates as "desire, yearning, or longing."

Either:

- a. The spirit (human spirit) He caused to live in us envies intensely OR
 - b. The Spirit (Holy Spirit) yearns (or is jealous) for us.
3. Greek word "phthonos" translated jealousy usually a negative human trait of man not a descriptor of God.
 4. Three possible translations:
 - a. God yearns jealously for the spirit that He has made to dwell in us. In other words, God wants our soul/spirit that He breathed into us to belong to Him wholly.
 - b. The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously, that is the Holy Spirit wants us to be His alone.
 - c. The spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely. Highlights the human struggle of the flesh desiring to be a friend of the world.

5. Two basic meanings can be derived:

- a. God is a jealous God who wants us to be sold out to Him.
- b. Our flesh (spirit) is bent toward sin, envy, and friendship with the world.

NOTE: I lean toward #1, but both are true.

B. God IS a jealous God

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me. Exodus 20:5 NKJV

For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Deuteronomy 4:24 NKJV

'For the seed shall be prosperous, The vine shall give its fruit, The ground shall give her increase, And the heavens shall give their dew — I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these. Zechariah 8:12 NKJV

NOTE: Fits beautifully with the rebuke as adulterers/adulteresses

C. Our flesh DOES yearn, long for the world

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Romans 7:18-23 NKJV

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Galatians 5:17 NKJV

NOTE: Also fits the context well

D. In either God can and will give us grace to meet His demand.

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." James 4:6 NKJV

1. If v. 5 refers to human/sinful longings of the human spirit, the “more grace” refers to the ability and willingness of God to help us overcome our sinfulness. This is TRUTH!
2. If verse 5 depicts God’s jealousy for His people, then James is reminding us that God’s grace is completely adequate to meet the requirements imposed upon us by that jealousy.

Augustine: God gives what He demands!

E. But, like faith, God's available grace demands our response.

"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." (4:6)

Douglass Moo—"God's gift of sustaining grace is enjoyed only by those willing to admit—their need and accept the gift. The proud on the other hand meet only resistance from God."

III. Grace to meet the demands of God comes only through submission and repentance.

Old Testament reminder: 2 Chronicles 7:14

(Humble, pray, seek My face, turn from wickedness)

A. If God gives grace to meet His claim for those who are humble, then we must learn how to be humble!

1. The call for humility is found in both verses 7 and 10 (bookends)

Therefore submit to God. James 4:7a NKJV

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. James 4:10a NKJV

2. Submit="hypotasso" to put in order under

B. The order of submission/repentance is four-fold

1. Must first resist the devil-refuse to bow to his authority.

- a. Resist=military term—defensive response to Satanic attack
- b. Must resist false wisdom, temptation to hate, divide, speak negatively
- c. Can be overcome

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV

- d. Must be in the Word to develop faith

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Ephesians 6:16 NKJV

- e. Faith without works is dead

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- f. Works=prayerfulness and steely commitment to obey

(ILL) Jesus when tempted

- g. He will flee!

2. Must draw near to God

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:8 NKJV

So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually. Hosea 12:6 NKJV

- a. Return back
- b. Like prodigal's father—He will come near you

3. Must wholly embrace radical repentance

- a. Radical repentance implies a deep and total cleaning of one's whole being

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts. James 4:8 b, c NKJV

— Cleans hands (sinners/adulterers)

- ✓ Clearly believers who have strayed
- ✓ Departed from genuine faith

— Purified hearts

- ✓ Out of heart issues of life
- ✓ From Satan's kingdom/Kingdom of God
- ✓ From flesh to Spirit
- ✓ Have been double-minded (di-psyshos)
 - With cursing/blessing
 - Divine/sensual wisdom

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? Psalms 24:3 NKJV

- b. Must sincerely embrace the seriousness of our failure

Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. James 4:9 NKJV

NOTE: Cleanse and purify sounds priestly. This sounds prophetic

"Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." Joel 2:12 NKJV

Note also Paul:

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 NKJV

- Must not wait to mourn our sin until it is too late
- Judgment will follow
- Laughter must change to mourning

To do evil is like sport to a fool, But a man of understanding has wisdom. Proverbs 10:23 NKJV

Grasp the awfulness of our sin

For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity. Ecclesiastes 7:6 NKJV

- Rid ourselves of our callousness toward holiness

4. Approach God wholly surrendered

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. James 4:10 NKJV

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14 NKJV

Conclusion: He is calling us to lives of repentance