

REVIVE US AGAIN

(James 4:7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (8) Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (9) Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (11) Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. (12) There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

For the next few minutes, we are going to be talking about a spiritual revival. Revival is a word we tend to shy away from because it is used so much by our denominational friends. But it is a good word. Some have defined a revival as “*a new beginning in obedience to God.*” It is a renewed determination to be everything that God wants us to be.

We need a revival in the church; but for there to be a revival in the church, there needs to be a revival in us as individuals. There is always room for us to grow closer to God in our individual relationship. And if there is a revival in our lives individually, it will spill over into the church.

In our text for today, James tells us how to have a revival in our own personal lives. He gives us twelve commands in rapid fire order. If we will implement those things, we will see a difference in our relationship to God and in the congregation here at Blodgett. I want to group those twelve commands into four categories: submission, sin, surrender, and speech.

FIRST OF ALL, if we are going to have revival in our lives, it involves the matter of **SUBMISSION**. Notice verse 7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God*. That word translated submission is a military term literally meaning “*to arrange under*”. It describes someone in the military that recognized his proper place. He is aware of his rank and submits to his superiors. That’s what it takes to have an effective fighting force. You see, it doesn’t really work for a private to go up to a general and say, “*I agree to serve in your army but I want you to know that I’m not going to do any marching, I’m certainly not going to take any KP duty and I’m not going to fight. But as long as you just leave me alone and let me do what I want to do, everything will go fine.*” We all know that the military doesn’t work that way. Just as it’s important for a soldier to be in submission to his superiors, it’s important for God’s people to be in subjection to their Heavenly Father-God is our Commander and Chief and such submission begins when we obey the gospel.

Understand too, this submission we’re talking about is not a one-time experience. It’s a continual relationship in the heart and life of the child of God for as long as he lives. Yet some do not love God as much as they did that first day after they obeyed the gospel; their zeal and commitment and submissive attitude over a period of time has grown cold.

ONE MIGHT ASK how you make such a commitment to that James is talking about.

A. We start by resisting the devil (*4:7 Resist the devil*). The devil is not your friend. He wants you to think that he is; he wants you to believe that if you follow him that everything is going to be fine. Remember the lie he said to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just follow me and things will be wonderful. You’ll be just like God knowing good and evil. It wasn’t until it was too late that they learned that he wasn’t their friend at all. Peter reminds us of this in (*1 Peter 5:8*) *your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*: He’s out to destroy you. So you have got to resist him.

Here again, James uses a military term for resist. It meant “*to take a stand.*” It refers to armies that dug in, refused to retreat, was determined to resist until the death. I’m reminded of those gallant few men who resisted the Mexican forces in the battle of the Alamo. That’s what he is saying to us. You resist the devil, dig in and make a stand.

You know the same plea is given in other passages of scripture. For instance, (*Ephesians 6:11*) ***Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*** Resist him. The devil wants you to believe that he is irresistible-that there is no way you can stand against him. But the Bible says that you can. Remember that comforting passage over in *1 Cor. 10:13* ***There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*** In our text James says you resist and when you resist enough he will flee from you.

B. In Godly submission, not only must you resist the devil, the text says you must **(8) *Draw nigh to God.*** Draw closer unto God. There is a sense in which the Lord is close to us at all times. But that’s not what James is talking about here. You can be in the proximity of someone and still not be close to that person. You can go to Wal-Mart and be within a foot of a person and still not have anything in common with that person. Geographically close, but spiritually miles apart. On the other hand, you might have family members hundreds a miles away but in spite of the distance, there is a bond of closeness there. You see, it’s not just a matter of geography.

What does James mean when he said, **Draw Nigh to God?** Well, he’s not talking about your position- he’s talking about your practice. You draw near to God by the way that you live, by the way that you conduct yourself. You cultivate the heart and the spirit of God. That’s the way you draw near to him. The promise is that if you draw near to God, then God will draw near to you.

Remember the parable that Jesus told of the prodigal son. Here was a young man that left home and went into a far country and wasted his substance in riotous living, but one day he came to himself. He said that there were servants in his father’s house that were better off than he was. I’m not going to stay here in this hog pen, I’m going home; and he did. Remember his father saw him at a distance and when he saw that young man coming home, heading in his direction, the father ran to meet him and he embraced him. He didn’t make the young man come the all the way, he met him part way. You draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. The wonderful thing is **YOU CAN BE JUST AS CLOSE TO GOD AS YOU WANT TO BE.**

How do you draw near to God; by **(1) spending time in his word** and **(2) time in prayer.** If you spend time in God’s word, then God is talking to you and likewise, if you spend time in prayer, you are talking to God. You are having communication and there is nothing that draws people closer than communication. So, if we are to have a revival in our lives, it involves submission.

II. **A second item involves the matter of sin.** Notice the latter part of Verse 8 ***Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*** You know in athletics, eye-hand coordination is important. You look at some of professional football wide receivers, they make some spectacular catches. The reason they are able to do that is because that have learned to get their eyes and hands working together. As soon as the ball leaves the quarterbacks hands, they watch it until it reaches their hands. Their eyes and hands work together. The same thing is true with a good baseball batter.

In the spiritual realm, it’s important to have heart and hand coordination. Your heart and hands work together in service to God. Understand, your hands refer to you action, what you do while your heart refers to you motives, why you do. One refers to the outside and the other the inside. If you heart’s not right, then you

hands aren't going to do what's right. So, cleanse your hands. LOOK CAREFULLY AT YOUR LIFE; is there anything there that ought not to be there? Is there any kind of habit or speech or conduct that's contrary to the will of God? If there is, you need to clean that out of your life. Cleanse your hands. Purify your heart. Your heart is so important. Long ago in the book of **Proverbs 4:23** *keep your heart in all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.* Later Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Understand that all of your behavior springs from what is on the inside.

Then there is the matter of sin. We live in a society that takes sin so lightly. It seems that James wants us to understand that sin is a serious matter. Look at what he says about it in verse **(9) *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning.*** Somebody says that doesn't sound right. I thought the Christian life was supposed to be a joyful life. I thought God's people were supposed to be happy people. Well they are and there's nothing wrong with having fun, enjoying things and going around with a smile on your face. Solomon once said that ***a merry heart doeth good like a medicine (Proverbs 17:22).*** Some need to learn to smile and enjoy life a little more. Solomon tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. He says there is a time to laugh, but he also says there is a time to mourn. One of the times to mourn is when there is sin in your life. So if I want a revival in my life, I've got to deal with this matter of sin; clean my hand and purify my heart. Until I do, there will be no joy in living for the Lord.

III. If we want a revival in our lives, there is this matter of surrender. Look at **(10) *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*** 1 Peter 5 is very similar **(1 Peter 5:6) *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*** There is a song youth groups sometimes sing based on this verse.

The philosophy of the world is the way up is up. God's philosophy is that the way up is down. We see this attitude in our Savior. Notice **(Philippians 2:8) *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*** Because of that, God highly exalted him. Jesus understood that the way up was down and he taught his disciples the same thing. That's a lesson we need to learn today.

One time there was a man visiting an art gallery and noticed a painting of Jesus. It was supposed to have been a masterpiece. He looked at the painting but failed to see the beauty. An attendant approached and the man told the attendant that he really failed to see the quality of the work. The attendant instructed the man to get a little closer. He did but still didn't see it. Get a little closer the attendant again instructed, but still nothing. Again he was told to get a little closer and a little lower. It wasn't until he got real close and real low that he saw what a masterpiece the painting really was. The closer you get and the lower you get, the more you can appreciate the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ and the more you will experience the joy of living for God.

IV Finally, a personal revival involves not only the matters of submission, sin, surrender, but also the matter of our speech. Look at verses **(11) *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. (12) There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*** You knew that eventually James was going to get around to the tongue because he deals with it all the way through his book. In fact, in chapter 3 he really drives that point home. He brings it up again here. He says that if you want a revival in your life, you have to watch how you talk about other people. **DON'T SPEAK AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.** The word there literally means to talk down. It's the idea of criticism; always finding fault; nothing is never good. The noun form of the verb is found in

Romans 1:30 and it's translated "backbiters." You can never have a right relationship with God unless you have a right relationship with your brother. Be careful and watch how you talk about others.

Somebody says, "*Well it's not really my fault, people just come to me with all this gossip and criticisms. I don't go seeking it out.*" Well, the next time that happens, you do the same thing you would do if you got a hold of some bad money. Ever been out and discovered when you got home that someone had given you a Canadian coin. That coin is no good to you, so what did you do with it. You probably tossed it aside. It was worthless in value so you take it out of circulation. So when you get criticism about someone else, you take it out of circulation. You let it stop with you. You don't have to repeat it or pass it on. That kind of talk is so destructive and detrimental, particularly to the unity of the church.

Not only is it detrimental, it is judgmental. Our text says there is only one lawgiver and judge. **(12) *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*** But when you speak against the law and judge the law, you are not a doer of the law; you make yourself a judge to the law. Imagine you are driving along one day and you see those flashing lights behind you and a state trooper pulls you over. He says you were driving without you seatbelt and I'm going to write you out a ticket. You say, "*Now just wait a minute, I don't agree with that seatbelt law. That law is unconstitutional and should have never been passed. So you just tear that ticket up and I'll be on my way.*" That would probably float like a lead balloon wouldn't it? He might reply with something like, "*And who put you on the Supreme Court? You are a law keeper, not a lawmaker. And until you get to be a judge on the Supreme Court, you don't have the right to pass judgement on the law. You have the responsibility of keeping the law.*"

So what James is saying here, you don't have the right or authority is select which one of God's laws you will keep. For instance, you might say, I like the command of *not forsaking the assembling*, I'll keep that one. What about the one that says, *give as you've been prospered?* Yeah that's ok; I'll keep that one too. But *don't talk against your brother* that's not a good one. I don't want to keep that one. Wait a minute, who made you a judge to the law? You're supposed to be a law-keeper, not a lawmaker. In essence, James is saying when you talk against your brother, you're playing God and that's serious. He says there is only one lawgiver and judge, and it's not you and it's not me. God is the only one that knows all the facts and the motives of the heart. So leave the business of judging to him.

If you want a revival in this congregation, this is how to do it. Look at yourself. It's not my brother, it's not my sister. It's me oh Lord who stands in need.

Invitation. Do you need a revival in your life? It can start today. Maybe you need to obey the gospel or need the prayers of the church.