**Clean Hands and Pure Hearts**

*James 4:1-10*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Timothy 3:1-5** – Paul warns Timothy of the problems he would have to address in ***“the last days”*** – the Christian dispensation.
   1. ***“Lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud”***
   2. ***“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”***
   3. ***“having a form of godliness but denying its power”***
   4. *These are Christians who are not allowing themselves to be fully changed by the powerful gospel due to their attraction to earthly things.*
   5. Such attraction foments strife, and spiritual downfall. 🡪
2. **James 3:13-16** – Such a lifestyle is born from the appropriation of earthly wisdom.
   1. **This wisdom is an indication of selfish pride.**
   2. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:18-19** – The world’s wisdom pales in comparison to God’s wisdom. In order to be truly wise, **one must humble himself, emptying himself of what he thought to be wisdom, and turning toward God’s wisdom.**
3. James’ audience were Christians who were guilty of such wisdom. *Their self-seeking, and pride were abundant, and manifesting themselves in dramatic ways.*
   1. **James 4:1-3** – Their desire for pleasure gained ascendency over their love for God, and each other.
      1. **(v. 2)** – ***“murder”*** – some think metaphorical, but not unlikely that they literally shed blood.
      2. **(v. 2b)** – **They were not depending upon God**, but taking it upon themselves to gain anything they needed or wanted by any means necessary. **(cf. 1:5).**
      3. **(v. 3)** – Even when they turned to God, **they did it in an unholy and selfish way**. Thus God did not extend His hand of favor to them.
   2. **4:4-5 –** They were committing adultery against the Lord.
      1. **Spiritual adultery** – **cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2** – church is the bride of Christ.
      2. **God is jealous** – Fraternizing with the world provokes the Lord to jealousy. God wants all of us, not some of us.
4. **Such behavior demanded repentance, to which James instructs. 🡪**
5. Humble Yourselves **(cf. James 4:6-8a, 9-10)**
6. The Lord Delights in Humility
   1. **James 4:6, 10** – God has an aversion toward the proud, but an affinity for the humble.
      1. **(v. 3)** – They were seeking grace (**divine favor – cf. James 1:17**) from God, but wanted it for selfish, and prideful use.
      2. **(v. 6)** – God gives grace only to those who ask in humility.
   2. ***“For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks” (Psalm 18:27).***
      1. God delights in humility, thus rewards it.
      2. He despises pride, thus humiliates it.
7. Humility Comes from the Recognition of Self-Deficiency
   1. **Romans 3:27; 4:4** – The one who is justified by perfect works has reason to boast.
      1. His justification is a matter of debt, not reward.
      2. **For, he is justified through self-sufficiency.**
      3. **Yet, no man can speak of himself in this way – Romans 3:23**
   2. **Matthew 5:3-4** – Jesus shows the inhabitants of His kingdom to be those who are aware of their self-deficiency.
      1. **James 4:9-10** – This is what James requires his readers to recognize.
      2. They need to be sorrowful about their sin, and allow themselves to be humbled.
      3. **Only then can God help them.**
      4. ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).***
   3. **This godly sorrow is a manifestation of humility, and it always translates into submission to God – which is also an indication of humility (cf. James 4:7-8a).**
      1. **This can be illustrated in two ways 🡪**
8. Cleanse Your Hands **(cf. James 4:8b)**
9. Washing of Hands
   1. ***“I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about Your altar, O Lord” (Psalm 26:6)***.
      1. In order to approach God’s altar there must be a cleansing.
      2. A washing of hands.
      3. **That is, in order to acceptably worship God, we must be free from sinful activity. 🡪**
   2. **Isaiah 1:15-17** – Those who are in sin, and petition God, will not be heard.
      1. There must be a washing.
      2. **Wash the hands of the blood – cleanse the evil doing.**
      3. Cease to do evil.
   3. **1 Timothy 2:8** – lifting up of HOLY HANDS.
      1. This was a custom, but not a mandate for all Christians – lifting of hands.
      2. **However, the concept of *“holy hands”* is the approach before God in religious purity – your hands are free from sin. 🡪**
10. Ceasing Sinful Activities
    1. ***“cleanse your hands, you sinners”*** – Sin is a spiritual thing, but it is practiced with our body. **We must stop practicing sinful activities to receive divine favor!**
    2. **James 1:21** – Our evil ways must be laid aside.
       1. **The world suggests God only cares about the heart, but what we are in the heart is manifest in our words and actions.**
       2. **(v. 26-27)** – Our tongue must be bridled – *an indication of spiritual maturity* – and our bodies must be kept pure. **NOT DEFILED WITH SINFUL PRACTICE**.
    3. **Colossians 3:5-7** – We are supposed to cease from sinful activity because we have been raised with Christ! **This is necessary to continue in God’s grace**.
11. ***While this is necessary, it is useless if our heart is not cleansed, or purified, as well. 🡪***
12. Purify Your Hearts **(cf. James 4:8b)**
13. A Pure Heart is Necessary
    1. **Matthew 5:8** – only the pure in heart will see God.
       1. We are promised to be like Jesus, and be with Him.
       2. *But only those who seek to be as He is now will be able to see Him – see God* **(cf. 1 John 3:2-3**).
    2. **Matthew 23:23-28** – The Pharisees cleansed their hands to a degree, but did not purify their hearts.
       1. Tithed, as they should have, but did not observe the less tangible, yet weightier matters.
       2. Cleansed outside, but dirty inside.
       3. Appear righteous outside, but hypocrisy and lawlessness inside.
    3. **Mark 7:20-23** – If we are not pure in heart, we will not be able to have a purity in outer practice either.
14. Purifying the Heart
    1. **Acts 15:8-9** – Peter showing the Gentiles to be gospel subjects based on his interaction with Cornelius’ household.
       1. Hearts made pure by faith.
       2. ***“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17)***. 🡪
    2. **Psalm 119:9-16** – In order to have a clean heart through faith, we must give time to God’s word.
       1. **Philippians 4:8-9** – Our meditation must be on the good and pure things.
       2. If this is so, God will be with us.
    3. ***“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).***
       1. In order to possess a pure heart, we must appeal to God.
       2. **He purifies us through His word, and we must devote our life to the diligent study, and practice of its content.**

**Conclusion**

1. **In order to please God, to receive favor from Him, we must repent.**
2. **Repentance includes:**
   1. **Humility.**
   2. **A cleansing of our hands.**
   3. **A purification of our hearts.**
3. **This process is continual. We must work on this daily, and never let our guard down for the Adversary to influence us with impurities.**