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A0742 – October 21, 2007 – Jas 4:9-10 – Divine Viewpoint
Humility

James 4:6-10 Μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει, Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιπάσσειται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. ⁷Υποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ· ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ, καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν. ⁸Ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν· καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοὶ, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. ⁹Ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε· ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μεταστραφήτω, καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν. ¹⁰Ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς. **(BYZ)**

James 4:6-10 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit therefore to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you, cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your heart, you doubters. ⁹Be miserable and sad and weep. Turn your laughter into sadness, and your joy into gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you. **(Author’s Translation)**

James 4:6-10 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. **(NASB95)**

But He gives a greater grace. Remember, this is the shift. The word **But** is the contrastive conjunction *de* and that’s one reason we had to change the NASB translation of verse 5 to something more similar to the KJV. The

second reason is because there is no OT Scripture that teaches that the Holy Spirit indwelt them. The Holy Spirit was with them but He was not in them. The third reason was because the form of the noun “the spirit” can also function as the subject of the sentence. So, to make this verse fit the grammar here and the theology of the rest of Scriptures we changed it to read, “The spirit that has settled in us is oriented toward envious jealousy.” So, verses 1-5 give a vile description of the warring that goes on in the sin nature to fulfill its various lusts but God **gives a greater grace**, that’s the shift, and it means God sends the grace necessary to overcome the lusts of the sin nature. But note the qualification in the quote from the OT, He only sends it **to the humble**. In other words, there’s a certain attitude that the Christian must have in order for God to send the greater grace, and it’s the attitude of humility, lowliness, it’s a recognition of one’s being created from the dust of the earth. We are His creatures and therefore do not think too highly of ourselves but have a proper evaluation of who we are. We don’t step into the Christian life with this mental attitude. When we come into the Christian life and many for years afterward, we have an attitude that I’m so great, God saved me because I’m a good little boy, I’m just so attractive to Him, God just had to have me. I don’t think so. You’re dust and to dust you will return. And until we face reality that He created us, He sustains us and we are chosen only because of Christ and what He did on the cross we’re never going to get it. This program of history is not about you and me. It’s about God and His Son Jesus Christ. It’s Jesus Christ who looked good to God and Jesus Christ alone. We don’t attract Him, we’re filthy. God, so to say, came down into a garbage dump and salvages some of the garbage and fixes it up again in Christ. So, we have got to get rid of our arrogance, our pride and put on humility; a right and reasonable evaluation of ourselves in comparison to God. If we don’t become humble but remain arrogant then what is God’s stance toward that attitude? He’s **opposed to us**. He takes up “battle array” against us. That’s divine discipline, we go under the fire of divine discipline, temporal discipline, in time because God loves His children and He wants us to grow. Therefore, to receive the greater grace James goes into a whole litany of commands. Each designed to develop humility in us. So, this section is really about humility and the DVP program for exaltation. Therefore, to give grace to the humble is the equivalent of exalting the humble. Let me repeat that, *to give grace to the humble is the equivalent of exalting the humble*. So as believers we should become humble to enjoy this grace. God’s grace always lifts us up, always gives us exalted status before

Him. As we are saved by His grace and lifted from being children of the devil to children of God so we are exalted by His grace and lifted from being mere believers in Christ to enjoying exalted status before Him. And so, verses 7-9 explain the DVP program or path to humility which results in the pouring out of His greater grace demonstrated in the exaltation. These are not commands on how to go to heaven but commands to those already going to heaven. Obeying or disobeying them will result in different degrees of status before God in this life or the life to come in the kingdom and beyond. First, **Submit therefore to God** and at the same time **resist the devil**. This means orient yourself to the authority of God and His commands, obey Him as your commanding officer and at the same time “stand against” **the devil** in battle as Paul stood against Peter in Gal 2:11. Put on the armor of God (Eph 6:10ff) and use the word of God. If you must use the word of God to resist the devil then you must first know the word of God. To know the word of God you must study the word of God. To study the word of God you must concentrate. To concentrate you must discipline yourself. To live it you must put it into practice. An undisciplined soldier who entangles himself in the world, does not concentrate, study and practice with his sword will likely fall by the end of battle but the soldier who is a master swordsman will conquer the enemy and send him retreating. That’s the portrait here, it’s a military portrait, a battle ground where the believer is either obeying God and winning the battle or is giving in to the desires of his sin nature and thus committing treason. There is no neutrality, no “no man’s land”. But if we are experienced with the word of God and have trained our senses to discern good from evil (Heb 5:14) then we will send the devil fleeing, that is, he will flee to a place of safety. Then He commands us to **Draw near to God**, this is approaching God in prayer. This is where we confess to Him that what we are doing is hostile toward Him. This is a part of developing humility because prayer admits we need Him, we are not self-sufficient. The first move is up to us. If we **draw near to God** James says **He will draw near to you**. This is a reciprocal closeness to God. How do you get close to people? You spend time with them you talk with them, you listen to them, that brings a closeness an intimacy and that’s what James is talking about, it’s a part of the program for developing humility. As we come to see more of who God is by listening to His word and more of who we are by the same humility is developed.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; That is, cleanse yourself from external acts of sin **and purify your hearts, you double-minded**, that is, purify your internal self, your intellect, emotions and will from HVP thinking, HVP

emotions and HVP decision making to DVP thinking, DVP emotions, and DVP decision making. As it is they are **double-minded**, one foot in the world and one foot in the word. So they are hesitant to act on the word of God with the end result of spiritual instability (cf 1:8). To correct this spiritual instability an internal purification of heart is necessary. That brings us to verse 9. We've seen the first five commands on the path to humility now let's look at the last five.

Be miserable and mourn and weep; all three of these go together and stand in contrast to the **laughter** and **joy** in the rest of the verse. At the time they were laughing at their sin and enjoying the world but that kind of light-heartedness toward sin and the world is not tolerable for the Christian. Sin and the world should cause us to **be miserable and mourn and weep**.

What James is calling for in this verse is Christian repentance. He doesn't use the word but commentators almost unanimously say that's what he's talking about. Repentance is a "change of mind", a definitive, deep seated renunciation of sin in this context. This isn't a glib, superficial repentance. If we're glib about it all we're going to do is be more likely to commit the same offenses. So, I think what we have here is a manifestation of genuine Christian repentance. Let's start with **Be miserable** (*talaipopeo*), the sixth command. It's a verb meaning "experience distress" over their sin and enjoyment of the world. It's only used here in the NT and communicates that sin in our lives and our enjoyment of the world should cause us to be unhappy and uncomfortable. Are you comfortable sinning? Does it cause you happiness? Do you laugh at sin? Is the world a comfortable place for you? Does the world cause you happiness? Seventh command, **mourn** (*pentheo*), a verb meaning "to experience sadness as a result of some condition or circumstance" "to be sad". Sin should cause us to "be sad" "to mourn". Turn to 1 Cor 5:2 for the sense of this word. Here Paul is condemning an immoral act in the Corinthian church and how they have done nothing about it; they haven't judged this brother, they haven't separated from this brother or anything, rather they've tolerated it. "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not *mourned* instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst." Think about the situation. Think about if such a relationship were taking place in our church and if nothing were done about it. The Scriptures say it is arrogant to stand by and do

nothing. Rather we should mourn for such a one and remove them from our midst. When there is such blatant immorality being practiced in the church by our brothers in Christ they must be removed. If we really have a sadness for sin and a love for our brother that he's doing all this should break our hearts. That's the sense in James except it's applied to us. Sin in our lives should sadden us; it should cause us to grieve, to mourn (also cf Matt 5:4). Eighth command, **weep** (*klaiō*), a verb meaning "to cry, to sob, to shed tears" because of sin. Turn over to Mark 14:27

Mark 14:27-31; 71-72 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.' ²⁸"But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." ²⁹But Peter said to Him, "*Even* though all may fall away, yet I will not." ³⁰And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." ³¹But *Peter* kept saying insistently, "*Even* if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also. Drop down to verses 66-72, here's the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, here's Peter's denials, verse 71, ⁷¹But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" ⁷²Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

See that word "weep" there at the end of the verse? That's our word *pentheo*. Peter denied the Christ and because of his shame he wept. Remember I said last week that our emotional responses need to change, that's a part of purifying our hearts. Well, one emotional response is crying and there are things that should make us cry and things that shouldn't. We need to be emotionally purified. Emotion isn't sinful. Jesus wept, Jesus got angry and He didn't sin. Here's one place where tears are proper. We should weep over our sin (other proper places to shed tears are found in Mk 16:9-10; John 11:33; Gen 37:35). That's what James is talking about. As Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, "Sin is to weigh heavily upon the believer." It's not to be taken lightly as this thing to joke about or laugh about or brag about. It should cause us to **be miserable and mourn and weep**. John Calvin said a man does not know 1/100th of the sin which clingeth to his soul. I think American Christians take sin far too lightly. If we could see our hearts laid

bare what a horrific site. Yet we are often glib about our renunciation of sin. Many of us say “Well, Christ died for that, I’ll just confess it” and go on as if it’s not that big a deal! We get an antinomian spirit about us that all too often slips in under the guise of “grace”. Yet this is never the proper mentality. Paul said, “Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? May it never be!” (Rom 6:1). In other words, grace is not a license to sin. Just because we have eternal security and are going to heaven does not mean we should abuse the grace God has shown us in His Son Jesus Christ. He did not call us out of the world by His grace so that we would turn around and abuse it, go on living like the world. He called us out to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom 12:2). John the apostle, in his 1st epistle said, “¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). That we will sin is not to be taken lightly or for granted. Paul taught the same thing when he said, “¹¹Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!” (Rom 6:11-15). Sin is not to be thought of as a master we must obey, a given, the inevitable or the normal. The author of Hebrews said, “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;” (Heb 12:4). Are you resisting sin to that point? These are tough verses to face. In James he’s saying, here are the proper responses to sin in our lives; misery, mourning and weeping. These kinds of emotions are foreign to most American Christians. In the oriental cultures such as the Jewish culture there is a much deeper sense of the stigma of sin and it manifests an external response that other people saw. And when others saw they comforted them. Now, I don’t mean going into public and having this public confession of sin and weeping. No, I mean in the daily course of life, sometimes privately, other times around family and close friends. That’s the only way we see it happening in the Bible. How are we to know when to comfort others if there is no external expression of emotion? We read of Jacob weeping over Joseph, Jesus weeping over Lazarus, the apostles weeping over Jesus. Yet it seems that American Christian responses are much different. I think we’ve been culturally conditioned not to weep. But

our responses are to be conditioned by Scripture not the culture and Scripture says there are proper times and circumstances where we should **weep**. Many of you will not take this seriously but this is the word of God and frankly, this is a command! Are we really going to say, as many have, that all emotion is wrong when God Himself commands these emotions? These are proper DVP response to sin in our lives. Any other response indicates we're not taking sin seriously enough. The alternative is to laugh at our sin, to take joy in our sin, to which James commands, **let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom**. This is a command to transition our attitude toward sin and it's a requirement to becoming humble, a turning in our external response which manifests an inner turn of the mind, genuine repentance. How can we be genuinely humble before God if we don't take seriously how wicked our sin is to Him? We talk about 1 John 1:9 and we talk sometimes glibly about confessing our sin, how that means to acknowledge our sin, to admit our sin to God. It doesn't mean feel guilt or sorrow and that's all good and proper and right but I don't think we should emphasize that to the exclusion of this. I think we're called to a deep sense of sobriety toward our sin. This is all a part of becoming humble, having a right evaluation of ourselves before God. One of the problems, I think a serious problem we have is simply a poor doctrine of God. See, God is the standard by which our behavior is measured, so if I don't have a good doctrine of God then I can't have a good sense of the sinfulness of my sin. It's as if we think of our sin on the plane of a comparison between the brightness of my flashlight to yours rather than the sun! We need a very strong doctrine of God. I think God should constantly be on the plate of our study. Study the difficulties related to God's omniscience. Study the difficulties related to God's immutability and His power, the logical quagmires you can get yourself into. It gets you more and more into this incomprehensible Person. Granted we can never know Him exhaustively, but that's not an excuse to exhaust what He has given us in His self-revelation. And what I find interesting is that I have a lot of tape catalogues done by various Bible teachers and if you look through those you'll find lessons on the essence of God or the attributes of God here and there, parts of larger series but you rarely find a whole course done on the Doctrine of God. I'm talking about a couple hundred lessons. And I'm to blame too. I haven't done that. But the way that works out in our lives is that we really don't grasp the wickedness and extent of our sin because we don't have the proper backdrop. If you take a diamond and show it on a white background you can't see many of the flaws but if you present it on a black

background then what was once invisible to the eye becomes visible. So it is when we study the (Q)ualities of God. As our knowledge of Him increases so our once invisible sins become visible. I also find it interesting that if you go look up Christian books the smallest category without doubt is “God”. I have two or three books on God, books that are devoted to the topic of God. Sure, I’ve got systematic theologies and these have a section on the doctrine of God but I mean an in depth analysis, a work dedicated to Him. Isn’t that odd? I have a friend who’s setting up a seminary and it revolves around the doctrine of God (Veritas School of Theology), that’s primary because, as he says, “so much hinges on your view of God” and he’s right. Until we get a proper view of God we really don’t understand the sinfulness of sin, the wickedness of sin, the lawlessness of sin. So, these responses toward our sin that James mentions are, as Hodges says, “not merely natural but...compellingly spontaneous.” In conclusion, we need to strike a balance between the proper emotional response toward sin and our frank admission of our sin. Most of us, I think, tend toward the frank admission of our sin devoid of the emotional response which Hodges says is “glib and superficial”.

Finally, verse 10, **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.** This is the tenth imperative, **Humble yourselves**, and really it is a summary of the other nine. How we humble ourselves is summed up in those previous nine commandments. If we lower our self-evaluation, if we lower ourselves **He will exalt** us. Note, where we are to humble ourselves, **in the presence of the Lord** or “in the sight of the Lord”. It’s alluding to an attribute of God. Does anyone see what attribute James is alluding to? His omnipresence. That God is fully present at every point. He’s not spread out over the universe so that He’s more present on planet Earth than He is on Pluto. We can’t get away from Him, “Where can I go from Your Spirit?” the Psalmist asked (Ps 139:7). He’s inescapable, “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). So, we are constantly in His presence. This is fearful when we are sinning but comforting when we need His help. But if you will humble yourself, bring yourself low by obeying the previous nine imperatives, **He will exalt you** in His time and in His way. The word **exalt** means “to lift up” as the waters of the flood lifted up the Ark (Gen 7:17). In our context it means “to cause enhancement in honor, fame, position, power or fortune”. There are positions of honor and power in this life. In the OT, prophet, priests and kings. In the NT teachers (Js 3:1-2; 1 Tim 2:11-15), deacons (Heb 13:17; 1 Tim 3:8-14), elders (1 Tim 3:1-7; Heb 13:17).

There are also positions of honor in the next life; different ranks of authority (Js 2:5), kings (Rev 21:24) and bond-servants (Rev 22:3-4). There are positions of fortune in the next life; different degrees of reward and privilege. There are positions of fame in this life and the next; for example David was King of Israel in his life but in the next life He will be the Prince in the Kingdom and other great saints we know from the Bible (Heb 11) as well as many I'm sure we do not know will be in positions of fame. The humble may be exalted in this life, as with Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46-55) or in the next life, as with Jesus Christ who was exalted to the right hand of the Father (Acts 5:31). But no matter when and to what degree the humble are exalted God is faithful to His promise to give a greater grace to the humble, the greater grace that exalts.

Let me give you a few notes on humbleness to close out this section. I want to do this because it can be a confusing term. It's from the Greek verb *tapeinoo* and it means "to lower one's estimation of himself, to have a proper evaluation of oneself" and as I said before it is the classic Christian virtue. Jesus Christ humbled Himself (Phil 2:5-8). The first confusion is that if a person is confident then he is not humble. Or put another way, confidence is always an indication of arrogance. Now, it is true that someone's confidence may be arrogance. For example, if one's confidence is grounded in himself. If a man asserts things with no greater authority than his own intellectual strength, his own thoughts, that is the epitome of arrogance. Who are we to be confident in ourselves, in our own strength? Where do we get such authority to pass ourselves off as the final authority on a matter? But there is a confidence that is not arrogance. It is the confidence which rests on the authority of the word of God. Someone whose confidence is grounded in the word of God and admits that all his knowledge is due solely to the grace of God. In such a case one can teach the word of God with confidence and remain humble because the confidence is merely a way of expressing absolute truth of God's word. So, when I teach I strive to be confident because I believe what I know and teach is due solely to the grace of God and I believe that His word is objective truth (also by the grace of God) and having studied the word of God in the original languages, done word studies, syntactical analysis, historical and contextual research I can present it with the confidence that what I am saying is what God is saying yet without claiming infallibility. So, confidence may be arrogant but it may also be humble, and it all hinges on where one grounds the confidence, in God's word or himself. Second,

humbleness is not inconsistent with boldness. A teacher may be bold in his exposition and yet remain humble, this is a virtue I continually long for, to maintain humility yet be bold in my stand for Christ. I know, by the grace of God, that all wisdom and all riches are hidden in Christ and that His word is sufficient for any and every problem any member of the human race faces. I can be bold in that proclamation. This boldness is possible for the humble Christian because and only because God's word is final authority. So, there is a humble, confident boldness. Humble because what I know I know by the grace of God and bold because what I proclaim is proclaimed on His authority not my own. So, as the song says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He, will lift you up, higher and higher and He will lift you up." We must humble ourselves, He does the exalting.

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