

## The Cure, Part 2 (James 4:5-10)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/30/14)

### Introduction

1. The characteristic of the evangelical church in the opening of the twenty-first century is *secularization*.
  - a. *Secular* comes from the Latin, *saeculum*, meaning to live for the world here and now with no regard for God or eternity.
  - b. But can a *church* be secularized? James says that the wars and fights in the early Jewish congregations were worldly, thus *saeculum*. To use worldly means to advance the personal agenda of one's sect within the church was to bring upon it God's wrath, not blessing (vv. 1-5).
2. The condition of these churches reflects the world's principles (the *cosmos*, defined as the order and process of life in the community of mankind as fallen and in rebellion to God).
  - a. The *cosmos* operates from *elitism*—the domination and control of the majority by a powerful few.
  - b. Wars are the means to gain that control—the prideful few lording it over the rest.
  - c. Chapter four continues the fourth and final *test of faith*—thirst-tested faith (3:13-4:16), one that demonstrates holy desire. True holy desire is incompatible with elitism.
3. Self-centered craving for pleasure in what God has given rather than a longing for God Himself is the root of the elitist mentality.
  - a. This lust is spiritual adultery (unfaithfulness to God), which jeopardizes true godliness.
  - b. God's response is to "battle against" (oppose) the prideful seekers of god-like power (v. 6).
  - c. On the other hand, God would give more grace.
  - d. Receiving that grace is conditioned on *humility* (making oneself lowly through submission and service; see Luke 22:26, 27).
4. Humility and a servant-spirit are not natural; therefore, James lays out the process that all believers must take to experience true humility (vv. 7-10).
  - a. Verses 7-10 give *ten* imperatives (commands) in two venues, which, if obeyed, will lead to harmony and holiness necessary in the churches to God's work.
  - b. Thus, there is call for a (1) *return* to God and, in so doing, resisting the devil, and for (2) *repentance* through cleansing and contrition.

### I. Returning to My God

1. Submitting to God (*hupotasso*, a military term for keeping rank) is the essential first step in spiritual change and involves two sides of one action:
  - a. Stopping activities in the pursuit of self-satisfaction that cause one to fall away from God.
  - b. Obeying directives designed to build holiness and true happiness into one's life.
  - c. In other words, to submit to God means that I must start obeying God while at the same time stop obeying my own lusts.
2. The negative side is further strengthened by the command to resist the devil.
  - a. Resisting the devil allows returning to God.

- b. One resists or withstands by refusing to believe Satan's siren calls to seek satisfaction in those things that displease God.
  - c. The power of temptation is strong, and resisting requires the power of the Spirit to be successful.
3. To submit to God, one must draw near to God (v. 8).
- a. This is an OT concept seen in the offering of the sacrifice to God in the temple (Mal. 3:7; Zech. 1:3).
  - b. This act of offering involves an approach to God in order to find Him, something that sinful man is naturally loath to do (Gen. 3:8-10).
  - c. Thus, there is a promise appended—if you will draw near to God, He will draw near to you.
  - d. However, God is holy and cannot and will not tolerate sin; therefore, one cannot draw near to God while holding on to sinful practices.

## II. Repenting of My Sin

1. In order to approach God, we must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts (v. 8).
- a. *Hands* speak of the practice of sin, but cleansing requires more than simply confessing sinful acts. It is to *purge* and *purify* (pictured in ceremonial cleansing) one's practices from all known sinfulness.
  - b. *Heart* speaks of one's inner disposition (spiritual core) as the source of sinful acts, which must be disposed to holiness by the power of God.
  - c. The problem of "double-mindedness" resides in the conflict of *loyalty*; one cannot love God and the world simultaneously.
2. There is yet a much deeper work that must be done—lamenting sin, which is God's way indelibly to impress its awfulness upon us so that we might hate it as God does (v. 9; see Psalm 51:17; Isa. 57:15; 66:2).
- a. First, we are to *grieve* (be afflicted or wretched)—the brokenness that comes with our seeing the horrible effects of our sin in our relationship to God.
  - b. Only then can we mourn and wail (outward demonstration) our wretchedness.
  - c. Our laughter must yield to heaviness and our gaiety to gloom (downcast eyes) as the Spirit breaks our hearts over our sad condition.
3. The way up is down (v. 10).
- a. The lowly becomes the lifted.
  - b. The marked advantage of humbling is the eventual exaltation. Jesus promised that—
    - 1) The poor in spirit (humble) will inherit the kingdom.
    - 2) The mourner (lamerter) will be comforted.
    - 3) The pure in heart will see God.
    - 4) Those who hunger and thirst for God will be filled (Matt. 5:3-9).