

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry
Andrew M. Davis
Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

The Nature and Fruits of True Repentance

James 4:1-12

The “shot heard round the world” ... the beginning of the American Revolution, Concord bridge... April 19, 1775, some Minutemen – farmers – stood their ground and chose to fire on British regulars rather than retreat or run away

In 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson memorialized this moment in history with a famous hymn... the words are inscribed on a monument erected at the Concord bridge in 1875

**“Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world”**

That phrase – “the shot heard round the world” – is powerful; a single moment’s action in one particular location caused a chain reaction that affected history around the world

There have been many such moments, but in the realm of church history, perhaps none is as famous as Martin Luther’s bold action on October 31, 1517... the nailing of the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle. Theses are assertions made for the purpose of debate

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

Repentance is the beginning of the work of salvation in a human soul... and it must continue all our lives. It is absolutely vital that we understand the nature and fruit of true repentance. And this morning’s passage in James is a great place to start.

I agree with Martin Luther... our salvation is a process, never stopping while we live in this world. JUSTIFICATION is by faith alone, not by works of the law:

Romans 3:28 “We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”

But WHAT KIND OF FAITH JUSTIFIES?

James is uniquely written to give us the answer to that question!

Not dead faith or demon faith or useless faith... but a genuine faith worked in the soul by the Spirit of God!

Faith is the eyesight of the soul by which we can SEE invisible spiritual realities...

Saving faith has two sides: an attractive side and a repulsive side

Attractive: we see the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ as the perfect representation of the glory of God; we see his love and power and wisdom and moral beauty – that he truly is God the Son

Repulsive: we see ourselves for the first time – like James said, “As in a mirror” ... we gaze at our own reflection in the perfect law of God and we see our ugliness and sin and rebellion and pride... and how much we deserve to DIE under the justice of God for those sins; and we see Christ’s BLOODY DEATH ON THE CROSS as the perfect and final payment for our sins

This is what saving faith is... the eyesight of the soul

And therefore we must CONTINUE to see our sins truly, and to hate them and grieve over them and repent from them... FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!!

That is what James 4:1-12 is all about – the need, nature and fruit of continual repentance for our ongoing salvation

I. The Need for Continual Repentance

A. Jesus’ Two-Fold Command

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

B. The Reality of Indwelling Sin

Romans 7:15-17 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

C. The Effects: Fights, Quarrels and Worldliness

James 4:1-4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

1. Fights and quarrels AMONG YOU... that is, in your churches, in your homes, in your families—in your marriage and parenting and friendships
2. The root cause: LUSTS... evil desires that battle within you

James 1:14-15 each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

- a. You kill and covet... looking on your neighbor's wife, house, possessions, privileges with a lustful eye, angry that he has those things and you don't: COVETOUSNESS

- b. “You quarrel and fight”... the bickering, brokenness in human relationships... amazing that so many of the acts of the flesh are seen in angry human relationships

D. Prayerlessness

James 4:2 You do not have, because you do not ask God.

1. Prayerlessness comes from self-reliance; worldly people are pursuing selfish goals in the power of self for the glory of self
2. Obviously, they never think to come humbly to God and ask for these things from his hand
3. And even when they DO PRAY, the prayer comes from worldliness

James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

II. The Spirit’s Deep Longing for our Repentance

A. Our Worldliness is Spiritual ADULTERY

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

B. “The World”

1. Not “planet earth” and its biological population of humans and animals... that God loves (John 3:16)
2. But the evil system of rebellion against the reign of God orchestrated by Satan himself: self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-promotion, self-satisfaction

C. Spiritual ADULTERY

1. James calls them “adulterous people”
2. To hanker after the world, to be attracted to it and throw in your lot with it, and delight in its pleasures and powers and possessions is SPIRITUAL ADULTERY for people who claim to love Christ... and it is OPEN WARFARE by those who don’t

3. The “ENEMIES of God” are those deeply hostile to his person and his kingly reign

Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

4. Jesus will one day crush his enemies

Psalm 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

5. We were at one time his enemies

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

6. Christ by his death on the cross has put to death our hostility to God and his hostility to us... we have been RECONCILED to God—made friends with God

James 2:23 "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

7. How can we now join in with Jesus' enemies?

Like Peter, the night Jesus was arrested, standing around with Jesus' enemies warming his hands with them by the fire, acting like he'd never heard of Jesus... even calling down curses on himself if he was one of his disciples!

8. If we choose to become a friend of the world, we make ourselves an enemy of God!

9. We become a spiritual ADULTERESS

Like the tragic book of Hosea, in which the prophet was commanded to marry a prostitute, Gomer, as a living symbol of how lustful and wandering Israel was in lusting after other gods... Hosea had to go BUY his wife's affections and time:

Hosea 3:1-3 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. ³ Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

D. The Spirit DEEPLY LONGS for our Hearts!!!

James 4:5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

1. Fascinating word... translated "lusts" in other places
2. It just shows that the Holy Spirit of God is JEALOUS over us, over our hearts and affections

Exodus 34:14 Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

3. He created your heart—with its intelligence and ability to evaluate and esteem and make choices... and especially its ability to LOVE... he created that FOR HIMSELF.
4. He wanted us to evaluate him and learn him and esteem him and be attracted to him and to love him ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE in the universe
5. But the essence of idolatry is to set our highest affections on anything created rather than the creator

E. So... the Spirit WORKS WITHIN OUR HEARTS... Working genuine repentance, out of his pure, fiery, jealous love for our souls

F. He will not allow us to wander away after the world and its idols

Hosea 2:5-7 Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.' ⁶ Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. ⁷ She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she

will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'

Is that you?? Does God have to BUY your affections with worldly gifts? Does your heart continually wander after the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life? Do you act like an enemy of God? This text stands over all of us, and we should hear the Spirit's deep longing for our souls to return to God and find our delights and pleasures in him alone!!

III. God's Gift of Continual Grace for Repentance (vs. 6)

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

A. To Save Us, God Must Give us CONTINUAL GRACE... a Steady Stream of Grace... what James says **MORE GRACE**

1. Our hearts are "prone to wander"
2. We do have a tendency from time to time to act like Christ's enemies more than his friends
3. We all stand like Peter did that terrible night, the night that Jesus was arrested and tried... to stand outside in the cold and dark and warm our hands with Jesus' enemies, denying that we even know him at all
4. We need a steady stream of saving grace until we are safe in heaven
5. Say in your soul "MORE GRACE, Lord, I need MORE GRACE..."

B. Bunyan's "Fire Against the Wall"

Then I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it, to extinguish and put it out, is the Devil; but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that. So he had him about to the backside of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast, but secretly, into the fire.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart: by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still. And in that thou sawest that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire, that is to teach thee that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.

The work of grace in our souls is not static but dynamic!!
Christ through the Holy Spirit must continually feed more grace into it, or it will go out

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

C. God Opposes the Proud but Gives Grace to the Humble

James 4:6 That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1. This is a powerful verse, quoted twice in the New Testament
2. God FIGHTS the proud... he is the enemy of the proud...
3. But when he saves a sinner, he does it by working humility in their hearts... he gives grace to the humble BY MAKING THEM HUMBLE

IV. The Nature and Fruits of True Repentance

A. Nature and Fruit Intertwined: What God Demands He Works In Us

Augustine, *Confessions*: **“Give what you command, then command what you will!”**

God “grants” repentance:

2 Timothy 2:25 in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth

B. So, in this passage we see both what God **COMMANDS** from us as sinners, and what he **WORKS IN US** as he saves us

C. The Commands Given Here Could Be Given **BOTH** to unsaved and saved people alike!! The same gospel saves initially and continues to save

1. So... if you have not yet trusted in Christ, these same commands can save your soul...
2. You see your sins for the first time, you come to Christ in **SUBMISSION**, not proudly... you **ASK HIM** to save you, and he will!!
3. **BUT** if you are already a Christian, you will find worldliness creeping in again and again
 - a. Perhaps you have defiled yourself on the internet
 - b. Perhaps you are a married couple consistently fighting and quarrelling
 - c. Perhaps you are a teenager, rebelling and arguing against your parents
 - d. Perhaps you are caught in some kind of addiction
 - e. Perhaps you see an overall worldliness in your life and you are wandering farther and farther away from Christ into materialism and entertainments and pleasures of the world

f. WHAT DO I DO? HOW CAN I GET BACK HOME to Christ?

g. James 4:7-10 gives you a specific path to take

D. Specific Steps to Take When You Sin

James 4:7-10 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1. Submit to God

- a. Kneel before God as King of your life... kneel before him in your hearts right now, and maybe even physically later
- b. Submit to him... acknowledge his right to rule over you; that sin has been rebellion against his kingly rule
- c. Take Jesus' YOKE upon you
- d. Say to him, "You are my God, I am your servant. I have been resisting your rule in my life. Forgive me, O Lord!"
- e. All of salvation is in essence bringing us into the Kingdom of God... where he rules over us and we are glad about it!

2. Resist the Devil... and he will FLEE from you

- a. Determine to say NO to the devil's schemes... acknowledge that he has been skillfully secretly alluring you and tempting you by his schemes
- b. Determine to FIGHT him, to resist him, to oppose him!

Ephesians 6:11-13 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ... Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

- c. Amazing verse: resist the devil, and he will FLEE from you!!

- i) As though the devil were terrified of you
- ii) But he's not... he's terrified of the LORD OF GLORY who will come to your aid and fight for you

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

- 3. Come Near to God... and He will come near to you
 - a. Our sins have made a separation from God

Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

- b. Speak to the Lord how DISTANT you feel from God; say that you want to be CLOSE to him again

Psalms 63:1-3 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

- c. Look at the promise... he WILL come near to you!

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

- 4. Wash your hands, you sinners
 - a. Come to Christ's cleansing blood to purify you from all your sins

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Revelation 7:14 they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- b. Your hands represent your ACTIONS... habit patterns

- c. Resolve to put away your idols... the actual sin patterns you have been following
 - d. Determine to “cut off your right hand” if it is causing you to sin
5. Purify your hearts, you double-minded
- a. All dirty hands have been serving dirty hearts
 - b. The real issue is the impurity of our hearts
 - c. We cannot obey this command, but God has the power to purify our dirty hearts
 - d. “Double-minded” shows we are talking about WORLDLINESS
 - e. Ask God to give you a single-minded devotion to Christ
- E. Grieve, Mourn, Wail... Change Your Laughter to Gloom and Sorrow
1. A verse that does not fit into our fun-loving times
 2. Christianity Lite... with “chipper” sermons designed to make you laugh and feel good about yourselves... John Piper spoke of churches that try to create an atmosphere of “bouncy, chipper, frisky, light-hearted, playful worship”
 3. We are not wanting a Christianity that is characterized by these words: “morose, gloomy, sullen, dark, heavy... solemnity”
 4. Jesus Christ came to bring us JOY UNSPEAKABLE and full of glory!! And we are going to a heaven that is characterized by these promises:
- Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away***
5. BUT we’re not there yet! And there are times when the healthiest thing we can do is GRIEVE, MOURN, and WAIL... and change our laughter to mourning and our joy to gloom
 - a. We are not talking about times of sorrow in other people’s lives, like when they have to bury a loved one

- b. The context here is not a Christian funeral, in which we “weep with those who weep”
- c. Or any other normal tragedy... like a devastating natural disaster in which a family has lost everything they own to a hurricane
- d. No, there are verses for that... but this is a sorrow totally tied to REPENTANCE FOR SIN
- e. We are finally joining the Holy Spirit in his deep-seated grief over our sin

Isaiah 63:10 they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit

- f. As soon as we sin, and delve into the world’s pollution, the Holy Spirit is GRIEVED...
- g. The way he gives us “more grace” is to pull us out of the banqueting hall where we’ve been gorging our flesh and work deep grief in us... hurting us so he can heal us

Luke 22:60-62 Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

John 21:17 Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

- 6. Sometimes we go TOO QUICKLY to being restored after sin... we need to take time and work over our sins in prayer, talking to the Lord about them, asking him to show us the dimensions of the sin and its ugliness, so that we will HATE IT as he does and turn from it

F. Humble Yourselves Before the Lord

Luke 18:13-14 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

G. He Will Lift You Up... restore you to peace and joy in the Lord