

TEXT STUDY – James 4:7-10

Intro: How dangerous is pride, sinful pride? The prophet Ezekiel in speaking to the King of Tyre said this about pride, “In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.’ But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.” Our sinful pride makes us think that we are wiser than God and can live contrary to his commands with no side effects. Our sinful pride is nowhere to be found, however, when we have to deal with the guilt and the consequences of our sins. As Christians we know better than to go against God, but somehow our sinful pride convinces us that we can get away with our sin or that maybe our sin isn’t that bad after all. Pride has no sanctified logic. It only gets us into trouble time and time again. To live for Christ who died for us it is important that we get our sinful pride under control. On the basis our text from James 4, let’s consider **JAMES’ TOP 10 WAYS FOR OVERCOMING PRIDE**.

1. Submit yourselves to God

- Here’s that awful word that makes women cringe when Paul writes in Ephesians, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.” Did you notice that by submitting to their husbands wives are submitting to the Lord? Earlier Paul has said, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” All believers men, women, children submit to each other in various ways. And we submit out of reverence for Christ. In reality we are submitting to Christ. This is willing obedience to follow his direction. It is an act of Christian love for us to willingly choose to place ourselves under someone else out of reverence for Christ. There is no room for pride in submitting ourselves to God. Christ gives us his example. Paul says, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

2. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you

- By submitting ourselves to God we will be doing the opposite of what the devil wants, the opposite of what he continues to tempt us to do. To submit to God we will have to resist the devil. James assures us that when we do resist the devil he will flee from us. Everything about the devil is pride. As a created angel of God he was filled with pride and tried to challenge God. He was then cast out of heaven and sent to hell. The devil’s temptations to sin are his way of getting back at God, to boost his own sinful pride. James encourages us to fight the good fight of faith and resist the devil’s temptations. Paul writes, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Equip yourself with the armor of God’s truth in his holy Word. The devil has met his match when it comes to God’s Word. He will flee.

3. Come near to God, and he will come near to you

- In our sinful pride we actually run away from God. We are just like kids sneaking away to do something naughty. James encourages us as Christians in our struggle with Satan and our own sinful pride to come near to God rather than to run away from him. We come near to God in prayer as we speak to him from hearts of faith seeking his guidance and help. We come near to God by reading and studying his Word and letting him speak to us. Through the Word the Spirit comes to us and draws us even closer to Jesus our Savior, strengthening our faith in him. It is only through Jesus that we can come near to God in the first place. Hebrews tells us, “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”

4. Wash your hands, you sinners

- Before we come near to God, James reminds us to wash our hands. Hands point to our outward deeds, the things people can see. When mom asks if we washed our hands, she can tell just by looking at them that they are not clean. Just running them under the water doesn’t count. She tells us to wash them and use soap this time. God wants those who approach him to have clean hands. He wants us to clean up our act. We do that through genuine repentance. But we need to use the soap of the law to get rid of the dirt. God’s law is harsh and shows our sin for what it is, but it is necessary for clean hands. After we rub in the soap of God’s law, we wash off the dirt of our sins with the cleansing water of Christ’s blood for our forgiveness. We are clean in Christ. David writes, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

5. Purify your hearts, you double-minded

- James reminds us that we not only need clean hands but also pure hearts. This gets at the root of the problem – our sinful hearts. Sin is so engrained, so deeply embedded in our hearts that we can't get it out. Paul says, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." But even such sinful hearts can be purified through Jesus and his sacrificial, atoning blood which was shed on the cross. John says, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." Even Christians need to purify their hearts through repentance and Christ's forgiveness. We know James is speaking to us as Christians because he calls us double-minded. He writes to Christians like us who with self-righteous hearts say that we will submit ourselves to God and resist the devil yet continue to sin with hearts and hands and voices too. As repentant sinners we come near to God with clean hands and pure hearts – washed clean by Jesus. David wrote in Psalm 24, "Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift his soul to an idol or swear by what is false."

6. Grieve; 7. Mourn; 8. Wail

- James identifies what repentance is with the next three ways to overcome sinful pride. We can group these three together because they are related. What is true repentance? True repentance is grieving, literally being miserable over our sin. It makes us sick. We should be ashamed by our sin, especially the sinful pride that lurks in our hearts. True repentance is mourning or being sad and even wailing or crying real tears. The Bible speaks of repenting in sackcloth and ashes. This is genuine sorrow over sin. It's not for show or to put on a sad front. Sorrow for sin is sorrow – grieving, mourning, and wailing. We don't always realize what our sins have done. We have offended God and brought down his wrath upon us. We have hurt other people. Paul writes, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" He then answers his own question, "Thanks be to God – through our Lord Jesus Christ." In our grief and sorrow over sin we flee to the cross. There we find God's open arms to forgive us through Jesus' suffering and death on Calvary's cross.

9. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom

- It seems as if James is encouraging us to walk around depressed and gloomy. But Paul says in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Yes Christians are joyful in the forgiveness of sins that Christ won and in the eternity of heaven which awaits them. Remember James is discussing sinful pride. He encourages us to grieve, mourn and wail over our sins. This is no time to laugh or make fun of our sin. Yet in our sinful pride we think that sin is a big joke. Is it funny when we hurt other people's feeling through our snide and insensitive remarks? Is it funny when we make our family suffer because of our own sinful, self-gratifying addictions? Is God laughing when we so flippantly rebel against his commands? James tells us to change our laughter to mourning and our joy to gloom. Those who laugh now at sin will mourn forever, while those who mourn now over their sins will laugh forever.

10. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up

- James concludes his top ten list for overcoming sinful pride with a summary statement. Humble yourselves before the Lord. Paul explains humility in the second chapter of his letter to the Philippians, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others." Humility cares nothing about what we get out of something or how we look. It would prefer that we looked awful in order to make someone else look good. Humility serves the Lord whatever he commands, wherever he asks us to go, and however long it may take. Those who humble themselves before the Lord will be lifted up. We come before God in true repentance with our faces in the dirt acknowledging that we deserve nothing from God but his wrath and punishment. And in the most remarkable act of grace and mercy he lifts us up in Christ to himself in heaven.

Conclusion: Are we wiser than God? Our sinful pride would like us to think so. James has a remedy for such sinful pride. It's submitting ourselves to God, resisting the devil, and coming near to God. It's washing our hands and purifying our hearts. It's grieving, mourning, and wailing by changing our laughter to mourning and our joy to gloom. We humble ourselves before the Lord knowing that he will lift us up through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Amen.