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“He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

Faith Humbly Submits

Central Truth: God gives overcoming grace to the humble.

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Topic: Faith: Of Believers; Humility; Submission: To God.

We live on a battlefield. War is raging around us every day. The war is external — between persons, philosophies, and interests. The war is internal — in the spirit and among the passions of each person.

The only way to win the war is to surrender! But be careful to whom you surrender. Surrender to God is the guarantee of victory. Surrender to passions is the guarantee to defeat. A person of faith humbly submits to God, whereas unbelief consistently resists submission to God.

In James 4:1-12 you find a discussion of those two concepts: the resistance of unbelief (verses 1-6) and the submission of faith (verses 6-12). Keep in mind the true nature of faith as you seek to apply God's Word in this passage. Faith is more than mental assent — agreeing that particular doctrines are true. It is belief plus commitment. We call it “trust.” Faith is confidence in a person, the person of God. It involves turning your confidence from every other person and thing and resting on Him alone. F-A-I-T-H means *“Forsaking All I Trust Him.”* Faith humbly submits to God.

The Resistance of Unbelief (James 4:1-6)

Is there evidence that you are resisting God in unbelief? Yes. James lists five evidences of resistance in verses 1 and 2.

(1) Continual conflicts give evidence of the resistance of unbelief.

James speaks of “wars...among you.” Those are feuds between persons and conflicts in society. A contentious spirit will cause problems as surely as wood will kindle fire. The unbeliever does not trust God to work things out, and he presses his own interests to the breaching of fellowship.

(2) Outbursts of quarrels provide evidence of the resistance of unbelief. James calls this “*fightings*,” referring to quarrels, struggles, and wrangling between people. God strictly forbids such a spirit among His people. “*The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men*” (II Timothy 2:24). The unbeliever contests his peers, thinking he must protect his own rights and promote his own interests. The believer rests in the Lord to work all things to his good (Romans 8:28) and need not engage in the “*fightings*” which mark the resistance of unbelief.

(3) Craving for selfish pleasures is evidence of the resistance of unbelief. James calls it “*lusts that war in your members.*” He pictures our lusts becoming soldiers which wage war one against one another. The Bible admonishes, “*Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (I Peter 2:11). The war within never brings victory. The lusts are never satisfied and the soul suffers injury from the internal conflict.

(4) Injury to peers is evidence of the resistance of unbelief. “You kill,” James writes. That killing could be a figure of speech, indicating a bad attitude and evil deeds, or it could be a reference to murder. Either way it pictures putting down another to elevate self and taking from another to satisfy self.

Unfulfilled desires are evidence of the resistance of unbelief. James speaks to those who “*desire to have, and cannot obtain*” (verse 2). How tragic! It is like spending money on what is not food and giving labor to what does not satisfy (Isaiah 55:2). But what else can the unbeliever do? He does not trust God to meet his needs.

What are the consequences of the resistance of unbelief? James gives four serious consequences in verses 3-6 of the text.

(1) Unanswered prayers result from unbelief. “*Ye ask, and receive not*” (verse 3). Why are the unbeliever's prayers unanswered? Because he has sin in his heart (Psalm 66:18) and does not meet God's requirement of faith for answered prayer (Hebrews 11:6).

(2) Hostility toward God is a product of unbelief. Friendship with the world indicates a spirit of enmity toward God (verse 4). The unbeliever either accuses God or ignores Him. Either way is sin.

(3) Internal conflict is born of unbelief. “*The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy*” (verse 5). The lustful spirit desires to control us completely. The Holy Spirit earnestly yearns for our entire devotion. That creates a battle

as *“the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* (Galatians 5:17). What a way to live!

(4) Resistance is God's response to unbelief. *“God resisteth the proud”* (verse 6). He draws himself up to do battle against unbelief. Rebellion is sacrilege, high treason against Him. He who resists God in unbelief will be resisted by God in spiritual warfare. Think about that!

The Submission of faith (James 4:6-12)

“Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly” (Psalm 138:6). As the resistance of unbelief brings curses, the submission of faith brings multiple blessings. What happens when you submit to God in faith?

You will receive an abundance of God's grace. *“He giveth more grace”* (verse 6). God's overflowing grace comes to the humble. He pours out His grace continually upon you, making you sufficient for the needs of each day. You are *“strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”* (II Timothy 2:1) when you are humble. Glory!

You will yield to the government of God. *“Submit yourselves therefore to God”* (verse 7). The best thing that could happen to you is for the will of God to be done perfectly in every area of your life. And that will happen more and more as you trust God and yield to Him. As members of your body are surrendered to His control (Romans 6:12-14), you will enjoy spiritual victory after spiritual victory (II Corinthians 2:14). What a way to live!

You will overcome the devil. *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (verse 7). Note the order of submission and resistance. You will not overcome the devil unless you are yielded to God. Submission to God comes first; overcoming the devil follows. Note also that victory over the devil is not automatic. You submit to God, resist the devil, and then he will flee. You must both yield and resist — yield to God and resist the devil. But victory is assured if you do both.

You will enjoy God's fellowship. *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you”* (verse 8). That is a promise beyond estimation. Submitting to God because you trust Him will bring an awareness of His presence as nothing else will. If you are having a problem with the sense of God's presence, here is the place to solve it. Come close to God and He will come close to you. God says, *“I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me”* (Proverbs 8:17). Seek, and you will find.

You will experience personal cleansing. *“Cleanse your*

hands...;purify your hearts” (verse 8). The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, keeps on cleansing you from all sin (I John 1:7) as you cultivate His presence. That is how you perfect holiness in the fear of God, as II Corinthians 7:1 instructs you. That is how you can be *“a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work”* (II Timothy 2:21). **You will sorrow over sin.** *“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep”* (verse 9). That sorrow leads to cleansing and relief, however. It is a godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation, not the sorrow of the world that works death (II Corinthians 7:10).

You will enjoy spiritual uplift. *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up”* (verse 10). The way up is down. If you humble yourself before God, He will exalt you. Make submission to God the major order of your life.

You will cultivate Christian fellowship (verses 11, 12). No longer will you talk against another. You will drop the habit of criticizing another. You will submit to God and leave judging to Him. That will increase the joy of Christian fellowship.

Look back over these lesson comments. Look at what comes from resisting God in unbelief. Consider what comes from submission to God in faith. Which is the better way? Which will you choose as the course of your life from today forward?

Questions for Discussion

1. In what sense are we living on a battlefield today?
2. How is that battle seen in society?
3. How is that battle experienced in your personal life?
4. Why is unbelief always resistance to God?
5. Why is faith always submission to God?
6. How does unbelief cause turmoil in a person's life?
7. What are some of the personal consequences of unbelief?
8. Why does God give more grace to the humble?
9. How can you experience God's presence more fully?
10. How can you cultivate and exercise your faith this week?