

Introduction

1. One of the most insightful statements I've ever seen about grace is from Max Lucado.¹
 - a. Grace is the voice that calls us to change & then gives us the power to pull it off.
 - b. Sometimes we limit grace to the gifts that God gives us. Ephesians 2:8-9.
 - c. We interpret grace to mean the gift of God's salvation to the undeserving. True, not all.
 - d. Lucado is right. Grace is all about change & God's power enabling us to change.
 2. Last Sunday we saw in James 4:1-6 why we need to change. Review subpoints of vv. 1-5:
 - a. Self-satisfaction is desired, denied to us, and then demanded by us.
 - b. Worldliness is ignoring God, then using God, which leads to grieving God.
 - c. These are causes of all unhealthy conflict, quarreling and fighting. How change this?
 - d. Change won't happen thru trying harder, but encountering the radical grace of God.²
 - e. How can we encounter this radical grace? (Give Title/Text)
- ☞ God offers us the grace to change when we take the path to change inspired by His promise of change.

I. THE POWER TO CHANGE IS THE GRACE OF GOD (V. 6A).**A. Context (vv. 1-5).**

1. James traces fighting and quarreling to three sources.
 - a. Flesh (v. 1) - self-seeking desire to indulge 1self and gratify 1's own wants.
 - b. Pride (vv. 2-3) - pushing 1self ahead and striving with those who interfere w/us
 - c. Worldliness (v. 4) - illicit values for popularity, power, control, things
2. But God says He is a jealous God who wants our full devotion (v. 5).
 - a. We must say no to flesh, dethrone ego pushes ahead others, & turn back on world.
 - b. That's a tall order. How? We are powerless on our own. We cannot do it.
 - c. Quote Jer. 13:23 = True for all. That's why we must receive the power for change.

B. The Grace Of God (v. 6)

1. 1 of most encouraging statements in Bible. What we can't do grace can.
 - a. more = μέγας mégas: English word = mega; He gives us mega grace.
 - b. You know what **mega** means. If you have **mega** anything, it's more than enough.
2. No matter how big the world, the flesh, & my ego, grace is greater. Greatest need.

II. THE PATH TO CHANGE IS HUMILITY BEFORE GOD (VV. 6B-9).

1. Notice the one condition God lays down for receiving grace is humility. Surprise you?
2. I'd have that you get grace by praying, being spiritual, reading the Bible, learning.
 - a. The point of this whole argument is that God wants the happiness of all, but that selfishness and pride can make that impossible. We must work with him in humility (James 4:10).³
 - b. When say, I need grace & I must humble myself before God → change can occur.
3. How? How do we humble ourselves? See v. 7a. Submission is the key to humility.
 - a. [T]he most visible sign of humility is the willingness to submit to others.⁴

¹ <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/519553>. Accessed 10/13/16.

² <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/933563>. Accessed 10/13/16.

³ 1996, c1986. *The New American Bible*: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

⁴Loh, I., & Hatton, H. 1997. *A handbook on the Letter from James*. United Bible Societies: New York

- b. Does that describe me/you? Submissive spirit? Or defiant, unbending, resistant.
- c. A Greek military term meaning “to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader.” In non-military use, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating.”⁵
- d. God wants to be our captain, leader. But we must choose to line up under Him.

⇒ How to Submit to God (v. 7a)

A. RESIST SATAN (V. 7B).

1. The chief sin that caused the fall of Satan was pride. (Show Isaiah 14:12-14)
2. Note 5 I wills. This was downfall of Satan. Ever since tempts people be just like Him.
3. I know of a pastor’s 3 yr. old son whose favorite words when told No were, I want it.
 - a. When his pastor-father told him he’d have to wait for it he would say, I want it now.
 - b. That pastor told his church? My 3-yr-old son’s just a little he-devil running around.
 - c. We can all be little devils running around - pushing, shoving, demanding, impatient,
 - d. quick-tempered, sharp-tongued, easily offended, stubborn, unlistening, controlling.
4. When rebellious like that can’t resist Satan. A rebel can’t resist the chief rebel.
5. When we stand up to our own rebellion Satan flees because we’ve turned against him.

B. RETURN TO GOD (V. 8A).

1. If hearts full pride/rebelliousness/selfishness/strife, we are in the devil's territory.
 - a. If God kicked Satan out of heaven for that, He will resist us too.
 - b. As long as we are letting the devil in we are pushing God out.
 - c. When I left God for a few years, I was young and able to look after myself. I could do all things. Why should I ask God for help? My pride kept me away from Him. Whenever anyone had tried to point out what was wrong in my life, even while I had still been in church, I got upset—they should mind their own business. And yet, now I see how I was allowing my pride to live more and more in the world and farther and farther away from God.⁶
2. But notice God's promise. Draw near God and He will draw near you.
3. We want that because it means reinforcements are arriving. Grace is coming.

C. RENEW CONSECRATION (V. 8B).

1. There is a rich image here that we do not want to miss. (Show)⁷
 - a. draw near = priests approach temple to minister in God's presence.
 - b. cleanse your hands = washing in laver outside temple make priest ritually clean
 - c. purify = washing clothes/bathing whole body to be fit to enter God's service
2. Those symbolic, external acts point to deeper truths—forgiveness for actions/attitudes.
 - a. hands = actions - God requires cleansing of our actions. What I did was wrong.
 - b. heart = motives/desires - God requires consecration. My heart has become infected.
3. You are sinners: get your hands clean again. Your loyalty is divided: get your hearts true once more.⁸

D. REPENT OF SIN (V. 9).

⁵Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. (electronic ed.) . Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

⁶Pastor John Kapteyn, *Grace For The Humble*, www.sermoncentral.com.

⁷ Priest washing at Laver. <http://www.ngabo.org/prophetic/israel/symbols/tabernacle/images/laverbig.jpg>. Accessed 10/13/16.

⁸J. B. Philips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, rev. ed.

1. A half-hearted or light-hearted casual approach to forgiveness doesn't cut it. To be truly sorry for something means to be distressed over it; to feel shame and grief.⁹
2. Define the terms:
 - a. wretched = be devastated over your sin; mourn = inner grief; weep = way one feels at a funeral; gloom = used of the publican who was so conscience-stricken not lift eyes heaven
3. Truly repentant person is pained and hurt by their sin.
 - a. I know of a pastor who had a sharp tongue that wounded people.¹⁰
 - b. People started coming to the deacons that the pastor was offending them. It was more than one so the deacons spoke to the pastor about it. He said, *What I said to them they needed to hear*. And he refused to humble himself over his sharp tongue. Because he refused to cleanse his hands and purify his heart of his stubborn pride, he alienated more and more and more people until Satan split that church wide-open. The very pastor of the church would not resist Satan and draw near to God in repentance.
 - c. Do I hurt when I utter hurtful words? Am I pained at being selfish & self-centered?
 - d. Have I been ashamed at being stubborn; grieved when I've demanded my rights?

III. THE PROMISE OF CHANGE IS ELEVATION FROM GOD (v. 10).

1. This elevation is best illustrated by prodigal son. When humbled himself Father elevated.
 - a. Forgiven. Father ran to him, threw arms around & kissed him. Forgiveness relieves.
 - b. Respect. Gave him king's robe, gold ring, sandals. God give respect if go His way.
 - c. Joy. Killed the fatted calf and made merry w/friends. Enjoyment in your relationships.
2. Pastor James MacDonald says, *With God the way up is down*.¹¹ (Show)
3. Look at it. Take the path to humility. Take the path down. God will lift us up. (Show)



⁹ Pastor Evan, *Doing the Opposite*, www.sermoncentral.com.

¹⁰ This church had been the largest church in the lower MI district. Pastor went on to start a competing church.

¹¹ <http://www.jamesmacdonald.com/teaching/devotionals/2015-11-18/>. Accessed 10/15/16.