

God Gives Grace to the Humble

James 4:6–10 (NASB 1995)

Learning Objectives

- I. **Remember:** State the governing principle of James 4:6—God sets Himself in battle formation against the proud but pours enabling grace on the humble.
 - II. **Understand:** Explain how the ten imperatives of James 4:7–10 form a single, ordered path from submission to exaltation—not a menu of options.
 - III. **Analyze:** Distinguish the godly sorrow of James 4:9 (mourning that produces repentance) from the worldly sorrow that mourns only consequences (2 Cor 7:10).
 - IV. **Apply:** Identify one defended act of pride this week and perform a concrete act of humility before sundown.
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Introduction

You cannot fight God and win.

That is not religious poetry. That is battlefield reality.

A man can sit in the pew, sing every hymn, and bow his head during prayer while still refusing to bow his will to God. Pride rarely walks into church wearing a sign that says *rebellion*. It usually appears as independence, wounded dignity, or the quiet conviction that “I know what I’m doing.”

James exposes that illusion with surgical clarity.

“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

— James 4:6

That sentence is not advice.

It is a spiritual law as fixed as gravity.

Every soul in this room is standing on one side of that line or the other.

Either God is resisting you.

Or God is supplying you with grace.

Thesis

God gives conquering grace only to the humble; pride places a man in active opposition to God.

I. The War You Cannot Win

(James 4:6)

“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

The word **ἀντιτάσσεται (antitassetai)** is a military term.

It means **to arrange troops in battle formation against an enemy.**

This is not mild disapproval.

This is divine opposition.

The proud man is not merely missing a blessing.

He is fighting a war against the Almighty.

Pharaoh learned that at the Red Sea.

Nebuchadnezzar learned it eating grass in Babylon.

Herod learned it when worms consumed him on his throne.

God has never lost that war.

Greater Grace

James says something astonishing.

*“He gives **greater grace.**”*

The phrase **μείζονα χάριν (meizona charin)** means **greater, stronger, surpassing grace.**

Greater than what?

Greater than the lusts of verses 1–3.

Greater than the spiritual adultery of verse 4.

Greater than the divided heart of verse 8.

Greater than the devil himself.

This grace is not merely forgiveness after the battle.

It is **power for the battle.**

Grace that strengthens a weak man.

Grace that breaks pride.

Grace that gives victory over temptation.

But this grace flows in only **one direction.**

Downward.

It gathers in the valley of humility, not on the mountain of self-exaltation.

Gem

God cannot fill a clenched fist.

The proud man stands tall and empty.

The humble man kneels low and finds the river of God at his feet.

II. The Battle Plan of Humility

(James 4:7–8)

James now fires ten imperatives like rapid military commands.

They are not suggestions.

They are orders.

Submit to God

The word **ὑποτάγητε (hypotagēte)** means *to fall into rank under a commander*.

Submission is not weakness.

It is the moment a soldier realizes his own strategy has failed and surrenders to the rightful King.

Without submission, the rest of the commands do not work.

You cannot resist the devil while resisting God.

Resist the Devil

“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Notice the order.

Submission comes first.

A man standing under God's authority becomes a man the devil cannot hold.

The devil does not flee from clever Christians.

He flees from submitted Christians.

Look at Jesus in the wilderness.

Christ stood under the Father's will, answered Satan with Scripture, and the devil departed.

Not because Satan suddenly became weak.

But because the Son stood exactly where He was supposed to stand.

Draw Near to God

This is covenant language.

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

God is not hiding.

He is waiting for the humble approach.

Prayer.

Scripture.

Obedience.

When the sinner takes one step toward God, God meets him there.

Cleanse Your Hands

Hands represent deeds.

Stop doing what your hands have been doing.

Stop touching what God has forbidden.

Psalm 24 asks the question:

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?”

Answer:

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart.”

Purify Your Hearts

Now James cuts deeper.

He addresses the **double-minded man**.

δίψυχος (dipsychos) literally means **two-souled**.

One soul for God.

One soul for the world.

James says that condition is intolerable.

You cannot serve two masters.

You cannot stand in two kingdoms.

You must choose.

Concrete Illustration

A man once came to a preacher complaining that temptation kept defeating him.

The preacher asked him a simple question:

“Are you resisting the devil?”

The man said, “I’m trying.”

The preacher asked another question:

“Have you submitted to God?”

The room went quiet.

Many Christians want victory over the devil while still negotiating with God.

James says the order cannot be reversed.

Submission first.

Resistance second.

Victory follows.

III. The Pain That Heals

(James 4:9–10)

James now strikes three hammer blows.

“Be miserable.

Mourn.

Weep.”

These words are strong because sin is serious.

Godly Sorrow

The word **πενθήσατε (penthēsate)** is the strongest Greek word for mourning.

Funeral-level grief.

Why?

Because sin kills.

It kills fellowship with God.

It kills usefulness in the kingdom.

It kills the soul.

Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 7:10:

“Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation.”

Worldly sorrow mourns consequences.

Godly sorrow mourns the offense against God.

Peter experienced that sorrow when the rooster crowed.

And that sorrow changed him forever.

The Promise

Then comes the final promise.

“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Notice the order.

You humble yourself.

God exalts you.

You do the bowing.

God does the lifting.

This is the exact path Christ walked.

Philippians 2 shows it clearly.

Humiliation before exaltation.

The cross before the crown.

Conclusion

James 4:6–10 is not devotional advice.

It is a field manual for the surrendered life.

God opposes the proud.

God gives grace to the humble.

Therefore:

Submit.

Resist.

Draw near.

Cleanse.

Purify.

Mourn.

Weep.

Humble yourself.

And the God who once opposed you will begin to fight for you.

Invitation

If you are not a Christian, the first act of humility is admitting you cannot save yourself.

Hear the gospel.

Believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Repent of your pride.

Confess His name before men.

Be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

If you are a Christian living with a divided heart, draw near to God today.

The throne of grace is open.

But it is reached only by those who kneel.

Word Study Table

GREEK TERM	MEANING	SERMON USE
antitassetai	to set in battle array against	God actively opposes pride
meizona charin	greater grace	grace stronger than sin and temptation
hypotagēte	submit under authority	surrender to God
antistēte	resist	stand against the devil
engisate	draw near	approach God
katharisate	cleanse	clean outward conduct
hagnisate	purify	cleanse the inner heart
dipsychos	double-minded	divided allegiance

GREEK TERM	MEANING	SERMON USE
penthēstate	mourn	deep sorrow over sin
tapeinōthēte	humble yourselves	voluntary lowering before God

Scripture Reference Table

REFERENCE	CONNECTION
Proverbs 3:34	source of James quotation
Psalms 138:6	God regards the lowly
Psalms 24:3–4	clean hands and pure heart
Luke 18:14	humility leads to justification
Matthew 4:1–11	Christ resisting Satan
2 Corinthians 7:10	godly sorrow vs worldly sorrow
Philippians 2:5–11	Christ's humiliation and exaltation
1 Peter 5:5–6	parallel teaching on humility
Acts 2:38	obedience to the gospel
Romans 6:3–4	baptism into Christ