

# How to Find Spiritual Recovery

Text: James 4:1-10



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**Main point:** Living faith responds to selfish strife and worldliness through repentance and faith in Christ.

## Introduction

On March 18, 2018, everything changed—and nothing changed. That Sunday evening a self-driving Uber vehicle struck and killed Elaine Herzberg in a late night accident in Tempe, Arizona. The vehicle was in autonomous mode at the time of the collision, with a human test driver behind the wheel. The incident is believed to be the first pedestrian fatality involving the burgeoning technology of autonomous vehicles.

It prompted Uber to halt its testing on public roads in four cities. It also led to Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, a proponent of the technology, to suspend Uber from operating in the state. It has raised the question: *what happens when a self-driving car is at fault? Who is responsible, legally speaking, in a world where machines make their own decisions?*

Have you ever thought of yourself as a car and your life as a road? You are aware, are you not, that you are moving along in some direction? You are not stationary. You are not the same age today as you were yesterday and neither am I. We are moving toward a destination and the journey we are all on will eventually end.

If you are willing to admit that you are like a car, then here is a personal question for you: *Who is driving you? What is driving you?* Now you might be tempted to think that it is your *spouse*, your *kids*, or your *job*, but James tells us that *there are only two possible drivers for our cars*. One is *human wisdom*, and the other is *divine wisdom*. One *spiritual*, the other *natural*. One is *godly*, the other is *ungodly*. One leads to a life of *blessing*, the other leads to every *disorder* and *misery* and every *evil thing*. James now shifts from a contrast of the *operations*, *origins*, and *outcomes* of false wisdom versus true wisdom, to *the source of conflicts from within the church, and within our hearts*.

If you will stay with the car analogy for one last handshake in the introduction—just like your car *you sometimes break down!* Sometimes, we need to get *a tune-up*, *an oil change*, *a wheel-alignment*, or perhaps, *a new part for your motor*. But what do you do when your car (life) has been stalled on the freeway or you have to pull over to the side the road because something is going wrong with your vehicle?

Here in our text, James addresses what we could call *the open road back to spiritual health*. If you want to know *the way back to God*, if you want to *get things in order spiritually*, here is the road. It is not the road for a *select* group, but it is open to all who would desire *spiritual recovery*. In this section James will do two things:

- 1) He will speak to us about ***the evidence of a life of spiritual disorder***. (vv.1-3)
- 2) He will speak to us about ***the way of spiritual recovery***. (vv.4-10)

## A. The Evidence of a Life of Spiritual Disorder (vv.1-3)

Now there is really one spiritual disorder—let's find out what it is.

### 1. The questions exposing the source (v.1)

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?

This is one of those truths that crosses time and space and applies to every church, in every age and applies to every Christian. If there is a picture in your mind that the early church was a conflict-free fellowship and dripping with sweet harmony, you should take down that picture from your mental gallery immediately! In Acts 4:32, Luke records that the *"congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them,"* but these conditions were short lived. James knows that in every fellowship there are *tensions*. Some are *open, overt, and verbally hostile*. Others are *hidden, disguised, and cold-blooded*.

However, before we go looking "up the corner", "down the street", and "around the block", let's bring it closer to home. Notice that James speaks of these quarrels and conflicts, *"...among you."*

In other words, there is no need to pay a counselor to find the source of your problems. Bring your tithe to the church and your heart to the Lord—James says, they are coming right from *within you*. It can literally be rendered *"Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again."* Pogo was right when he said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Are you *at odds* with another believer? What is causing those *inner feelings of tension and frustration*? What is the root of those thoughts of *indifference and hostility*? Have you spoken a *subtle, stinging* word about any believer for the purpose of putting them down? Are you *shunning* someone within the fellowship? Are you *waiting* for the downfall of some brother or sister so that you can say, "I knew it...they were not what they made themselves out to be!"

*Where* does that come from in a Christian fellowship? What *causes* that unwillingness to help or serve? What causes these fights and battles? James wants us to KNOW the origin of these fights—so he uses the plural (*"quarrels...conflicts"*) to indicate that these were not confined to an occasional disagreement.

The word *"quarrels"* (*polemos*) is a figurative word used in ancient politics and national conflicts. It describes a state of hostility which arrays its forces and carries on its campaign. We might say that it recruits its army of backers and then it starts to buy votes. The word *"conflicts"* (*mache*) refers to the specific battles, feuds, or micro-outbursts among individuals. James combines these words to depict *situations in which there are sharp disagreements and inwardly hostile attitudes even after the battle is over*.

It seems as if James has been the closet of many homes in the Christian community. He seems to have been listening to the arguments, watching the fights and observing how that spills over into the church body.

## What is at the root of these wars and fighting?

James answers by saying, *"Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?"* *"Your problem,"* James says, *"is that deep down inside, what you actually want, is what pleases YOU."* That's what you are after—you want your own way. Now, this is not a new revelation or theme. It is exactly the same thing that James spoke of in chapter 1:14—*"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."* There is no need to misdiagnose the issue here. What draws us away and causes spiritual disorder is *your pleasures* (desires) that wage war in your members.

The source is not some *noble battle for the truth*. It is not some *evil environment* beyond your control. The problem is YOU. There is something *clamoring inside YOU*, crying out for war. The reason that there is tension between you and another believer is not them, but YOU.

Today, we usually think of pleasures as that which makes us laugh or that which entertains us—having "fun." However, the word for **"pleasures"** (*hedonon*) in verses 1 and 3 is a term from which we derive our English term *hedonism*. It is the craving for the pleasure of self. James is speaking of that which *pleases me* or you. It is one of those hidden forces which belong to the unsanctified members of the old man.

James is bold! He exposes the sinful root in our own hearts in the form of an *inner craving* and *yearning* to get what we want. It is *carnal desires*. He says, *"this is the thing that disrupts your own personal enjoyment of peace and which spills over into the congregation and disturbs the harmony of the body of Christ—this desire to please yourself."*

This is why *service* in the kingdom lags. This is why *giving* in the church suffers. This is why *evangelism* of the lost is neglected. This is why *high and holy praise* in the worship falls flat. When we are adamant on doing our own thing by yielding to those demanding inner desires which have their base of operations in the old man, what will be the outcome?

## 2. The outcome of the condition (vv.2-3)

The sentence structure of verses 2-3 reveals a parallelism. *"...You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your own pleasures."*

In a nutshell, James is saying that *you will stop at nothing to try to get what you want.* It is a motivating principle in the life of the person of spiritual disorder. *You want what you want!* You are burning up inside (this is the word for lust "*epithemia*") to get what you want, because that's all that counts in your life. You will murder, you will fight and quarrel, you will even disguise it in a prayer request!

Having exposed *the root*, James now describes *the fruit*. The hidden source is within *our own hearts*, but those inner, hidden, demanding desires now actively come out and enter into combat with fellow believers. The actions are not sequential, but they are strong and real. James places his finger on *the great motivating force and cause of spiritual disorder*—it is *selfishness*.

Professor Hiebert once said, "the ultimate choice in life lies between pleasing oneself and pleasing God."

You recall in the previous section (3:13-18) James taught us that one of the profile marks of counterfeit or false wisdom is that it is characterized by *selfishness* or *self-centeredness* (3:14-16).

This is the only cause of spiritual disorder in our lives. It is what led to the fall of the entire human race (*Rom.5:12ff*). Adam and Eve wanted what they wanted and not what God wanted. We suffer today from the same disorder—*making myself the center of the world*. Every thought we have is with an immediate self-reference. *Saying* what we want to say. *Going* where we want to go. *Doing* what we want to do. *Living for self* is the only spiritual disorder there is (*Is.53:6*).

**What does this spiritual disorder produce?** What are its *marks*, its *characteristics*, or its *signs*?

- **First, James says you will be unsatisfied.**  
"You lust and do not have...you are envious and cannot obtain."

James is explaining the *consequences* of breaking the Tenth Commandment—"You shall not covet..." (*Ex.20:17*). When we break the command not to covet, one of the consequences is that we lose the ability to control our lives and sin begins to reign, leaving one frustrated. The Tenth Commandment is not last because it is least important, but rather, when you violate this command, it will make you break all the other nine. Coveting can make a person *lie, steal, dishonor their parents, commit adultery, murder*, and host of other things. When we choose to crave something that we think will satisfy us outside of God Himself, it will elude us every time, leaving us *disappointed* and *unfulfilled* (*Jer.2:12-13*).

Be on the lookout for unfulfilled desires; it is often a cover for that little man called "self" who refuses die.

- **Second, you will cause hurt.**  
"...so you commit murder."

Each time we choose to pursue *our own will* or *our goals* instead of God's, that unrequited desire opens the door to the assassination of others by foul means—which is *murder*! The term "**murder**" here is figurative. Jesus taught us that hate in the heart is potential murder (*Matt.5:21-22; 1 John 3:15*). Douglas Moo, suggests, "it is simplest to take murder straightforwardly and to regard it as that extreme to which frustrated desire, if not checked, may lead." If you don't think unchecked selfish desire can lead to murder, just ask King David. It was this sin of covetousness that induced him to murder Uriah (*1 Kings 21:1-14*) and steal his wife.

- **Third, you will cause divisions.**  
"...You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."

James warns us that a *pleasure-dominated, want-my-own-way* kind of life, it will lead to a constant campaign of *warring, quarreling, battles, feuding, and divisions*.

Now do you want to know how God feels about that?

**Proverbs 6:16-19**—There are six things which the LORD hates,  
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

<sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
And hands that shed innocent blood,

<sup>18</sup> A heart that devises wicked plans,  
Feet that run rapidly to evil,

<sup>19</sup> A false witness *who* utters lies,  
And one who spreads strife among brothers.

My pastor taught me long ago, "Marvin, you never want to do anything God hates."

This is why the big fisherman Peter tells us in his letter,

**1 Peter 4:15**—"Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler."

- **Finally, you will forfeit the answer to your prayers.**

"You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

This not only explains *the lack of prayer* in the life of a person whose life is spiritually out of order, but it also affirms that *heaven is not only acquainted with our words, but with our motives*. Why do you ask for the things you ask for in prayer?

Is it all about self? Your *desires*, your *will*? Your *plans*, your *goals*, your *wants*, your *needs*?

Now let me be quick to say, Jesus taught us that it is okay to bring our personal needs before God. In the Lord's Prayer, He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread..." (Matt.6:11), but here James is showing us that *real prayer* does not have self at the center.

When self is at the center we are "*praying amiss*" as its translated in KJV. "*Asking or praying amiss*" means praying with only one thing in your mind—and that is, *getting what pleases you*.

Jesus not only taught us *how to pray*, but He is *the model for prayer*. And this is what read in Luke 22:39-43:

<sup>39</sup> And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. <sup>40</sup> When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." <sup>41</sup> And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." <sup>43</sup> Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

Jews did not normally kneel in prayer, but our Lord did, and Christians have been kneeling in prayer ever since they read of it here. *Praying right* is not just a matter of *WHAT we ask for*, but *WHY we ask it*. If what we seek in prayer is personal gain and selfish consumption, then we ask amiss. No reply is given from heaven. And get this: the lack of answered prayer actually fuels our lust and it is a form of judgment (*Is.1:11-15*).

How so? Because if we are so determined to get what we want, just because we want it, we will show that our burning desires is not about God's will but our own.

The early Quakers got it right. They taught their young converts a simple principle in prayer called, "Hands out, hands down, and hands up." Hands out meant, "Lord, I come to you in prayer." Hands down meant turning your palms down and saying, "Lord, I let go of everything I want." Hands up meant turning your palms up and saying, "Lord, I am now ready to receive everything You want."

Is this how you pray? When it comes to choosing a career, do you pray, "Lord, not what I want, but what You want." When it comes to *the big decisions of life* or *the small decisions of life*, is your prayer, "Lord, not what I want, but what You want."?

This is the sign, the mark, of spiritual disorder—*self*. *Self-centeredness, self-reference, self-thought, self-desire, self-willfulness, and a lack of self-denial.*

Dear friends, the reason this is so serious is that it is a complete denial of the law and the Gospel. Let me explain. Jesus taught us what the correct order for our lives is in Matthew 22:37-39:

<sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." <sup>38</sup> This is the great and foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

The correct order for our lives is: *God, others, self*. When I put *self*—first, it is really an act of rebellion against God's order, God's law. That's why there is "*disorder and every evil thing.*" (Cf. *James 3:16*)

The Gospel declares...

**Romans 5:6**—<sup>6</sup> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

**Galatians 2:20**—<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**—<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

**Romans 15:3**—<sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

When things are in spiritual disorder in our lives, we are *unsatisfied, we cause hurt, we cause divisions, and prayers are not being answered*. These are the evidences of spiritual disorder.

Now James speaks to these believers and us about *the way back—the road to spiritual recovery*. At the start his words will be like a surgeon's knife—*precise, forceful, sharp, cutting deep* into the soul. If you yield to them, they will bring healing dear friends. But first, we must *bleed*.

## B. The Way to Spiritual Recovery (vv.4-10)

Spiritual recovery begins when we recognize WE have denied the law and the Gospel—the problem is not with “them” but “me”! It is not with “where am I” but “who I am”! And if we are being dealt with by God, we all know that as a Christians, *we are not what we should be, we are not where we want to be, and yes, we are not what we used to be*, but is there a way of spiritual recovery?

James says, “Yes, and it’s an open road,” but it is *no different than the way you came in the first place*. There is not one road for *lost, unredeemed people* and another road for *failed, saved people*, there is only *one road to God*—and it’s through Christ. The way onto it is by *repentance* and *faith* (Col.2:6). *Repenting and believing. Grieving and turning, trusting, and following.*

There is a way and James give it to us here in four clear statements.

### 1. Christians must repent of spiritual adultery. (v.4a)

<sup>4</sup>You adulteresses,

John and Susan have been happily married for over 20 years. Every year on their anniversary they open the old photo album and look at their wedding pictures. They watch the video and hear the vows that they made and remember the people at their wedding and the changes that have come through the years.

But as the time has gone along, Susan feels that somehow John has changed...he has cooled down in his affection toward her. She can’t quite seem to put her finger on it, but things don’t quite seem like they should. Then she discovers the truth.

Do you remember the love, the joy, the wonder, the awe we felt, when we first came to the Lord? When we came to Christ in that first blush of love He was all there was, and we could be with Him all day, without any care for anything else and it would be alright! Do you remember?

Do remember that ravishing of the soul? Do you remember that burning, yearning love?

When is the last time your heart went out to Jesus like that? Do you sense that things are not like they should be with the Lord? The reason is, ADULTERY, says James. You have another lover in your life. It is not that you have renounced Him, but you’ve taken in another one and now there are two. And guess who the other lover is. That’s right—it’s YOU. Its SELF.

When we love ourselves as much as we love God, it’s SPIRITUAL ADULTERY!

This is why Jesus said...

- **Luke 9:23**—<sup>23</sup> And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must *deny himself* and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

James says, if we want to experience spiritual recovery, we’ve got to repent of spiritual adultery.

## 2. Christians must repent of worldliness. (v.4b)

<sup>4</sup> ...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Mr. Smith is in public office and his life is being threatened constantly by others. He is a law-abiding truthful man. He is against all forms of corruption, and there are people running rampant who are out to kill him. One day he discovers that *his son* has become best friends with them. His son is speaking the *same language* and doing the *same things* as those who hate him.

Imagine how God feels as our heavenly Father, when he sees us becoming friends with those who hate Him, speaking their same language, adopting their same values. James is reminding us as the sons and daughters of God, that the world hates God. It hates the Lord Jesus. Jesus Himself said so.

- **John 15:18-23**—<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, <sup>19</sup>you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have <sup>23</sup>sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> He who hates Me hates My Father also.

**Applied to us:** Jesus teaches them and us that if we preach the Gospel and live progressively conformed to His will, the same antagonism will be ours.

Have we forgotten that the world will *kindly acknowledge God’s existence*, but still go right on doing *its own thing*, going *its own way*, and only referring to Him when the occasion seems to warrant it. Have we started thinking like the world? As children of the king, are we wishing to be friends with those who want to see the King dead? Are we speaking the same language as those who desire to see our Father’s name removed from all private and public life?

James says, *we’ve got to repent of this spiritual adultery and worldliness*. If the first argument that races to your mind is, “*What about being in the world but not of the world,*” you have already bought in, hook, line, and sinker! James indicts our diversionary tactics and calls us to repent of desiring to be friends with those who hate Him.

Do you want to get on the road to spiritual recovery? If so, you’ve got to repent of spiritual adultery, worldliness, and...

## 3. Christians must repent of grieving the Holy Spirit. (v.5)

<sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

With this rhetorical question James desires to convey two truths to us:

First, *Holy Scripture demands as well as reveals*. Many of us come to the Scripture simply as an information book to glean some knowledge, or a flashlight because we are looking for something for ourselves. And yes, God’s Word does help us know the truth so that we can break free from the shackles of darkness and ignorance (*John 8:31-32*), and yes, God’s Word works like a lamp unto our

feet and light unto our path (*Ps.119:105*), but it also is the voice of God calling out to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it!"

Second, *God lives in our hearts and bodies through the Holy Spirit*. He is not far off, but near. Not just near, but *within, internally*. He, the Spirit, desires deeply that we look like Christ from the inside out.

Now we can relate to this in a small way as parents. We long to see our kids do well. We rejoice to see them get good grades. When they are awarded something for doing well, we are so proud of them. We attend their practices and cheer them on because we want what is best for them. We check their homework and read their report cards because we want them to reach their full potential. As parents, let's admit—we have these *deep desires for our children* because of our love.

And God has these *deep, deep desires for us*. He has put the Holy Spirit within us and He yearns that we might be holy. And when we are not, we are treating the Scripture as if it has said in vain, "*be holy as I am holy.*"

We've got to repent of grieving the Holy Spirit. How do we do it? Read Ephesians 4:30-32:

<sup>30</sup> Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- Are you holding on to hurt, refusing to deal with it God's way and now you are bitter?
- Are you full of displeasure and hostility?
- Are you clamoring, yelling, loudly demanding your own way at home or on your job?
- Are you damaging people's reputation by *innuendos, insinuations, hearsay, and speculation*?
- Do you secretly harbor a desire to see others hurt, stumble, and suffer like you feel that you are?
- Are you refusing to be *considerate* of others perspective or feelings?
- Are you holding someone's offense against you as a *debt* to be repaid before you love them?

The road back to spiritual recovery starts with *repentance from spiritual adultery, worldliness, grieving the Holy Spirit*, and...

#### 4. Christians must repent of provoking God to act against us. (v.6)

<sup>6</sup> But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Jimmy is a teenager who wants to go to a party where everyone knows that weed and hard drugs will be actively pushed and bought. His father says, "Jimmy you cannot go." His father knows his son so well that he fears that just the right amount of pressure, Jimmy may give in.

His father knows how these dope dealers target and persuade people and so he says, "No, Jimmy—you are not to go to the party." But Jimmy is insistent. He thinks he can handle it, and his father is provoked to resist him! Jimmy starts to walk out of the house and head to the party, and the father stands in-front of the door and resists him by saying, "*You will have to go to that party over my dead body!*"

The Holy Spirit yearns to make us more like Christ, but when we set our hearts on an impure, or ungodly course of action, *we are provoking God to act against us*. He will oppose us—NOT OUT OF

SPITE or as a killjoy, but because of His deep, deep desire and yearning that we be like Christ! God will act against us because He loves us. It may feel like He doesn't, but we must repent of provoking Him to act against us by doing our own thing!

James says, instead of provoking God to work against you in your pride, why don't you repent because God has sufficient resources to give you everything you need to live for Him in this world? He gives grace to the humble. Grace not only means *unmerited favor*, it also means *enabling power* (1 Cor.15:10; 2 Cor.12:9ff).

There is enough power...enough joy...enough love...enough wisdom...enough food in the storehouse...enough cattle on the hills...enough in God Himself. BUT...we only find it at God's feet.

"GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

If we try to manipulate or run roughshod over God's will, we will find that God will undo and unravel everything we think we have done.

If we buck up against God's will, He will be provoked against us, but if we *humble ourselves*, we will find everything we need to live a life that is pleasing to God. We cannot fight against God—so why try?

The best thing to do is to *fall at His feet as a conquered person and surrender*. And when we do, how will it look? What will it entail? This is now where James takes us as he summarizes what he has just taught us.

**RECAP:** Christians need to repent of *spiritual adultery, worldliness, grieving the Holy Spirit, and provoking God to act against us*. How? James gives us practical instruction in staccato form.

- Submit therefore to God.

In other words, don't just sing "Have thine own way, Lord," let God reign by *waiting* and being still.

- Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It is not inevitable that we sin. We can say "no" because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Resistance means holding your ground. Not giving up your position. Don't follow the deceptive temptations to do, say, or believe what the enemy says. We can say, "no."

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

If you can think back to a time when God *drew near to you*, you will discover that it was actually because, *you drew near to Him*. He was always there. We left, but then through the *trial*, through the *tears*, through the *hardship*—we drew near to God, and He drew near to us. There is a way back. There is spiritual recovery—but not without *quitting the sin*. We must repent! James circles back again, but this time he puts it this way...

- Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Is there anything that clearly violates God's Word in your life?

Is there any doubtful thing?

Pure gold is just gold with nothing else, and a pure heart is a heart that is set for God and no one else. There are no two loves. Only one and it is Him! A pure heart lives as if there was nobody else in the world but God Himself.

- Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

We know that the fruit of the Spirit is "*love, joy, peace...*" etc., but did you also know that *the Christian life is a life of tears*. Tears for *our sin*. Tears for the *disappointment* we've brought. Tears even over *what we are by grace* and *what we shall become as grace leads us home*.

Verse 9 is funeral language, and there is a "*time to weep and a time to laugh, there is a time to mourn and a time to dance*" (Eccl.3:4) in the Christian's life. Jesus said,

- **Matthew 5:4**—<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Happy and satisfied is he who has a *change of heart*. He or she *mourns over their own sin and the sins of others*. They shall be *strengthened*. If ever there is to be a joy in the Lord in our lives, there must first *be tears*. If there is to be *strength*, there must be *weakness*. The *breaking of the heart* is first, then the *mending of the heart*—by the grace of God. These are enigmas of the faith—the world knows nothing about them. The way *up* is *down*. The way *back* is the way you came.

- <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

The way to heaven is down at the feet of Jesus. The way to holiness is *submission, grief, self-denial, and obedience*. And when the Lord lifts you up, oh what a lifting up that will be!

## Conclusion:

I am teaching this study to someone who feels *useless* in service. The way to spiritual recovery is to get *self-reference, self-desire, self-focus, self-determination, and self-centeredness* out of the way by repenting of sin and believing on Jesus—just like you did at the start...if you are saved.

Someone else feels *the dry, barren desert of much activity*. You are active, but in your service it's become all about you, or them, or someone other than...HIM—and Him alone. Repent of that sin today.

Someone else has chosen what they knew God disapproved of and you've been miserable ever since. You've seemed to have *lost your way, your joy, and your fire* and the Lord has shown you and called you once again to *humble yourself* and follow Him. Would you do it—today? Surrender your heart right now!

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.