

Submit to God

October 17, 2010

James 4.4-10

Up and Down

- **Up is good** – **Down is bad** (generally – but always exceptions)
 - We might get a **raise** or a **promotion** or a **salary reduction** or **demotion**
 - The value of our stocks might go **up** or **down**
 - A critic might give a movie a **thumbs up** or a **thumbs down**
 - Even last week our text was “Why are you cast **down**, O my soul?”
- So we consider **up as good** and **down as bad** - this is natural in our world
 - When we’re **down** we might not want to come to church
 - We’re not **up** and we don’t want to pretend to be **up**
 - “But where is it written that you must pretend to be **up** at church?”
 - God doesn’t say, “be ye **up** for I am **up**”
 - If you’re **down** and someone asks how you’re doing, tell them
 - Say, “Honestly, not so good . . . It’s been a bad week.”

But what does being **up** or **down** have to do with today’s message?

- **James 4.1-10** is about **pride vs. humility**, **rebellion vs. submission**
- The **ups and downs are reversed** here ~ **up is bad** – **down is good**
 - Pride puffs you **up**; Humility brings you **low**
 - In rebellion you rise **up**; In submission you bow **down**
- Peter tells us in **1 Peter 5.6**
 - “**humble yourselves under** the mighty hand of God, that He **may exalt you** in due time”
 - In this verse **down & up** are **both good things**
 - We can step off the pedestal voluntarily ~ or God may do it . . .
- We’ll address pride and humility more – but now let’s set the context

Our context is found in James 4.1-3 (**read**)

- In **vss 1-2** we **murder** and **war** to satisfy our cravings for pleasure
- Even when we go to God in prayer (**v3**) we ask him to **aid and abet** our lusts
- Now don’t miss this . . .
 - In **v4** this is implicitly defined as “**friendship with the world**”
 - Friendship with the world is to pursue what the world pursues

Xition: Let’s look more closely at v4 and following . . .

v4a ~ “Adulterers and adulteresses!”

- “Whoa!” ~ This is a serious statement . . . Spiritual unfaithfulness
 - “Can you imagine me bringing such a rebuke to this congregation?”
 - Only God, speaking through men, speaks so bluntly . . .
 - This is classical Old Testament prophetic phrasing
 - Jeremiah said Israel “committed adultery with stones and trees”
 - Ezekiel said, “You are an adulterous wife who takes strangers instead of her husband”
 - Hosea is commanded to marry a harlot to live out this metaphor
 - In **Mt 12.39** Jesus refers to “an evil and adulterous generation”
- James accuses his readers of this too (KJV - “whoring after other gods”)

v4b ~ “friendship with the world is enmity with God”

- “But aren’t we supposed to be friendly towards the world?”
- Paul commands us in **Rom 12.18** to “live peaceably with all men”
 - Yes . . . But we must understand what was said earlier . . .
 - This is defined in **vss 1-3** as lusting after the world
 - The world will be less antagonistic towards us if we’re more like them
 - You will “fit in” if you laugh at a co-worker’s crude joke
 - Being at peace with God means being at enmity with the world
 - Many in the emerging church believe otherwise
 - But we’ll see if their children remain in the faith . . .

v6b ~ “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”

- God is repulsed by the proud
 - **Ps 101.5** “haughty look .. proud heart .. I will not endure”
 - God Himself is all powerful but exceedingly humble
 - Father ~ **Is 57.15** – “For thus says the High and Lofty One ..”
 - Son ~ **Php 4.5-9** – “Let this mind .. should bow .. under the earth”
 - Holy Spirit ~ **1 Cor 6.18-20** – “Flee sexual immorality .. are God’s”
 - Pride led Satan to rebel against God
 - Paul warns against making a new believer an elder
 - **1 Tim 3.6** “not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil”
 - Pride leads men into self-destructive behavior
 - Men will sacrifice all on the alter of their pride

Xition: I’d like to share an example of someone overcoming pride . . .

III: “God in the Pits” by Mark Ritchie

- Mark was born to Christian missionaries to Afghanistan
- Dreamed of being a commodities broker in Chicago
 - Failed in his first attempt ~ wife and child to support
 - During hard times became a truck driver ~ hand to mouth
 - One day looked around at poor people on street in Chicago
 - God crushed his pride ~ he was no better than these folks

v7a ~ “Therefore submit to God”

- i.e., Because you know that God resists the proud, submit to Him . . .
 - Submission (*humility*) is shown to be the opposite of pride
- Submission and humility are different aspects of the very same thing
 - Submission is an act of the will ~ humility is a state of the heart
 - Submission is an outward act ~ humility is an inward state
 - Submission proceeds from humility . . .
 - Proud people are not in submission to God ~ it’s that simple . . .

v7b ~ “Resist the devil and he will flee from you”

- When we resist God, he crushes us – he humbles us . . .
 - God is repulsed by our pride so he changes us . . . through chastisement
 - **Amos 6.8** ~ “*I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.*”
- But when we resist the devil, he flees from us - totally different results
 - The devil doesn’t just leave off his temptations ~ he **flees** . . .
 - He finds our humility repulsive and wants to escape it – quickly
 - III: “The Screwtape Letters” Lewis, “*Lord Foulgrin’s Letters*” Alcorn
 - The demons hate being around humble praying people

v8a ~ “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”

- **Ps 138.6** says ~ “*Though the LORD is on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.*”
 - I just said that when we resist God, he crushes us – he humbles us . . .
 - You draw near to God only when you are humble
 - And God only draws near to the humble
- “*How do we demonstrate our humility?*”

Xition: Demonstrate works befitting repentance (Read Acts 26.19-21)

v8b ~ “Cleanse your hands, you sinners”

- The Pharisees and scribes refused to see themselves as sinners
- One commentator I read refused to see these words as spoken to Christians
 - *“The expression “ye sinners” coming right in the middle of this (James 4.8) forbids referring this particular paragraph to Christians, the unmodified designation “sinners” not being an appropriate address for members of the body of Christ to whom the whole letter is written.”*
- The Pharisees and this commentator refuse to see the simple truth
 - Christians are saved . . . But they are still sinners . . .
 - Though saved, they still need to repent of their sins regularly

v8c ~ “Purify your hearts, you double-minded”

- Cleansing hands referred to repenting of acts of sin ~ physical sins
- Purifying hearts refers to rectifying sins of worship ~ spiritual sins
- *“What does James mean by the phrase double-minded?”*
 - That we’re trying to hold something back ~ leave something for Satan

v9 ~ “Lament and mourn and weep . . .”

- This is not demanding that Christians are to be joyless
- It demands that life be taken seriously ~ that sin be taken seriously
- The life’s ambition of too many Christians is to take their ease

v10 ~ “Humble yourselves .. and He will lift you up”

- **Mat 23.12** ~ *“.. whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*
- **Pro 16.18** ~ *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*
- III: Asking God’s forgiveness on hood of 1969 Dodge Polara
- III: Adoniram Judson’s (*Burma*) 7th point of advice to young missionaries

*“It was pride that changed angels into devils;
it is humility that makes men as angels.”*

~ **Saint Augustine**

“Humble yourself and submit to God without reservation . . .”

Closing Prayer and Benediction