

Spiritual Adultery and the Grace to Be Restored

By Jim Elliff



Are you sinning often but professing to love the Lord? Though the fruit of constant sin against God can indicate a lost condition, true believers can also sin in awful ways. James has a helpful word for us in James 4:4-10. On the one hand the solution is difficult but on the other hopeful. Here it is: “Humble

yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

Let’s look closer at what James is teaching here. It’s too important to miss.

After explaining how conflict comes from the wrong kind of passions in us, James shows that these passions for worldly things are evidence of what he calls “spiritual adultery,” or loving something else beside the Lord whom you committed yourself to. That’s a powerful term. He speaks very strongly because the problem is a serious one:

“You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?”

Now, he is talking to the Christians here because he says that the Spirit dwells in them. Their sin is a temporary spiritual adultery and, if continued, could indicate being “a friend of the world” and one who lives in “enmity with God.” Yet, the Father has great affection for the Spirit he put in the believer. When the believer has passions for worldly things, he provides a way out of your sin. James continues . . .

“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

What he means is that he provides grace to be restored. You can end this spiritual adultery and find help from God. He is inclined to give you grace to turn around and be a devoted lover of the Lord again.

This recovery is given by being *humble*. Below is what that looks like when it comes to sin, says James. Notice that he starts with humility and ends with humility as the summary of what he says. What is in the middle is the expression of humility in five statements to live out sincerely in order to be restored.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

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

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:4-10 ESV

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