



In our passage this Sunday (3v13-4v12) we saw 4 dangers the Christian can fall into, and God's humbling and wonderful solution to them.

Danger 1 – wisdom that is skin deep (3v13-18)

James warns that there is a type of 'wisdom' that consists only of words and comes from a heart still filled with "bitter envy" and "selfish ambition" (3v14). True wisdom is the product of a transformed heart. It produces "righteousness" (v17-18) rather than empty boasts (v14).

Danger 2 – warring wants that foster fall outs (4v1-3)

We tend to blame our fallings out with each other on other people's sin or our circumstances, but James writes that our conflicts come from "your desires that battle within you" (4v1). We don't get what we want and so we get angry. Or we try to get from other people what we should be seeking from God.

Danger 3 – words that weigh others up (4v11-12)

In this brief PS, James warns that if we condemn others for their actions, we put ourselves in the place of God as judge. And, as none of us are perfect, that is not a wise thing to do!

Danger 4 – warmth towards this world (4v4-5)

In this forthright section James warns of the danger of trying to be friends with the world as well as with God. By trying to have it both ways we risk becoming enemies of God. We have a jealous God (4v5). Like a parent who wants to protect, love and care for their children, God is not willing to share us.

God's solution – wave our white flags as we welcome God's grace (4v6-10)

In 4v6 James tells us that God "gives us more grace". Whatever our struggle, whatever our shortcoming, whatever our temptation, we can come to God

knowing that he will give us more grace. What a relief that is! But his grace is not a free pass to abuse – a route to instant, effortless sanctification whenever we want it. Quoting Proverbs 3v34, James says that God gives grace to the humble. In 4v7-10 we see what such humility looks like:

- we are to wave our white flags (v7, 10) – we are to submit to God, humble ourselves before him, and actively enlist ourselves as on his side
- we are to want to draw near to God (v8) – we must come close and not keep him at arm's length, or else he will respect our wishes and stay away
- we are to wash ourselves – inside and out (v8) – we need to come to him that he might clean and transform our hearts, words and actions
- we are to wail over our wretchedness (v9) – we are to see ourselves and our world as it really is: broken by sin. This should make us mourn.

But these commands are littered with promises. Perhaps the chief is the last: if we humble ourselves, God will lift us up (v10). He gives us more grace. Hallelujah!

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Which of the four dangers particularly resonate with you? Why?
2. Do you see any overlap or common themes between the dangers?
3. What is God's solution to these four dangers (and to our sin as a whole) – cf. 4v6-10?
→ Why/how is it a solution?
→ Is it the solution we would expect?
4. How have you experienced God giving you more grace (v6)?
5. How do we balance the promise of God's grace with the instruction to be humble? Is this salvation by works?
6. Which of the commands in 4v7-10 do you find particularly challenging?
→ How do the promises contained in 4v7-10 help us both to understand and interpret, and also to accept and follow these commands?
7. What do you think it means that God "will lift [us] up"? Where else might we go in Scripture to help us understand that?