

Sermon or Lesson: James 4:8 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Cleanse Your Actions And Thinking

INTRO: While reading the Old Testament, have you ever wondered why the people back then had to fulfill such extensive and stringent requirements for ceremonial cleansing of themselves and their belongings? And do you ever wonder why we believers today do not have to fulfill all of those requirements from Old Testament times? Or maybe do we, perhaps in a similar way, on a spiritual level rather than on a physical level?

Let's study our passage and see what God requires for our cleansing today, in New Testament times.

READ: James 4:8, with verses 4-7 for context

Verse 8 is a continuation of the steps started in verse 7 of the process of coming out of significant sinfulness such as "worldliness, envy, selfish ambition, sensual desires, coveting, quarrels, or fights" in the church or destroying of ministries, and coming in to getting one's life in spiritually healthy right-standing with God. (vv.4:4; 3:14; 4:2,1)

[Lesson Question: What is this "Come near to God and he will come near to you" and exactly why do we need to pursue this?]

SECTION POINT: God invites and encourages believers to spiritually draw close to Him.

v.8a - "**Come near to God and he will come near to you**", implies:

- - God desires for you to be close to Him but He will not force His friendship upon you. (v.5; 2:23)
- - You, as a believer, are the one turning your back on Him when you turn to worldliness. (v.4:4)
- - Yet He does not turn His back on you. (vv.5-6)
- - So He has been working to draw you close to Himself and is now waiting for you to respond. (v.8)
- - He is offering you the option to freely choose whether you want to keep your worldliness or you want to return to spiritually healthy right-standing with Him.

-- Therefore, you are being encouraged here to draw near to His righteousness, which He wants to grow in you: (vv.3:17-18)

- - - - come on a personal level and He is approachable on a personal level; (v.4:5)
- - - - come seeking intimacy with Him, which He intensely craves and desires to reciprocate; (v.5)
- - - - come desiring His acceptance and you will find it; (v.6)
- - - - pursue restoration or repairing of relationship with Him and He will both facilitate and grant it; (vv.7-10)

- - - - come needing grace (undeserved favor), which He will give more of; (v.6)
 - - - - come for forgiveness, which He readily supplies through Christ; (vv.8; 2:1)
 - - - - leave your sinful and worldly ways behind, and He will show you a better way to live; (v.4:4)
 - - - - approach Him as your God, because that is what He wants to be - in fullness. (v.2:23)
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[Lesson Question: How do we do this, "wash our hands" "and purify our hearts"?]

SECTION POINT: In order to effectively draw close to God, He instructs that there is a necessity for believers to be spiritually and morally purified.

v.8b - "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded"

In order to repair one's relationship with God, the believer caught up in significant sinfulness is in need of spiritual cleansing, as characterized in verse 8b as:

- - "wash your hands, you sinners" - completely cease doing the evil practices and sinful deeds you have been doing, you have been involved in, you have been supporting, you have been promoting; this is corrective action you take to wash away or remove or terminate your doing of this evil any longer;
- - "purify your hearts" - thoroughly deal with and either adjust, or correct, or extinguish inner heart thinking, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, motivations, and etc. that underlie and drive you to do the evil practices and sinful deeds you have been doing; i.e. make your inner heart thinking clean, pure, sinless, wholesome before God;
- - "you double-minded" - establish and ground your inner heart thinking solidly upon what God says, in His Word, and no longer be of two mindsets wherein you flip-flop or "vacillate" back and forth between what you want and what God says, trying to have or juggle both; (Strong's #1374)

[Lesson Question: How do we facilitate this spiritual cleansing? What do we need to do?]

By implication, presenting yourself to God for spiritual cleansing as prescribed here includes:

- - recognizing and admitting to God that you have been sinning, that your hands are soiled and unclean - you are guilty of being involved in significant sinfulness; (AMP, v.8b)
 - - realizing that you have been wavering between worldliness and godliness; (AMP, v.8b)
 - - identifying, taking responsibility for, and being sorrowful for the evil you have been doing and the damage you have brought, you have caused, and you have inflicted upon God's Kingdom, His church, His ministries, and His workers;
 - - acknowledging to God that you are in need of His cleansing;
 - - and requesting that He grant you cleansing. (see 1 John 1:9)
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BIG IDEA: God wants you to clean up your life, the significant sinfulness you are doing along with the supporting sinful thinking.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Are you ready to do business with God, to bring before Him the significant sinful actions you have been doing?
 - - Are you ready to bring before God your corrupt thinking that supports and drives the significant sinful actions you have been doing?
 - - Are you ready to bare your soul to God, acknowledging and admitting that you have been disloyally double-minded, flip-flopping back and forth between significant worldly sinfulness and godliness?
 - - Are you ready to now take these steps next by being spiritually cleansed by Him?
 - - What are you going to do?
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