

the way UP is DOWN

by Robert Hatfield

God distances Himself from the proud (Psalm 138:6). In fact, a proud look not only separates one from God, it causes one to incur the wrath of God! This is undoubtedly why James would take the pen of inspiration and write, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6). James, in chapter 4:6-10, reveals God-given wisdom with relation to humility.

Humility demands full SUBMISSION to God (4:7). It is difficult to teach those who esteem themselves so wise that they already know enough. Because God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6), God's people must put off their own wishes and wants and accept the law and love of the Creator. James says, "resist the devil." To fully submit to the Will of God is to fully resist Satan, who tempts man into following his own desires. With the Bible in hand and eternity in mind, Christians will entirely adhere to sound Scripture in submission to God.

Humility requires one SEEKING God's favor and mercy (4:8). "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." One who seeks the favor of God and a close relationship with Him must be willing to come to Him, for He does not force Himself upon men. This is a decision based upon an individual's faith and obedience. The key word is *WORK*. As sinners who are greatly enticed by the temptation to sin, it is not easy to "cleanse our hands" and "purify our hearts." Those who fail to cleanse and to purify are labeled as *sinners* and *double minded* (cf. James 1:8).

Humility must express appropriate SORROW for sin (4:9). James describes laughter being turned to mourning and joy turning to heaviness. The word *heaviness* is a Greek word that is used only in this passage; it refers to a casting down of the eyes, thus, sorrow on account of sin. Luke 18:13 describes a praying publican who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," but simply cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Here is a man who expressed great sorrow for his sinful behavior, and begged for God's mercy on his behalf. In a world where sin is so widely accepted, all people would do well to realize the seriousness of sin.

Humility must acknowledge the SIGHT of the Lord (4:10). James said, "Humble yourselves in the *sight of the Lord* (emp. mine, RH)." The Psalmist declared, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa. 51:4; cf. Luke 15:18). God is the One against whom the sin is committed, and God is the only One who can pardon that sin from the souls of men!

God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). While men repeatedly sin against Him, God joyfully accepts those who take action and come to Him in repentance (cf. Luke 15:22-24). The way to heaven is to realize the sins and shortcomings of frail humans, and to depend upon the all-powerful Father for their eternal salvation.

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