

ESF, Lord's day service message  
12/7/2014

**Let the Lord Lift You Up**  
**James 4:4-10**

*<sup>4</sup> You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?*

*<sup>6</sup> But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:  
"God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble."*

*<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

During the building of the Golden Gate Bridge over San Francisco Bay, construction fell badly behind schedule because several workers had accidentally fallen from the scaffolding to their deaths. Engineers and administrators could find no solution to the costly delays. Finally, someone suggested a gigantic net be hung under the bridge to catch any who fell. ~~Finally~~ In spite of the enormous cost, the engineers ~~decided to put~~ ~~opted for~~ the net. After it was installed, progress was hardly interrupted. A worker or two fell into the net but all were saved. Ultimately, the time lost to fear was regained by replacing fear with faith in the net.

There are many dangers in our lives. God wants to provide us a safety net to work over as we cross the bridge of life. How can we put ourselves on God's safety net? In today's text James shows us how.

### **Love God more than the world (4-5)**

A key to living ~~on~~-over God's safety net is to love God more than anyone and anything in this world.

God, who causes His Spirit to dwell in the believers, is jealous of their friendship with the world. Among the ten commandments, the first and the second ~~commandments~~ are the commandments not to make idols and not to worship idols. ~~Then-And~~ at the end of the commandments, God tells us ~~the reason~~ why He gives us those commandments: *for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments* (Exodus 20:5-6). Here, God is not emphasizing punishment, but blessing for those who love Him most of all.

Not only the first and second commandments, but the third and fourth ~~commandments~~ are also commandments to love of loving God. Jesus said that the key of the ten commandments can be summarized to commandments of love- love your God with all your heart and with your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as you love yourself (Mathew 22:37-39).

If you want God to bless you and lift you up, love Him more than you love anyone or anything in this world.

When God blessed Abraham and lifted his name above all, He tested Abraham with ~~with a test~~ whether he loved God most of all or not. Abraham's ~~got his~~ only son Isaac was born when he was 100 years old. So to Abraham, ~~the~~ his only son Isaac was more precious to him than his own life. But that could bring temptation to Abraham. The temptation was to love Isaac more than God. The temptation was to make Isaac ~~as~~ his idol. So God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice Isaac to God. It was an extremely difficult test for Abraham to pass. But Abraham chose to love God

more than his only son Isaac, and was determined to sacrifice ~~the~~ his son. ~~Then And did~~ Abraham lose his son and became miserable? No. God accepted Abraham's love for Him and gave ~~the-his~~ son back to Abraham. God lifted him up by praising his faith.

We can find the blessing Abraham received in Genesis 22: 15- 18:

*<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD ....said, "I swear by myself, ...that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

God wants to bless you. God wants to lift you up. But God wants your love for Him first. God tests you to know what you love most. When you choose to love Him most of all, He will give you the faith to do so as He did to Abraham. Then He will love you more than you can ever imagine. 1 John. 2:15-17 says, <sup>15</sup> *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him..... <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

### **Humble yourself before God (6-10)**

Humility before God is another key to living ~~on~~-over God's safety net. -Verse 6 says, *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* And verse 10 says, *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.* D.L. Moody said, "We may easily be too big for God to use, but never too small." God can't use anyone unless they recognize how small and sinful they are.

Then how can we humble ourselves before God?

First, when we come before God, we have to deny any merits we might have, acknowledging our inadequacy and His sufficiency.

To clarify this point, Jesus tells a story of a Pharisee and a tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. A Pharisee was a man who claimed before God that he kept all laws and commandments and therefore he was better than the tax collector. But the tax collector came before God with broken heart. He stood at a distance, did not look up to heaven and beat his breast and said, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." And Jesus concluded, *"I tell you that this man (the tax collector), rather than the other (the Pharisee), went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

To receive God's grace, there is nothing we can do. We can't dress grace up. We can't make it any more attractive than it already is. There is no way human beings can improve upon grace. All we can do is simply take it and say, "Thank you, Lord."

When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his ~~g~~guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court. The judge asked, 'Guilty, or not guilty?' When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, 'That'll be ten dollars—a dollar for every mile you went over the limit.'" "Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. 'You have violated the law,' he said. 'The fine must be paid—but I am going to pay it for you.' He took a ten-dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! 'That,' said Billy Graham, 'is how God treats repentant sinners'.

You started your journey of faith by God's grace and you will finish it that way. Throw yourself on God's grace and He will lift you up. That is your safety net.

Second, we have to submit ourselves to God.

The Bible talks a lot about submission. It says that children are supposed to submit to their parents, employees are supposed to submit to their employers, angels are supposed to submit to God, we are supposed to submit to our elders, and all of us are supposed to submit to one another. But our response to all of those is determined by whether or not we submit to God.

A part of humbling ourselves before God is to rely on his strength and not on our own. The term “submit” is used as a military term and it meanings to “give someone with superior rank the respect and authority that is due them.” It carries the connotation of staying in rank with God. So submitting to God is acknowledging that God’s will is always right and good for us (Isaiah 55:9), and we honor Him and obey Him in all circumstances.

Submitting to God is a voluntary act of placing yourself under God’s authority. This is what happens when we really pray “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

This means that we want His will to be done no matter what it may take from our lives. It means giving God the right to choose our circumstances, our health, our measure of prosperity, our location, our job – everything.

When you submit yourself to God, you are giving God control of your life and your conflict. You are putting Him in charge. You need to yield yourself to Him. Are you willing to let God be God? Are you willing to do whatever he pleases? Can you submit to His program for your life and His way of working things out in it? Does God have that right in your life?

### Third, we have to resist the devil

Christian author, C. S. Lewis wrote: “There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.”

A proud person does not recognize his weakness and that he is vulnerable to the devil's attack. But a humble person recognizes the real existence of the devil and his vulnerability to the devil's attacks. When we humble ourselves before God, God opens our spiritual eyes so that we can see the devil, and encourages us to resist the devil.

To resist the devil and win-be victorious over him, we have to follow Jesus' teachings on the devil and His fighting and winning triumph over the devil. Jesus exposed the reality of the devil by saying that he is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). Then, He never compromised with the devil, and resisted and win-won over his temptations by sticking on-to the word in the Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). He rebuked the devil and drove the devil out of people's lives. He crushed the devil's head by dying on the cross and proving that all sinners can be forgiven by God through the power of His blood on the cross. By being risen from the dead, Jesus has proved that the devil is the-a liar who threatens us with the lie that death is the end of life and there is no eternal life. Jesus is the only One who completely overcomes the power of the devil. Jesus is the only One who can enable us to resist the-devil and defeat the devil. As 1st John 4:4 says, "Greater is He (Jesus) who is in you, than he (the devil) who is in the world." Call His name. Use His authority when you resist the devil. Then Jesus will always let you win.

Fourth, we have to constantly draw near to God with a heart of repentance. Drawing near to God means to have a close and personal fellowship with God. As we draw near to God, we find Him more real to us. Verse 8 says: when-we *Come near to God and He will come near to us.* We cease having a religion and we discover we have a relationship – a bond of life.

There's a story about a young man hired by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. His job was to paint the white lines on a nearby highway, because the machines were temporarily out

of order.

The first day he painted 8 miles.

The second day he painted 4 miles.

The third day he painted 2 miles.

The fourth day, he only painted 1 mile.

The supervisor couldn't figure out what was happening concerning the performance of the man's job and asked him, "Hey! What's the problem?"

The young man replied, "I'm painting less and less, because the paint can is getting farther and farther away!"

The young man would have done a much better job if he had carried the paint can with him. The truth is, we will do better living the Christian life if we walk near ~~to~~ God, ~~d...~~ in close daily communion with Him. As Psalm 145:18 says, "*The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.*"

To draw near to Him, we have to turn ourselves away from what pulls us away from God-sin. We have to turn away our sinful life and actually turn to God's way of holiness.

This is demonstrated beautifully in Jesus' parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-31).

After living a sinful life, the son came to his senses and, ~~he~~ said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men" And he actually got up and went to his father.

That is what the words s in this text means: *Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy*

*to gloom.* Psalm 34:18 says, *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

**Commented [m1]:** I think it might be good to add the following verse here too: *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*  
- I think it adds more of a conclusion to the sermon while also referring back to some of your earlier points of God's blessings and such, and it is also a smoother transition to the Psalms verse.