

Spiritual man

“When God means everything”

Intro: When Satan first approached Adam and Eve in the garden, his mission was very clear—to convince this first human pair that there was something better than what they had with God. Adam and Eve did not know what it was like to experience sin and they gave up everything they had with God to try the devilish experiment. And I can imagine that once they had made the discovery of their mistake, they did everything they could to stay in the garden with God. The Bible says, “God drove them out”. They didn’t want to leave God’s presence; but they had to because of their sin.

Ironically, all of us now have the task of showing people that there is something better than what they have with Satan! We must persuade men to leave their carnality and be spiritual and experience the blessings of fellowship with God.

In the same way, James shows us that the carnal mind will lead to conflict and the loss of all that God can give; but he does not leave us without hope. He shows us that there is a better way. God gives a greater grace (or favor), greater than that which the world may give through friendship with it! All that God wants us to be and all that He wants to give to us can be enjoyed upon the condition of putting away our selfish pride and humbling ourselves before him, of being the spiritual beings God made us to be!

So let’s consider tonight the characteristics and consequences of spirituality. “When God is everything”

The characteristics of spirituality

In contrast to the carnal man, the spiritual man:

Seeks God and spiritual things: (James puts these in a series of imperatives that show us what the spiritual does.)

Submits to God--v. 7

If the carnal man lives by his own selfish desires, the spiritual man puts himself under God's control, arrange under. If only we could learn to see that God's commands are not obstacles to our well-being, but stairsteps to blessing. Deut. 6:24. Not stop signs to happiness, but guidelines to joy!

Resists the devil--v. 7

The devil seeks to get us to disobey God's commands, because he knows their outcome. He knows that once you have a taste of both worlds and you know the fullness of the joy that God can give, it'll will hard to ever win you back. And so, he works tirelessly to keep you from getting too deep into God's word and too focused on Him; because once you have tasted the Lord's salvation you may never want to go back to where you were!

The spiritual man not only sees the blessing of obeying God's word; he sees the ruin and destruction sin brings to our lives. And so he "resists the devil". Literally "take a stand against". The spiritual man resists Satan.

Draws near to God--v. 8

Spiritual is more than making the right choice of two conflicting laws—God vs. Satan. It is not mere obedience that God wants from us. He did not make us just to delight in saying, "Look at them. They do everything I say." God wanted us to love him.

And so the spiritual man seeks for a close personal relationship with God. If God seems far away from us, is it perhaps because we spend so little time listening to his voice or talking to him? We need to spend time daily reading the word and praying to him; as we do we develop nearness to God. He is as close as we let him be!

Cleanses his hands--v. 8

He removes the obstacles to fellowship with God. God cannot bless those who continue in sin. Cf. Is. 1:15 When we find out that we are wrong we need to "cleanse our hands".

Purifies his heart--v. 8

The spiritual man works on the inside too. "Doubleminded" (dipseukos). Lacking sincerity or singleness of purpose. Playing both sides. Repentance is more than outward conformity to his will. We need to get our hearts right with God.

Cf. Jer. 29:13 'And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.'

Turns laughter into mourning--v. 9

The spiritual man is never casual about sin. He realizes that his sin put Jesus on the cross! We need to feel genuine sorrow for our sins. (Mt. 5:3) For what they've done to us..for what they've done to God. When we sin we not only break God's law, we break God's heart!

And with this is a serious view of life. We were not placed here to be entertained or amused.

Humbles himself before God--v. 10

The spiritual man exalts God in his mind and lowers his own self-estimation in view the great God who created him. He knows he doesn't know anything compared to the God who made the world. He knows that he has no power compared to the God who is omnipotent.

All of this is a part of the process of seeking God and spiritual things. And when we do, we can expect response from God!

Cf. 2 Chron. 15:2 "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if

you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

Notice how seeking God brings blessings from Him!

We draw near; He draws near to us!

We humble ourselves; He exalts us and give us His grace.

And so true spirituality begins here. In this life, God is everything; things are nothing in the ultimate sense.

Helpful spirit toward others

He does not want to be a judge of others, but an example of obedience for others.

Do not speak against or condemn your brothers. "Stop speaking!" Note carefully the context and the antithetical style of James.

James is not forbidding us to point out their fault to them or to others who may help them, nor is he forbidding the judging of God's people for their sinful acts. Both of these are clearly within the teaching of Scripture and even commanded elsewhere.

It is actually very similar to Jesus' words of Mt. 7:1-5.

We must not critically speak against others while we ourselves refuse to correct our own lives!

How easy it is to see the fault of everyone else and quickly speak of it, while at the same time rationalizing or ignoring our own errors. By pointing out the error of others while not doing the law of God ourselves we become judges of the law rather than doers of it. By such actions we declare that we are above the law, as if we were the lawgiver and the judge of the disobedient!

This manifests a pride that God resists!

The spiritual man is not quick then to condemn; but eager to show love in providing help to the wayward and the lost.

Cf. Gal. 6:1

The hallmark of the spiritual man is that he cares about the souls of people. He is a seeker of the lost.

Realizes his daily dependence upon God

The spiritual man recognizes that everything depends upon the will of God!

He will not boast of his achievement as if they were his own, but he will glory only in what the Lord has done for him! Gal. 6:14

He will not presume that life will continue, but trust in the providence of God!

The spiritual man says, "If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that".

The facts are that we are entirely dependent upon God for our successes!

We do not know what our life will be like tomorrow! v. 14
We do not even know that we will be living tomorrow! v.
14b Life is a vapor (atmos).

Recognizes the need to live by the knowledge he possesses.

James concludes with an appropriate warning:

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”.

True spirituality requires nothing less of us than to do what we know is right.

I believe that God allows us time to grow in our knowledge and mature in the faith. But when we reject the knowledge God has given us and continue in sin, then the principle of faith is no longer working in us. We stand condemned as sinners who have lost the favor of God.

God may not hold us accountable for what we do not know; but he surely will judge us for the failure to do what we know is right.

Conclusion: Let us aspire to be spiritual people. All that God seeks to give us is conditioned upon our sincere desire to be spiritual. Such a life is the secret to the pleasant coexistence of God's people.