

Nigh Drawing – James 4:6-10

I. Introduction:

- A. I am not an artist; I can't draw accurately, and can't paint.
1. I even have a hard time painting the walls in my house.
 2. I have a hard time keeping my crayons between the lines.
 3. But I am surrounded by artists, & our house is filled with their original work – from paintings to crafty things.
 4. As I say, I am not an artist, but there is **something I have drawn** from time to time; I have **“drawn NIGH.”**
 5. I need to do that more often.
 6. I need to maintain the skill, because this is one of those talents that can be lost through neglect.
 7. Of course, you know that I'm being silly and playing with words. But I do so with a point.
- B. The title of this little lesson is **“Nigh Drawing,”** and our subject is drawing near to God.
1. This **could** be a part of a series, because James presents this exhortation in the midst of several others.
 2. **“SUBMIT yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil...**
 - a. **CLEANSE your hands ... and PURIFY your hearts**
 - b. **Be AFFLICTED, & MOURN, & WEEP ...**
 - c. **HUMBLE yourselves in the sight of the Lord ... Speak not evil one of another, brethren.”**
 3. Each of these exhortations are important in the life of the Christian, because they describe characteristics necessary to being good ambassadors for our Lord.
 4. And there is a sense in which they are all linked together, becoming something similar to a beautiful shirt emblazoned with a thoughtful spiritual message.
 5. It fits tightly to our human frame, but not too tight.
 6. Tonight, I am not going to look at all the things James tells us, but I'll leave the door open for other nights.
 7. And I'm not really going to emphasize the second half of James' thought: **“Draw nigh to God, and HE will draw nigh to you.”**
 8. I'm thinking primarily about **our responsibility** rather than the reward it produces.

II. **“Draw nigh to God.” First, let's consider the REASON for the exhortation.**

- A. To whom was James writing?
1. His first verse tells that he was thinking primarily of the people of his own nation – the Jews – who were being scattered around the world – the **“diaspora”** as my old pastor used to say.
 - a. But that verse, and others, reveal that they were Jews who trusted Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah and the Lamb of God.
 - b. **“James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”**
 2. The first verse of the second chapter says, **“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.”**
 3. The people to whom he was writing had **“the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ”** – they were believers.
 4. And as such they had been **born again**, giving them a new and proper relationship with the God of the Old Testament.
 5. By extrapolation this exhortation also belongs us who are Gentile Christians.
- B. But again, why is there a need for this kind of exhortation? **“Draw nigh to God.”** We all know the answer.
1. We could look back through the first three chapters and find reasons to draw nigh to the Lord.
 2. But we really don't have to go back farther than the first verses of this chapter.
 - a. James talks about warring and lusting after the things of the world – which might include money, power and pleasure.
 - b. He speaks about the evil of becoming friends with the world.
 - c. And there is the failure of our prayer lives.
 3. The point is, most Christians are not as nigh to the Lord as they should be.

- C. Life in general has a way of drawing our hearts down from the *“things above, from where Christ, who is our life, sits beside the Father, and from where He shall appear to redeem us.”*
1. When was the last time you thought about **Christ’s return**? Last week? Yesterday? A month ago?
 - a. Those who have drawn nigh to God, think often think about the possibility of their imminent translation.
 2. But the many **thorns** we have in our flesh pull our attentions from our future glorified bodies.
 3. **Our friends** and **loved** ones draw our affections – love which should be superceded by our adoration of the Saviour.
 4. **Satan**, the Lord’s enemy, wants to keep us from nearness to Christ, so he tempts, afflicts and perverts things around us to accomplish his purpose.
 5. And then there is the **general weakness** of our **flesh**, making obedience to the Lord difficult, and also making more spiritual things, like prayer and worship, difficult at well.
- D. We need to **hear** the exhortation over and over again: *“Draw nigh to God,” “Draw nigh to God.”*
1. We need to **heed** the exhortation: *“Draw nigh to God.”*
 2. Yes, there are blessed benefits in nearness to the Lord.
 3. But first we should recognize the things which make this nearness necessary.

III. What is involved in this nigh drawing?

- A. As I asked myself that question and jotted a few points down.
1. And then I asked myself if there are any Biblical examples from which to draw some answers.
 2. I have found through the years of my ministry, that most people tend to be visual thinkers.
 3. They would rather watch someone do something than to read about doing it.
 4. And that is so much more possible today.
 5. Most people would rather watch a YouTube video on some project than to read the manual.
 6. And I confess my own tendency in that direction. I did that very thing yesterday in regard to my BBQ grill.
- B. Who can we find in God’s Word who implemented James’ exhortation?
1. Some common examples came to mind; the first being **Moses** in the wilderness of Sinai.
 - a. He was ordered to kick off his filthy shoes before approaching the Lord in the burning bush.
 2. There is a lesson there that James also highlights – *“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners.”*
 - a. Since God is absolutely holy, even born again souls, have no right to march right into His presence.
 - b. We must learn to approach with our hands washed in the blood of the Red Heifer – Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. There have been many, like **Uzza**, who thought they could put their hand on the Ark of the Covenant.
 3. But actually Moses at the bush isn’t a great example of drawing nigh, because God actually said, *“Draw **NOT nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”***
- C. Another thought, common at least in my head, is **Isaiah** coming into the throne room of God in **Isaiah 6**.
1. There he found himself unfit to stand in the presence of the holy, holy, holy God.
 2. But, again, that perhaps is not a great example, because it was not really his choice to draw nigh.
 3. It wasn’t that he was unwilling, but it wasn’t in response to James’ exhortation or that of anyone else.
 4. So it is a bit difficult to study Isaiah in order to find how to draw nigh to God.
 5. After considering some other potential illustrations, I settled on two imperfect examples.
- D. First there was **King Solomon**.
1. You could say that his father David had exhorted him to draw nigh to God.
 2. **I Kings 2:1** – *“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

 - a. And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses,
 - b. that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:.”*

- E. So what did Solomon do to draw nigh to the Lord?
1. At the instruction of his father, He **built** a little **prayer closet**, so to speak – **Solomon’s temple**.
 - a. And he made sure he was meeting with God by bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the Holy of Holies.
 2. Then he **cleansed his hands** just as James exhorted, by **“sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude”** – **I Kings 8:5**.
 3. And then he **prayed** – O how he prayed.
 - a. He didn’t care if ten thousand people were listening, because he was simply talking with the Lord.
 - b. He **confessed his sins** and the sins of the people.
 - c. He **pleaded** with God for divine blessings, at the same time acknowledging that Israel should expect chastisement for their future sins.
 - d. He **submitted himself** to the Lord, as James exhorted.
 - e. And he was **“afflicted and in mourning, blending joy and heaviness”** as James tells us.
 - f. But above all, or perhaps below them all, the king of Israel was truly **humble** before the Lord.
 - g. And if you’ll remember Jehovah lifted him up, just as James promised He would.
- F. After Solomon I stopped my search, when the Lord gave me another example – **King Josiah** – **II Kings 23**.
1. Josiah was eight years old when his father died, putting him on the throne of Judah.
 2. Through the sovereign blessing of God, there were godly people around him, including high priest **Hilkiah**.
 3. In the eighteenth year of his reign he commissioned the cleansing and repair of Solomon’s temple, which by this time had suffered 350 years of use, abuse and neglect.
 - a. During those renovations, the Word of God was discovered.
 - b. That was the real beginning of Josiah’s nigh drawing.
 4. **“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.”**
 - a. He **“cleansed his hands as the captain of a bunch of sinners.”**
 - b. He was **“afflicted and began to mourn. His joy was turned into mourning,”** as James had exhorted.
 5. So Josiah drew near to the Lord, and it had wide-spread effects.
 - a. He attacked with vengeance the idolatry that had grown up in his life and in his area of influence.
 - b. He cleansed the priesthood, and removed those who taught heresy.
 - c. **“He broke down the houses of the sodomites”** – **II Kings 23:7**.
 - d. And he brought Israel back to observing the ordinances of the Lord – like the Passover.
 6. **“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might...”** – **II Kings 23:25**.
 7. Josiah **“TURNED to the Lord with all his heart,”** or to put it another way, **“he drew NIGH unto God.”**

IV. **“Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you.”**

- A. If you’ll remember, the title of last week’s Wednesday message was: **“Replenishing the Gift Card.”**
1. Its theme involved our need for the filling of the Holy Spirit; our need for refilling, refilling and more refilling.
 2. Later one the members came to me and said in effect, **“this talk about the filling of the Spirit is essentially the same thing as talking about the need of revival and how to be revived.”**
 3. That was indeed a proper assessment, but I hadn’t thought of it in quite that way until he pointed it out.
- B. Well, I’ll beat him to the punch tonight.
1. What took place in Israel during Josiah’s eighteenth year, has been preached, over and over again, as an example of a spiritual revival. And I will concur.
 2. Over the last year or so I have read a number of books on the theology and history of revival.
 3. And one of the things I have learned is that **revival** is the **gift of God**, but it **falls on people**, and then on **churches**, which have **prepared themselves for revival**.
 4. **James 4:6-10** gives us a very good description of the core of that preparation.
 5. And those five verses can be summarized with the words **“draw nigh unto God.”**

- C. I'm not sure that **Josiah** had the privilege of hearing one of the Lord's prophets say, "*draw nigh unto God.*"
1. But at the very least the Holy Spirit said it to him, and when he obeyed, revival fell on that nation.
 2. It has been said many times, the greatest Passover celebration in Israel's history took place in the midst of that revival.
 3. And by the way, the Passover is all about redemption and deliverance through the blood of Christ Jesus.
- D. This evening I am reminding my own heart – "*draw nigh unto God.*"
1. And I'm exhorting you with the words of **James**, "*draw nigh unto God.*"
 2. I'm looking at Solomon and Josiah, and I'm seeing the blessing of God on those men & on their "*churches,*" because they "*drew nigh unto God,*" and they lead others to join them.
 3. This evening as we go to prayer, we may do so as a group, but as individuals, I urge you to "*draw nigh unto God.*"