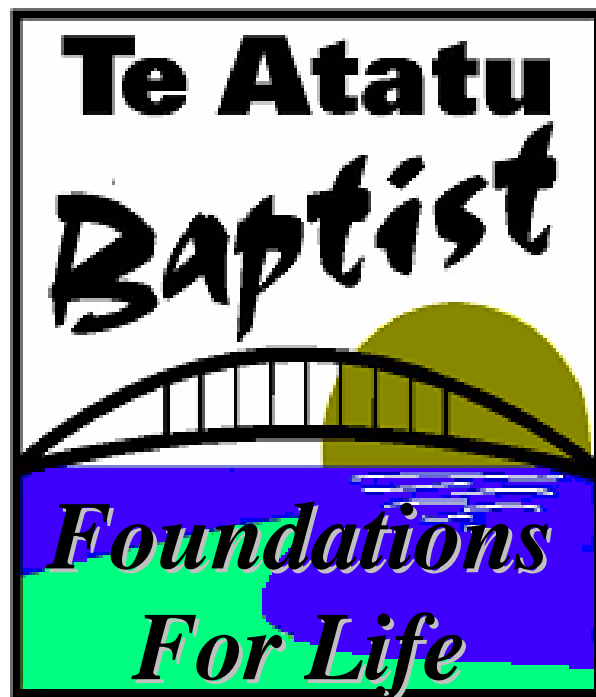


An enormous serving of grace!

James 4:4-5



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📁 An enormous serving of grace.DOC

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- NIV Life Application Study Bible – *Selected Scriptures*

This morning – I'm going to give you one enormous serving of grace!

I sure hope you're hungry

Because what you are about to hear, has the ability to transform your relationship with God – into something fresh and invigorating!

I can promise you, that if you listen, and act upon what you hear – you will never be the same again.

You will soar to new heights in your relationship with God and victory over sin.

This message has the ability to allow you to see God and the world in a way you never have before.

The reason I can state that, is because it has transformed my life, and I know it will do the same for you!

As an introduction to our message, I want to read you a passage from 1 John 2:15-17.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does— comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.

Let's pray together.

The passage we are going to base this morning's message upon, is James chapter 4 verses 4 to 6.

We will divide this passage into two parts.

The first part we can call the problem, and the second, the solution.

James 4:4 –6

The problem: You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The solution: Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace.

Let's look at the problem first!

In 1960, Israeli undercover agents orchestrated the daring kidnapping of one of the worst of the Holocaust's masterminds, Adolf Eichmann.

After capturing him in his South American hideout, they transported him to Israel to stand trial.

There, prosecutors called a string of former concentration camp prisoners as witnesses.

One was a small man named Yehiel Dinur, who had miraculously escaped death in Auschwitz.

On his day to testify, Dinur entered the courtroom and stared at the man in the bullet-proof glass booth – the man who had murdered Dinur's friends, personally executed a number of Jews, and presided over the slaughter of millions more.

As the eyes of the two men met – victim and murderous tyrant – the courtroom fell silent, filled with the tension of the confrontation.

But no one was prepared for what happened next.

Yehiel Dinur (the witness) began to shout and sob, collapsing to the floor.

Was he overcome by hatred?

By the horrifying memories?

By the evil incarnate in Eichmann's face?

No.

As he later explained in a riveting 60 Minutes interview, it was because Eichmann was not the demonic personification of evil that Dinur had expected.

Rather, he was an ordinary man, just like anyone else.

And in that one instant, Dinur came to a stunning realization that sin and evil are the human condition.

“I was afraid about myself,” Dinur said. “I saw that I am capable to do this ... exactly like he.”

Dinur's remarkable statements caused Mike Wallace (the interviewer) to turn to the camera and ask the audience the most painful of all questions: "How was it possible for a man to act as Eichmann acted?"

Was he a monster?

A madman?

Or was he perhaps something even more terrifying?

Perhaps he was normal?"

Yehiel Dinur's shocking conclusion? "Eichmann is in all of us."

The language of sin and evil is a lost language in society today and even in the church.

Our culture is uncomfortable with the words.

We are quick to rationalize behaviour by pointing to a broken home or an abusive relationship.

We've found a new way of identifying what we used to call sin.

Today we call it being broken, or wounded, or unhealthy.

Why?

Because we don't want to hurt anyone's self esteem.

We want everyone to feel good about themselves.

And telling someone that they are sinful doesn't build them up.

The language of evil and sin has been toned down so much, that today in the church, the words are seldom spoken.

When was the last time you heard a sermon on it?

And I'm just as guilty of it, as the next preacher.

Why?

Because I want you to go away from here feeling good about your relationship with God, not feeling badly about yourselves.

But in our attempt to make each other feel good we've lost something very important.

We've lost track of the fact, that if there is no darkness, no evil, and no sin, - then there can be no light, no goodness and no love.

If you take a brief survey of the Scriptures you'll discover that the Biblical writers had no problem reflecting upon sin and evil and calling them by name.

According to my concordance, the word "evil" is found in the Bible some 600 times and the word "sin" some 500 times.

The Gospels alone contain over 50 explicit references to evil, and Paul uses the word more than 60 times.

The New Testament also has over 200 references to sin.

So what conclusion should we draw from this?

I would suggest that we cannot simply ignore these words and the need to address them in our walks with God.

I want to start today by talking with you about our need to uncover the lie that we tell ourselves and come face to face with the enemy within.

If you are playing with sin today, obvious sins in your life – then you need to stop it today – or else you will end up experiencing death in every part of your life – in your marriage, family, business or health – but most importantly and drastically, spiritual death!

But I want you to be courageous and strong this morning!

We need to be encouraged this morning to allow Christ to be Lord over all areas of our lives, including the areas we have never surrendered to Him, because they are too painful or private – our hidden sins!

The next time you reach out for something to comfort you, - alcohol, shopping, eating or some other fantasy, to escape or cope with your loneliness or pain, remember this and be encouraged.

Jesus said, ‘ I will send you the Comforter, and He will guide you unto all truth.’

We must allow Christ to be Lord over all areas of our lives, includes those hidden sins, those areas of our lives that are just too painful to address.

Jesus said, ‘you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free’.

We need to know that it is good, healthy and releasing to face our fears and inner pain.

Jesus came to take our sins away!

Satan is the father of lies, and one of the big lies he has spoken into many Christian today, is that their pain is too hard to face, or their sin is too comforting and pleasurable to stop!

We need to know, that not facing our sins, will lead to death and destruction.

When we *refuse* to allow God into the innermost parts of our hearts and lives, to be willing to listen to Him speak to us – in love – through our

brother and sisters – we risk deception and delusion.

This morning, God is wanting us to be set free – free from addiction, free from fears, free from superstitions and bondages.

And it starts with confronting our sins!

Okay, that's part 1, the first portion of this Scripture...

James 4:4 –6

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

And now, let's look at part 2!

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace.

While it is true that the wages of sin is death.

The second half of the verse is also true, ...but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

James says that God's Spirit within us – envies intensely!

Do you know what envy is?

It means to be jealous, to be resentful, to be envious and hurt *due to rejection!*

Ask a wife how she feels, or a husband how he feels when they discover their spouse has been unfaithful to them, and you will get an idea of what this verse is trying to convey.

Have you ever wondered why God calls his rebellious children unfaithful or adulterous?

It is because we have engaged in a love affair with the world!

The Spirit of God living within us *envies intently!*

God wants you!

When we fill our lives and time with objects and obsessions that leaves no room for Him or the life He offers,

...the Bible says that He is envious, jealous, and resentful of those things!

Many years ago, when the internet was just new, and chat rooms were just developed.

I discovered them for the first time!

It was amazing, I was able to 'chat' with a person in Germany as if they were next door!

I was buzzing, and went to tell Debbie who was sitting in the next room, what I'd be doing.

As soon as I looked at her, I knew I'd done something wrong!

There on her face, was a look of rejection and hurt.

She said words to me that I've never forgotten to this day, 'It's not fair that you are spending your evening talking with someone in Germany, and you won't even spend time talking with me in the next room.'

That was the *first* night I had ever been on a chat room, and it was also *the last*.

Sometimes we just don't realise how our lives rob God of spending time with us.

Listen, this doesn't mean we have to pray all the time, sing worship songs all day long or attend every church service of meeting!

That legalism!

What it does mean, is that we realise God is wanting you.

He is wanting your heart.

He is wanting each of us to live healthy and balanced lives, and while we do the things that make Him happy, He is there in our midst.

That might mean turning the computer or television off – which are amongst the biggest addictions of Christians today!

Imagine hearing THAT at a crusade or altar call, 'Come forward and repent of your addiction to the internet, X Box or television!'

But it's true!

When we spend time talking and laughing with our family and friends, God is there!

While we spend time walking and talking along a bush track, sitting on a park bench, around a table, or with a friend in a boat – God is there!

Can you see what I'm getting at?

We've got to get Churchianity out of our Christianity!

We've been deceived by the devil, and made certain sins our friends, instead of letting God be our friend!

The reason sin is so damaging to our lives, is that it keeps God out of our lives!

You need to hear this, this morning.

God is intensely in love with you!

For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son, so that who so ever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that's you and me!

Peter, Sarah, Trish, John, Peter, Rachel,
Debbie, Joy,

God loved you so much – that He gave His only Son!

Allow me to give you a modern day paraphrase of that verse.

God loves you so much, that He would rather die than live without you!

Do you understand this?

God would rather die than live without you!

That's why the sin in our lives is so horrible.

God is dying to get to know us, and we would rather fill our lives with sin, with fears, with distrust, and with going our own way and doing our own thing.

How many of you have heard the saying that 'Each of us are born with a God shaped hole in our hearts, that only He can fill.'

You know, that's so true.

But let me share about the love of God for you this morning.

God loves you so much, that He too has a hole in His heart, and it is in the shape of you, and only you can fill it!

No wonder God is so envious of the things we fill our lives with,

...the false comforts we turn to instead of turning to Him.

When we understand how much God wants to free us from sin, we can begin to realise what sin is all about.

And why it is so ugly.

Most of us have been taught that sin stops us having a relationship with God.

And yes, that is true!

But that's only half the story!

Most of us have only understood sin from our own point of view, from our own limited human perspective.

And that is why we still struggle with it and are held in its grip.

The reason why sin is so destructive and harmful, is because it stops God having a relationship with us!

It is God who wants us, not us who naturally wants God.

Even the faith we have to believe in God, is not from ourselves, but a free gift of His grace.

When we understand grace, we understand sin!

When we understand sin, we understand that the way to overcome it is NOT by willpower, but by accepting the forgiveness and truth of God into our lives!

Most of the church today has failed in its battle with sin, because they fail to understand how easy it is to overcome it.

And it starts by understanding that God loves you so much, that He would rather die than live without you.

All striving and effort to please God vanishes when we understand His awesome grace towards us!

We realise that we are no longer in a *contract* with God, but a loving covenant!

No longer is it an effort to come to church, to worship, to tithe or attend meetings.

No longer is it an effort to pray and spend time in His presence.

No longer do we have to 'strive' to be a Christian or wonder if we are doing the right things.

We are secure and safe in the loving arms of God.

And all our commitments remain, and often increase.

But no longer out of obligation, but out of a grateful and responsive heart that loves to walk with God every moment of the day and night!

When we understand how much God loves us, we stop worrying about what others think about us.

The labels others give us, simply won't stick.

Performances end, striving ceases and we are secure in His love for us.

God loves you so much, that He would rather die than live without you.

As the song goes that we sang a few weeks ago, 'everything was done, so you would come!'

When Jesus rose from the dead, He was in His eternal and perfect state.

What was among the first things He did?

He went looking for His friends, He wanted to walk with them, to share a meal – a BBQ of fish on the beach with them.

Today – right this moment, God hungers for your love, for your attention, for your friendship.

Maybe now, you'll have a better understanding of what the Bible means when it implores us to 'stop grieving the Holy Spirit'!

I have a question I want to leave you with, for you to take home and consider.

'What is there in your life that God is envious of – that is stopping Him having a relationship with you?'

Let's pray together.

(There is a *love letter from Jesus*, for each of you, waiting at the foot of the cross. Please come and collect it during the worship.)