



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Genesis Sermon Series

Supports Session 9: Dreamer

Sermon Title: “Healing for a Polarized Nation” (James 4:1-10)

Connection to Session 9

Today’s society is filled with the same kind of hatred and jealousy that drove Joseph’s brothers to sell him into slavery. How should followers of Jesus respond to such attitudes?

Introduction/Opening

Our country is approaching another presidential election year. I must confess that I don’t pay much attention to the news anymore, especially political news. It seems most people are no longer interested in solving problems. They only want their own way, and they don’t care who they hurt to get it. Disunity and anger seem commonplace. As Christians, we’re called to demonstrate a different attitude.

Outline

1. The deadly plague (vv. 1-3).

- a) The full context of James’s letter is not stated, but he was clearly writing to people who were torn by internal strife.
 - i. The word translated “passions” is the Greek word *hedone*, from which we get the word “hedonist.” It refers to pleasure or enjoyment.
 - ii. James used a different word for “desire” in verse two. In this context, it refers to selfish desire. In other words, everyone wanted their own way!
 - iii. “You murder”—James probably didn’t mean that literally. He was probably equating their level of animosity with murder (Matt. 5:21-22).
- b) Some conflict in the church is inevitable, but if left unchecked, it can be detrimental.
 - i. It can distract you from praying (v. 2b).
 - ii. It can prevent God from answering your prayers (v. 3).

2. The distinctive problem (vv. 4-6).

- a) James accused his readers of spiritual adultery.
 - i. When he referred to “the world,” he was talking about things that are affected by sin—its values, norms, trends, etc.
 - ii. To love both God and the world is to commit spiritual adultery (1 John 2:15)
- b) He reminded them that we serve a jealous God.
 - i. He was not talking about the petty, selfish jealousy that we humans often have. Rather, he was talking about godly, protective jealousy (Ex. 20:5).

- ii. God knows what is best for us, and He has a right to our exclusive devotion.
- iii. It's not always easy to stand up to the world's temptations, and that's why we need God to help us (v. 6).

3. The divine prescription (vv. 7-10).

- a) Resist the devil.
 - i. You resist the devil by submitting to God (v. 7).
 - ii. You have to keep resisting the devil again and again, because he never flees from you permanently.
- b) Draw near to God.
 - i. As you draw near to God, you'll recognize sin in your life.
 - ii. None of us are perfect, and we never will be in this life. We must cleanse ourselves of sin repeatedly.
 - iii. As you draw near to God, you'll see things as He sees them. This will cause you to be brokenhearted over your sins and the sins of our nation (v. 9).
- c) Humble yourself before God.
 - i. That means realizing just how much we need Him.
 - ii. We must also realize that He is our nation's only hope for the future.
 - iii. When we humble ourselves before Him, He will do great things.

Conclusion

Bertha Smith was a missionary to China and Taiwan for forty-two years, and she was also a participant in the famous Shantung revival in the 1920s. Her colleague, Dr. Charles Culpepper, wrote a famous book about it. They gave different perspectives on how the revival began, but Miss Bertha said it all started when they had a special prayer service for Dr. Culpepper's wife. She had been having some trouble with her eyes, but there was no one who was able to help. Finally, they decided to pray for God to heal her. They wanted to make sure they were right with God, so they began confessing their sins to God and to each other. They prayed for Mrs. Culpepper, and miraculously God healed her.

Miss Bertha said after God performed this great miracle, she came under tremendous conviction. She shared her feelings with the others. She said, "What kind of missionaries are we? We've been praying for the healing of one of our own, but shouldn't we be praying even more that God will open the spiritual eyes of the people of China?" Before long, revival broke out in Shantung because God's people humbled themselves.¹

We do a lot of praying during election years, and there's nothing wrong with that, but we must remember that true revival will never come through the political system. It only comes when God's people humble themselves before Him, confessing their sins, and acknowledging their absolute dependence on Him. What would happen if Christians all over America joined together, confessing our sins, and prayed for God to open the spiritual eyes of Americans? Then we might see true awakening. That is the only true healing for our polarized nation.

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¹Bertha Smith, *Go Home and Tell*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995, pp. 37-40.