

Introduction: I wonder what the health and wealth preachers do with this passage?
Preaching this portion terrified me.
3:13-18 tied directly to 4:1-10

I. The Wisdom of the World Exposed (1-5)

A. The Pattern of Worldly Wisdom

1. Ordinary Sins

-There is no sin that has *no consequences* for those around you.

Examples abound.

-Translation issues: v.1 fights and quarrels *among you*? Pleasures that wage war "in your members". Not just talking about the individual. Structure of verses 2 & 3. (Acts 5:17,18; Mark 15:10)

Desire? Are we to be without desires? No. Can desire be twisted? Yes!

Envy? Who doesn't from time to time? Is it really so bad as all that?

You Name it! Sin wreaks havoc on people & organizations & nations.

Prayer is undercut by sinful desires.

2. Extraordinary Consequences

-Killing

-Fights and quarrels

-Prayerlessness

B. A Bleak Picture of Reality

1. Spiritual Adultery – double-minded. Follow God and "Baals"
(Is.57:2,3,8; Jer.3:20; Is.54:5,6)

2. Friend of the World or of God? Can't be both.

Friend *of* the world?

a. Happiness is defined in what I have and what I have experienced

b. Value is based in what I have accomplished and made of myself

c. Self-promoting?

3. A Fallen Nature (5)

Very difficult to translate. All said and done – NIV does best job. Is the s(S)pirit the subject (nominative) or the direct object (accusative) of the sentence? Two reasons I believe it is the latter:

1) by the use of *phthonos* (envy – negative) vs. *zelos* (jealousy-used of God's desires)

2) context – condemnation of selfish desires and war/strife

II. The Power of God Affirmed (5-6)

A. Made in His Image – but Marred

B. He Gives Us More Grace!

1. Power of Sin? Universal – Devastating!

2. Power of Grace? Rom.5:20-21 Cannot come to him in arrogance, self-promotion, merits of your efforts/accomplishments, or pride. Grace - God's unmerited favor – is given to the Humble.

III. The Wisdom of God Portrayed (6-10) What does Humility mean/look like?

A. A Poetic Structure. Opening and close: both include the promise. Bookends!

4:6-7 Warning: God opposes the proud
Promise: he gives grace to the humble!
Response/ Submit yourselves, therefore, to God
Or Conclusion (this is an act of humility!)
4:10 Command: Humble yourselves before the Lord
Promise: and He will lift you up (exalt you!)

The middle verses develop the theme.

Command: Resist the devil
Result: He will flee from you
Command: Come near to God
Result: He will come near to you
Command: Wash you hands, you sinners
Command: Purify your hearts, you double-minded

Note the parallelism

Command: Grieve, mourn, wail (three-fold/triple command)
Instruction: change laughter to mourning
Parallel: change joy to gloom
Command: Humble yourselves before the Lord
Result: He will lift you up (exalt you)

We, if we are to have real life – must abandon such things, such thoughts, such pursuits.

B. A Powerful Promise. Submit to God – live under his influence and authority.
How do we do that?

1. Resist the devil! – and he will flee from you!
2. Come near to God and he will draw near to you!
-Follow, submit, obey. And he will draw near.
-There is no God like our God!! He drew near to us in Christ.
3. Wash your hands, purify your hearts! That is: Repent! Psalm 24:3-6
4. Grieve, mourn, wail. Sorrow for sin – godly sorrow – that leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10)
5. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up!
-Admit we are sinners, sinful, with a heart bent on sin
-We cannot change ourselves or make ourselves better.
-The promise takes root! (Luke 14:11)

IV. Called to Pursue Humility – or “How To Be Humble”

A. Bowing to the Savior

- Or you will be humbled, brought down to destruction.
- This is God’s means of lifting us up.

B. Serving the Savior

- Resist the devil
- Draw near to your great God
- Ask Him for wisdom that leads to peace and righteousness!
And walk in that wisdom of life.