

## **Season 2, Episode 7: James: Grace that shapes our repentance (4:1-12)**

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**Sarah:** Welcome to Two Sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah and I live in the UK. And this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US.

**Felicity:** Hello, everyone. How are you doing, Sarah?

**Sarah:** I am okay, thank you. What have you got in your mug today for tea?

**Felicity:** Well, actually, teapot brewed. I know my teapot is particularly nice. Actually, it's red polka dot teapot. I really like it. How did I not know that about you? But yes, and I do actually think that when you throw it in a teapot, it actually is nicer. So I'm appreciating my teapot tea. What about you?

**Sarah:** Nice. I've actually got hot water here, but I have got a McVitties biscuit. After the sad, sad news about McVitty's potentially having to close one of their factories because of biscuit decline, I thought the only right thing was to go and buy a packet of digestives.

**Felicity:** That is the right move. And if I was in England, I would do the same. I can't believe that. Have we really declined in our biscuit eating to that extent that they might have to shut a factory?

**Sarah:** Well, hopefully through the influence of our podcast, hopefully not.

**Felicity:** That is true. Or in fact, it might be. My biscuit is something special. Because here's the thing. In America, people more often than not make their own cookies. If you can make cookies, you make cookies, you don't really buy them. And so my friend was saying, well, how do you make English biscuits? And I was, I just don't really try and make a chocolate digestive. Or why would you? Well, why would you? But she has embraced the challenge. And this week well, actually, it was a few days ago, produced her attempt at a chocolate digestive. And actually, it's not too bad. I mean, there are some improvements. She's welcoming feedback, so I have given her the feedback. The chocolate doesn't quite go to the edges and it's a little bit thick, but actually tastes pretty good. So if the factory does go down, I'm going to be okay because I live not far from biscuit banking. Mackenzie anyway, while we're talking about all these kind of biscuit things, we were talking about that thing of how you even get into conversation with friends. That goes beyond just the surface, maybe even beyond biscuits and cups of tea. And whether, Sarah, you have any good questions that just ways into conversations that do drive to the heart and help us to spiritually care for one another, I guess, during our weeks. Any thoughts?

**Sarah:** Well, actually you were talking about it earlier. First you say what you say what you said.

**Felicity:** Okay, well, so I was saying that in our Bible study that we've been doing this year, our last question of the Bible study every week has been, how has this helped you to enjoy Jesus? And we've been saying to each other, well, why don't we ask others that question this week? So how have you been enjoying Jesus this week? And I think actually it's really changed the way that we're beginning to have conversations with one another. I love that question because it's a hard question, isn't it? How are we loving Jesus more? So I've really enjoyed asking that and being asked that question more.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I think that's a really helpful question. I tend to just ask people how I can pray for them. I guess that's the kind of my into wanting to get conversation just a little bit deeper to see how people are doing. And I really appreciate when people ask me that. Whether it's written text or phone call or having walked with someone, asking that question

shows that they care enough that they want to pray. And I think it's also one of the most helpful questions to ask, really?

**Felicity:** Yeah. It's definitely a good one. It sounds simple, doesn't it? But actually it just immediately changes the gear of the conversation. Not to make it too intense, but just to remind us that we are brothers and sisters caring for one another.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And actual thing is to pray for each other and to care for each other in that way, isn't it?

**Felicity:** Yeah. Speaking of brothers and sisters, James' favorite address.

**Sarah:** I know, let's get stuck in. So we are doing first half of chapter four today. So chapter four, verses one to twelve. I'm actually going to read though from 317, so just to kind of start with a bit of heavenly wisdom that we saw last time. So chapter three, verse 17. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere peacemakers. Who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires, that battle within you? You desire but do not have. So you kill, you covet, but you cannot get what you want. So you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. And when you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people. Don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God? Or do you think scripture says without reason that he jealously, longs for the Spirit He has caused to dwell in us, that he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says god opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. Submit yourself then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you're double minded grieve. Mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them, speaks against the Law and judges it. When you judge the Law, you are not keeping it but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one lawgiver and judge, the one who is able to save and destroy, but you. Who are you to judge your neighbor? Great.

**Felicity:** Thanks, Sarah, as ever. Jampacked and I feel like with James it's often a bit of a roller coaster, isn't it, where you're kind of cut to the heart and then you're given grace and this is it, this is the peak of the roller coaster. In that sense, I feel like the first few verses, this kind of exposure of our desires and wants and passions and how that is problematic as to.

**Sarah:** Where talk us through that, sister. Talk us through his line of thought there in those first couple of verses.

**Felicity:** Yeah. So he seems to be pointing to the fighting and quarreling. So there's disorder things are not going well and he says don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have. So you kill, you covet, but you cannot get the heart of it seems to be the desires. So what we're wanting is causing problems because as we then desire the wrong things, so it leads us to coveting and quarreling and fighting. And even then he says because you do not ask and when you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motive. So desire and motive seem to be the thing. So even if you're asking God actually the reason for your request, or maybe what you're asking for is in line with earthly worldly things rather than that which is Godly. It's interesting, I think that just desire and motive, they're quite broad in some ways. So he's not pinpointing what the problem is outside of the heart, really.

**Sarah:** Yes, but it is a heart issue, isn't it? And I think just the amount of times that you use it's very self centered what the desire and motivation, isn't it? And that is the opposite to the wisdom that has just been described in the verse above, kind of the peace loving, considerate wisdom from heaven. So it's such a contrast, isn't it? The relational contrast between those is huge. And then his verdict on that is then really stark. Then in verse four, isn't it? You're adulterous people. Don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity with God? I mean, that's a really stark on them, isn't it?

**Felicity:** I feel like that verse has been sitting with me all week as I've been dwelling on these things. Exactly. That you can't be straddling both camps. And that's what double mindedness. We've talked about it before, haven't we? The idea of hedging your bets and hedging your bets is really having a foot in both camps. And I think this verse really makes it clear that you are adulterous people. You're being unfaithful. If you seek to try and be friends of the world, then you are actually an enemy of God. Because as I think about that, I think that must be so obvious to God when I'm in my worldly ways.

**Sarah:** And also it's very easy to think you can I don't know, it's very easy to think that, oh, I would notice if I was being this adulterous. I would notice if I was being this double minded. But actually the way this talks about desires and motives, that's all in the heart, isn't it? That's not necessarily showing on the outside. That exposes my double mindedness, as the whole book has done so far. This then kind of compounds that, doesn't it? And shows me my heart.

**Felicity:** Yes, absolutely. And it's interesting that verse five or do you think scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he's caused to dwell in us. And that's quite romantic language in a way, isn't it? This longing that he has caused to dwell in us. And that reality of this is who I am in Christ and as I pursue my double minded worldly ways, then I'm actually being adulterous to the God who loves me and saves me and gives me all of this. But then it is the best, I think. But he gives us more grace. I love that he's like but he gives us more grace. Like, that is just really true because we do need it again and again and again. Yeah.

**Sarah:** And you think the natural response would be that he judges, wouldn't he? I think that's what I'm expecting to read in that verse. Like God's judgment is severe on your double mindedness, but the opposite happens. He gives more grace. And that is why the Scripture says God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. So what is the answer to our double mindedness the whole way through the book? This is where it kind of really roots itself, isn't it? That the grace is shown when we humble ourselves and realize that we're double minded.

**Felicity:** It shouldn't be surprising by this point in James we've seen that all the way through. He really doesn't hold back and exposes our heart again and again. But what a sweet kind of reality that as we're humbled, as we're aware of our heart issues, so we are all the more delighted in the grace. I love that. Verse ten, humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. There's kind of two aspects on there and I wonder whether we need to just need to spend a bit of time. What does it actually mean to be humble before the Lord, before we consider the lifting up?

**Sarah:** I think he kind of shows us what it looks like, doesn't he say in verse seven, submit yourselves, learn to God, resist the devil and he'll flee from you. Come near to God. And then he talks about grieving, mourning and wailing. And that's in relation to our sin. So it's recognizing the depth of our doubleminded death, isn't it? Wash your hands, you sinners, purify your heart, recognize your need for cleansing, recognizing your need for Jesus, that you cannot approach God without his grace. As we see our sin, we are humbled in our need.

**Felicity:** No, I think that's right, sir. I think that the humility which then manifests itself initially as a grieving of our sin and the seriousness of that. And I think that's actually, maybe we're not very good at that. I'm not very good at that in our kind of culture. Don't dwell on the bad stuff, just move on to the good stuff. But here I think we're being instructed that it's a right thing to grieve more than where it's a right thing to be really gutted about our doublemindedness. And as we are, I love the certainty of the come near to God and he will come near to you. He will respond to that rather than, I wonder whether I don't want to dwell on my sin, maybe because I get a bit nervous that maybe I'm going to be stuck with my sin. I don't know whether I just functionally forget that Jesus does forgive my sin. So I don't want to think about it because I don't want to be dragged down by it. But I think here we have a lament of it followed by the certainty of grace.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I think it's very easy to get into the frame of mind that he's begrudging the fact that we need grace again. He's begrudging the fact that God needs to give mercy again, really? But actually he delights to give mercy. He could delights to give grace and that's why it says, but he gives more grace. He's very character, very nature. A few years is

compassionate grace, isn't he? We have freedom to grieve and mourn and weigh in because we can, because there's no judgment on it now it's been taken, isn't it? And I think that's why the submit yourselves is also really helpful, that kind of language of yielding and submitting your desires to Him, like all these covetous desires that we've had. And I think all this kind of feels like a bit of a climax of the book, doesn't it? But actually, if you haven't been hit like by now if you haven't been hit by the double mindedness. There's a problem. Genuinely, though, if this is just sailing over your heart and you're not really bothered, go back and start again, because you've gotten to the point where he's like, this should be your reaction to what you've seen exposed in your heart.

**Felicity:** Yeah, that's really clear, isn't it? I think that's really helpful. Just it's a right thing. It's a good thing. And that's kind of the pattern throughout James. And so when we've been convicted again. Actually. The grace that we see here and then it makes perfect sense. Then humble yourselves for the Lord and he will lift you up and all the way through James. I think we've seen this. That those who are dependent upon Christ are lifted up your humble circumstances. What it looks like to the world. That's not the reality of your heavenly circumstances. And the perspective on that and the joy in that and the certainty of that.

**Sarah:** And then he goes, a couple of last verses. It makes sense, doesn't it? Because actually, if you're at this point of having been humbled and see yourself rightly before the Lord, then don't judge anyone else. Don't look upon other people's sins. You have no place to do that, essentially. Who are you to judge your neighbor? You cannot, can you? And so that comes back to the heavenly wisdom that we saw at the beginning of actually peace loving wisdom, sincere, considerate for the mercy towards others, because we are the ones who received mercy.

**Felicity:** Yeah. And isn't it such a delight that as we look back at that 17 and 18, actually, as we go through this process of lamenting our sin and realizing our need for the Lord and this grace, this more grace, so we are heading towards the Christlike wisdom. Not that we are perfect, but that is how we're going to be more like this. That's so freeing, isn't it? Because in the midst of that is weakness, and in our weakness, so we can be strong through grace and be more like grace. So just quickly, Sarah, how does this drive to our heart?

**Sarah:** I think it's pretty there already. I think it's the accumulation for me, it's the accumulation of the whole book so far leads to this point. And it's good to hear it again, but it is hard to hear it. I need to hear it. I think for me, this has just been a really good reminder that, again, he's writing to brothers and sisters. And the purpose of James words is not to wound us, it's to heal us. But in order to heal us, we need to be exposed in our sin, we need to be exposed in our doublemindedness. And I just love that. Actually, what we do with that is that we run to Him, to Jesus, we draw near to God, and we trust his grace is sufficient to do that transforming work that's what we need to be praying, isn't it? And that's where it hit. Kind of the rubber hit the road for me this week. How about you?

**Felicity:** Yes. I think that's a really perceptual point you're making, that we do trust God's grace to do the work. Because if we're in any way sensitively conscience with all of this, as we've been reading James, we might be feeling battered, but then to really believe that God does love to give us grace again and again, and he is transforming us by his grace, and that is the reality. So I think there's two things there, aren't there? That kind of it's okay and good to be convicted and then, as we're convicted, run towards this glorious grace that we see 17-18. A picture of yeah.

**Sarah:** And I think just realizing that it's okay, as you say, it's important to just have grace at the center, isn't it, of what is shaping us. And I think I naturally get weighed down by my sin. And actually, I really need to hear I've kind of highlighted all the gray spots in this passage in purple, and it's covered in purple. And actually, I really need to focus on that color when I'm feeling like, oh, no, I don't have to get out of my sin.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I think that's right. Should I pray that we would, then? I don't know all of these things. Heavenly Father, we praise you so much for more grace, but there is more grace, and we praise you that it is a good thing to have our double mindedness exposed, however tiring it feels to see our hearts again and again. But, Lord, we pray that as we see our hearts, would you call us to be those who are humbly dependent upon you? That we really would draw near to you as you draw near to us, and that we would love and trust and

believe the grace that you give us? And we pray, Father, you'd be making us more and more like Jesus. Make us wise like we see in verses 17 to 18. Amen.

**Sarah:** Amen.

**Felicity:** Thanks, Sarah. Good gracefield. Cup of tea? I mean teapot, but also greater accompanied. Absolutely.

**Sarah:** Do you remember we've got questions in our show notes for you to chat about this with another sister in Christ. And if you haven't given us a review already, we would love you to do that. We so appreciate every review, and it just helps for other people to hear about what we're up to. You as well. Until next time, then.

**Felicity:** Until next time.

**Sarah:** Thanks, Sarah. All right. See you soon. Bye.

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