

It's an adrenaline rush no one ever wants. 2am, a college dorm, an RA sound asleep after hours of intense exam prep, sees light exploding into his room, the hallway lights making an unwelcome entrance. He hears a muffled whisper, but nods it off, longing for the escape of sleep, when he feels a piece of paper pressed into his pillow. The door closes, darkness regains the scene, and he experiences a jolt that not even the world supply of caffeine could contend with. This is the very situation he dreaded when signed up to be a resident assistant. He remembered the orientation seminars on mental health, on suicide. He bolts through that door, without a care in the world if the whole dorm knows his every sound and step. He bursts into the outside air, and pauses with hands trembling. A dear friend, knife in hand, shaking with unending tears. What words can heal this? What could this RA say as a remedy? He cautiously approaches, sits at his friend's side, speechless. In the quiet, still darkness, a mumbling barges into the scene. His friend, head down, is lost, and finally reveals his lonely wandering, "I feel like I have two minds. The one mind who seeks Jesus, a mind filled with a wholeness and hope that overcomes, but then the other mind who seeks to psychologically tear me apart, a mind who longs to fit in with everyone else, who mocks me as an outcast and unworthy of love." What would you say to that young man? His double-minded struggle? You and I know his heart's track. When you face the battle for mindfulness, how do you shun friendship with the world, and embrace our Lord's single-mindedness for you?

James, the Lord's half-brother by blood, and complete brother by faith, saw this struggle unfold in his own church family, and in his own life. For a time in his adult life, he had a double-minded purpose. He believed his brother to be a farce, he challenged him, he refused to believe, but now he was convinced. He knew single-mindedness, but his own people still stood in two camps. A foot in the favoritism and friendship with the unbelieving worldly influence, and a foot in the camp of Christ, who calls for complete solidarity and the cutting off of any influence that threatens it. James' flock filled the Jerusalem soundscape with praises, yet also cursed their fellow human beings in whispers and shouts. A church family who is one moment stood defiantly for Jesus when persecuted, yet in the next refused even the smallest of charity to the widow and orphan. Double-mindedness became a lifestyle. The impossibility of being both friends with Satan and Jesus had been forgotten. Have you and I forgotten this inconsistency as well?

What strikes you when you read James' words, "**Submit yourselves, then, to God.**" Do you see the single-mindedness? The solidarity? Or do you feel a tension within? Do you struggle with being an "on-paper" Christian? You come to connect with God here, but then when you are disrespected at home or at work you connect with anger and revenge. You confess your sin, your utter inadequacy to even take the first step in approaching God, yet you judge the people around you, place yourself above them, making your standard THE standard. You and I know what double-mindedness looks and feels like.

Have you ever felt like a spiritual double-agent? Living as if God's purpose isn't enough for you. You think you can please both Jesus and the influences of sin around you and within you. You and I to our shame, instead of grieving over our pride, realizing the horror of our sin, we laugh when we seem to get away with it. Instead of humbling reaching out to God in prayer and

confession, we think we will find joy in our personal crusades, our own agendas that God should be blessing, but if he gets in our way, we'll just keep trucking along. We **judge the law** like James calls us out. We zip up our judicial robes and **sit in judgment** of THE Judge. We expect God to be double-minded like us. He can have his purposes, but if his purposes don't align with ours, he better get with the program.

If you are sensing the danger here, the hurt here, you too know the mind of that young man outside the dormitory. You and I know that when we try to live an inconsistent life, a double-minded perspective, we will never feel whole. We will never find true acceptance. We will feel under constant pursuit, never living up to God or to people, and living the life of bitter judgment toward humanity, the never-ceasing comparison of people exercise, wasting away as we go. We want that evil tenant, the sinful nature to pack its bags, but it doesn't budge. It longs to dismantle solidarity with Jesus and in its place the disformity of sin. But the enemy here is not who it seems to be.

The enemy of the sinful traitor-self does not work alone. He has a superior. A devil of a being who dictates his movements. Your and my struggle is not against "**flesh and blood, but against the powers of this dark world.**" Even though they try to split our hearts, lead us to double-mindedness, there is a single-minded Attacker who has one goal, one mission.

James re-orientes our inward focus to the outward reality. As James pleads with you to "**submit,**" you see the face of our Brother who submitted to our Father, the gospel in human skin who surrendered all for you. Then you hear the invitation, "**Come near,**" and the automatic response, "**and he will come near you.**" Does it take your breath away that your God comes near you? Could there be a more heart-stopping thought that our God choosing to have total solidarity with you? The God of the universe drawing near to you by living life as an embryo, as a toddler, a teenager, an adult? When you take in the action verbs, "**Wash**" and "**purify**" do you picture the calloused, nail-marked hands of a Carpenter who has purified your heart, your inner being, which shows itself by the washed hands, picking up the pieces of the broken people in our lives and clenching fists with joy over the victory they get to proclaim through action? Finally, do you see the call to refuse "**double-mindedness**" and embrace humility? The author and pastor Tim Keller put it like this, "The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less." As you think of yourself less, and think of Jesus more, your enemy has only one response: Retreat!

Because you know the single-minded compassion of God, you submit your very being to him. As you submit like your dear Brother, the devil must run. To not run is to seek annihilation! When you draw near to God, he fills every void. He will reciprocate. As our Father runs toward you and me his prodigal children, nothing can stand in his way. How can we not respond with tears of joy? How can we not readily confess our wrongs to our loving heavenly Father? How

can we not give up whatever semblance of self-pride we have clutched to? How can we not rejoice in the joy of single-mindedness? How can we not rejoice in humility!

As we walk into the arms of God through repentance, we will always find him drawing us to him in grace, pardon, protection. We no longer live a double-minded life trying to seek our own "rights" and "privileges," but instead you and I humble ourselves knowing the **"the Lord will lift (us) up."** You now have one purpose, one mind, and in joy, you long to share this revelation with everyone in your life!

No longer do you sit in the judge's seat in the courtroom of humanity; instead, you stand beside the defendant. Because you have the single-mindedness of God and his unifying grace, the thought of tearing down a sinner like you and me is the furthest agenda item on your life list. Your focus is on your connection to God. What room in your single-minded heart is there for jealousy of someone's God-given gifts and talents? What space is left for you to slander a sibling in the family of Christ? You know the answer. You are single-minded. You couldn't care less if someone categorizes you as being simple-minded because of it. You stand with that sibling in Christ who is struggling and you see Grace personified declare innocence and freedom. You submit to God and instead of wanting people to live according to your standards, you long to join in God's single-minded rescue mission to bring his family to the greatest reunion ever. You see the single-minded reason for your existence, to exist and live for others, to live for Christ, to stand in solidarity for eternity with Him.

The joy of single-mindedness encapsulates you. That young college student is not alone in his struggle, neither are you. Don't fight the wrong enemy and even more so, see your Brother who lives in your heart. Grab hold of his promises. Take in the sight of the devil fleeing, scared out of his mind, as God draws near to you. Open your purified heart, stretch your hands, open your mouth and see the hurting needs of both your family in Christ, and the lost who breathe the same air you do, yet don't yet know the aroma of Jesus. Look upon the single-minded heart of God, who has one pursuit: Your soul and the souls of all his dearly loved creation of humanity. Don't let your Christ-given joy elude you. Recognize it, cherish it, suffer for it, because you have seen the beating heart of God through his Son. You have the mind of Christ. Live the joy of single-mindedness out of thanks to the God who always has you in mind. Amen.