

“My Way?”

James 4:6-10

It's the #1 all-time funeral song in Great Britain ... “My Way” by Frank Sinatra. I think the reason it's so popular is it highlights our culture's attitude about how to best approach life: “Live for yourself. Do what you want, when you want, how you want. You're the master of your own vessel, so ‘full speed ahead!’”

Let's listen to a bit of the song and then we'll talk about a better approach to life.

<my way snippet 1> You can see him singing ... chest out ... chin up ... saying when he bit off more than he could chew, he just “ate it up, and spit it out!” Bravado! Honestly, as a guy, this song fires me up, it feeds my self-confidence and pride ... which runs exactly counter to God's plan for my life. Let's see what I mean.

A. God gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6, But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- Sinatra asks “For what is a man, what has he got? If not himself, then he has naught.” Sinatra is saying a man is an island unto himself, and you're the king of your little island!
- What is the source of strength in our lives?
 - Me. My intelligence. My physical ability. My mastery of my surroundings.
 - God. God's grace in my life. God's ability *through* me.
- James 4:6 says that God actively blocks the progress of those who elevate themselves, relishing in their pride.
- Humility is the ultimate “sacrament.” A sacrament is the Catholic way to dispensing grace. God's grace comes to us, beyond ritual, through simple humility.

B. Submission to God results in less evil in our lives.

James 4:7, Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Listen to the last verse of the song: < my way snippet 2>

- Sinatra wants “To say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels.” “one who kneels” may refer to submission, or to those who pray?
- Submission is not passivity. Submitting to God means choosing to resist the devil. Prayer is certainly not shrugging your shoulders and saying, “eh, whatever...”
- To resist something means to ...
 - ... know what you stand for.
 - ... value something that is worth holding on to.
 - ... push away that which is contrary to your value system.
- The result of resisting the devil is victory over him! He flees from you!

C. God wants to change us for the better.

⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

- Sinatra considers his life ... regrets a few things, admires his fighting spirit, is amused at some of the turns his life has taken
- Double-mindedness, pursuing both sin and purity, excludes God from our lives.
- ILLY: There are many reports of Frank Sinatra being involved with organized crime. He had one foot planted in the entertainment industry, and the other with the mafia.
- Our posture toward sin: grieving, mourning, and wailing.
- A lighthearted approach to sin isn't helpful. Sin isn't funny, cool, or harmless ... it chokes us off from the good life God wants for us.

D. God can inspire you through humility.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

- ILLY: During the football bowl season it's interesting to watch the banter between wide receivers and defensive backs. Neither are particularly known for their humility! Which is more common? After a big reception, or hit, do we see hot-doggin' "in your face" antics? Or, an extended hand helping the other player up and a pat on the back? And, which requires more self-confidence and discipline? Humility demands more courage. Humility demands the bigger man.

CONCLUSION: In 2013 you're going to have so many, 1000's, of opportunities to act with pride and arrogance ... or humility and submission. Let's finish today's message with verse 2 of "my way." <my way snippet 3>

As you plan your "charted course" (as Sinatra puts it) in 2013 won't you include God's Word along the way? Decide to follow Jesus closely, becoming a Godly man that others can follow without regret. The truth is, we're not on an island by ourselves and there are many who look up to us for guidance and leadership. Let's point them beyond ourselves to Christ, our Savior and Lord.

MAIN POINT: When "my way" = "God's way" you experience life at its best!

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, we want all the best that life has to offer. Perform within each of us whatever attitude adjustments and changes are required to make us better men and women. Ultimately God, I want 'my way' to be 'Your way' in my life. In Jesus' name, amen."