

James Chapter 4:1-17 – Warnings Against Pleasure-Seeking and Pride

James 4:1-17

VI. Symptoms of and Solutions for Having Left Your First Love – 4:1-10

Introduction

Chapter four is a powerful treatise against worldliness. We'll find many familiar passages in this text, and we'll see many examples of worldliness that have specific and practical remedies.

“The whole passage is an in-depth treatment of the havoc wrought when worldly wisdom rather than heavenly wisdom dominates the life.” – Vaughan

James 4:1-17 – ¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. ¹¹Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? ¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” ¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

<4:1> Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; <4:2> ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, <4:3> αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε. <4:4> μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς ἐάν οὖν βουληθῇ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.

<4:5> ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφὴ λέγει, Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, <4:6> μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; διὸ λέγει,

Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται,
ταπεινοὺς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

<4:7> ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν, <4:8> ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγίει ὑμῖν. καθαρῖσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίστατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. <4:9> τάλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πειθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν. <4:10> ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

<4:11> Μὴ καταλαλεῖτε ἀλλήλων, ἀδελφοί. ὁ καταλαλῶν ἀδελφοῦ ἢ κρίνων τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καταλαλεῖ νόμου καὶ κρίνει νόμον· εἰ δὲ νόμον κρίνεις, οὐκ εἶ ποιητὴς νόμου ἀλλὰ κριτὴς. <4:12> εἷς ἐστίν [ὁ] νομοθέτης καὶ κριτὴς ὁ δυνάμενος σῶσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι· σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλησίον;

<4:13> Ἄγε νῦν οἱ λέγοντες, Σήμερον ἢ αὔριον πορευσόμεθα εἰς τήνδε τὴν πόλιν καὶ ποιήσομεν ἐκεῖ ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ ἐμπορευσόμεθα καὶ κερδήσομεν· <4:14> οἷτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε τὸ τῆς αὔριου ποῖα ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν· ἀτμὶς γὰρ ἐστε ἢ πρὸς ὀλίγον φαινόμενη, ἔπειτα καὶ ἀφανιζομένη. <4:15> ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν ὑμᾶς, Ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ καὶ ζήσομεν καὶ ποιήσομεν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο. <4:16> νῦν δὲ καυχᾶσθε ἐν ταῖς ἀλαζονείαις ὑμῶν· πᾶσα καύχησις τοιαύτη πονηρὰ ἐστίν. <4:17> εἰδότε οὖν καλὸν ποιεῖν καὶ μὴ ποιοῦντι, ἁμαρτία αὐτῷ ἐστίν.

A. A Life Dominated By Pleasure – 4:1-3

Passage

The Westminster Catechism – the primary purpose of man is “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.”

“James is setting before his people a basic question—whether their aim in life is to submit to the will of God or to gratify their own desires for the pleasures of this world.” – Barclay

Setting aside churchy answers and what you wish were true, and looking instead at your time, attention, and actions, what is the aim of your life – submitting to the will of God or gratifying your own desires for the pleasures of this world? _____

Remember James' focus at the end of chapter 3 – peace! **Peace was the outcome of those who had godly wisdom. Note the immediate contrast in this new section.**

James 4:1-3 – ¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

<4:1> Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; <4:2> ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, <4:3> αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε.

Verse 1

Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;	What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?
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This sounds just like the previous section where the outcome of worldly wisdom was bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

What is the source of, what causes (NIV, ESV), from whence (KJV) –

Πόθεν Pothen **What is the source of** quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

πόθεν pothen **from where**

adverb, interrogative

BDAG from what place? from where?; from what source? brought about; given by whom? born of whom?; how, why, in what way?

LXGRCANLEX from where?; from where; how

Quarrels (NASB, ESV), fights (NIV), wars (KJV) –

πόλεμοι polemoi **What is the source of** quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

πόλεμος polemos **battle; war**

noun, nominative, plural, masculine

Sense: contention ⇔ war – a contention understood as if a battle in a war.

BDAG war; battle, fight; strife, conflict, quarrel

LXGRCANLEX a war; quarrel; war

Wars – chronic hostility

Conflicts, quarrels (NIV), fights (KJV, ESV) –

μάχαι machai **What is the source of** quarrels and **conflicts** among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

μάχη machē **fight; quarrel; dispute**

noun, nominative, plural, feminine

Sense: contention ⇔ battle – an open clash between two opposing groups.

BDAG fighting, quarrels, strife, disputes

LXGRCANLEX fighting, quarrels; quarrel; fight

Battles – single encounters

Source, they come (NIV), hence (KJV) –

Initial comments

ἐντεῦθεν enteuthen **What is the source of** quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not **the source** your pleasures that wage war in your members?

ἐντεῦθεν enteuthen **from here**

adverb

Sense: from here – from this place; hence.

BDAG from here; fr. this

LXGRCANLEX from here; from this

Pleasures, lusts (KJV), desires (NIV), passions (ESV) –

Note the Greek word here:

ἡδονῶν hēdonōn What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your **pleasures** that wage war in your members?

ἡδονή hēdonē **pleasure**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [plural](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: desire (feeling) – the feeling that accompanies an unsatisfied state.

[BDAG](#) pleasure, delight, enjoyment, pleasantness; agreeable taste

[LXGRCANLEX](#) pleasure

Sensual pleasures – the pursuit of pleasure

Luke 8:14 – ¹⁴“The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and **pleasures** of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

“Desire is at the root of all the evils which ruin life and cause divisions.” – Barclay

“Philo points out that the Ten Commandments culminate in the forbidding of covetousness or desire, for desire is the worst of all the passions of the soul. ‘Is it not because of this passion that relations are broken, and this natural goodwill changed into desperate enmity? that great and populous countries are desolated by domestic dissensions? and land and sea filled with ever new disasters by naval battles and land campaigns? For the wars famous in tragedy ... have all flowed from one source—desire either for money or glory or pleasure. Over these things the human race goes mad.’” – Barclay

Wage war (NASB, KJV, ESV), battle (NIV) –

Initialcomments

στρατευομένων strateuomenōn What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that **wage war** in your members?

στρατεύω strateuō **fight; wage war**

[verb](#), [present](#), [middle](#), [participle](#), [plural](#), [genitive](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: to war – to make or wage war.

[BDAG](#) serve in the army; wage battle, fight

[LXGRCANLEX](#) serve in the army; fight; to wage war; to serve in the army; to serve as a soldier

Members, you (ESV) –

Initialcomments

μέλεσιν melesin What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your **members**?

μέλος melos **member**

[noun](#), [dative](#), [plural](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: self ↔ parts – a person considered as a unique individual understood as the sum of all their body parts; often with an emphasis on the physical aspect of a human being as the seat of sinful habits and passions.

[BDAG](#) member, part, limb; member

[LXGRCANLEX](#) member; part; member or limb of the body; member; body part

Tasker – “The human personality has, as it were, been invaded by an alien army which is always campaigning with in. ... Human nature is indeed in the grip of an overwhelming army of occupation.”

Verse 2

ἐπιθυμεῖτε, καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε· φονεύετε	You lust and do not have; so you
καὶ ζηλοῦτε, καὶ οὐ δύνασθε	commit murder. You are envious and
ἐπιτυχεῖν· μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε. οὐκ	cannot obtain; so you fight and
ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς·	quarrel. You do not have because you
	do not ask.

Lust (NASB, KJV), desire (NIV, ESV) –

ἐπιθυμεῖτε epithymeite **You lust** and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[ἐπιθυμέω](#) epithymeō **desire; long for; lust for**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to crave – to have an intense desire for some particular thing.

[BDAG](#) desire, long for; desire

[LXGRANLEX](#) to desire; to long for; to covet

Have –

ἔχετε echete **You lust and do not have;** so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[ἔχω](#) echō **have**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to have – to have or possess, either in a concrete or an abstract sense.

[BDAG](#) have, own; have, have as; have, hold (to), grip; have on, wear; can, be able; consider, look upon, view; have; to have; include in itself, bring about, cause; it is, the situation is; be (in a certain way); hold fast, be next to, be next

[LXGRANLEX](#) have; hold; to have; it is; to be in a certain way; to look upon; to be; to be next to; to hold fast; to hold on to; to sieze; to consider; to hold a view; to wear; can; to set; to take; to be able to; to include in itself; to cause; to experience

Commit murder (NASB, ESV), kill (NIV, KJV) –

φονεύετε phoneuete **You lust and do not have; so you commit murder.** You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[φονεύω](#) phoneuō **kill; murder**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to murder – to kill intentionally and with premeditation.

[BDAG](#) murder, kill

[LXGRANLEX](#) murder, kill; to murder; to kill

Remember how Jesus said we murder others?

Matthew 5:21-22 – ²¹“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²²“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough* to go into the fiery hell.

There are plenty of ways we can (and do) murder others without ever picking up a weapon.

You are envious, desire (KJV), you covent (ESV, NIV) –

ζηλοῦτε zēloute **You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious** and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[ζηλόω](#) zēloō **be jealous; strive for**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to be jealous – to be or become desirous of exclusivity in relationship.

[BDAG](#) strive, desire, exert oneself earnestly, be dedicated; be filled w. jealousy, envy

[LXGRCANLEX](#) strive; to be filled with envy; to strive for; to court someone's favor; to be jealous; to be filled with jealousy

Same as from the previous section.

Cannot –

δύνασθε dynasthe You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and **cannot** obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[δύναμαι](#) dynamai **be able; can**

[verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to be able – to be or become sufficient to meet a need or task.

[BDAG](#) can, am able, be capable.

[LXGRCANLEX](#) can, am able; to be able

Obtain, get what you want (NIV) –

ἐπιτυχεῖν epitychein You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot **obtain**; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[ἐπιτυγχάνω](#) epitynchanō **obtain**

[verb, aorist, active, infinitive](#)

Sense: to reach (obtain) – to achieve and obtain a goal.

[BDAG](#) obtain, attain to, reach

[LXGRCANLEX](#) obtain, attain to; to obtain; to reach; to experience

You fight, you quarrel (NIV) –

μάχεσθε machesthe You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so **you fight** and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[μάχομαι](#) machomai **fight; quarrel**

[verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to spar (argue) – to fight verbally.

[BDAG](#) fight; fight, quarrel, dispute

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to fight

Quarrel (NASB, ESV), war (KJV), fight (NIV) –

πολεμεῖτε polemeite You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and **quarrel**. You do not have because you do not ask.

[πολεμέω](#) polemeō **make war**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to argue ⇔ wage war – to fight verbally, conceived of as active warfare.

[BDAG](#) wage war; be hostile

[LXGRCANLEX](#) wage war; to make war; to fight

“Obedience to the will of God draws people together, for it is that will that they should love and serve one another; obedience to the craving for pleasure drives them apart, for it drives them to rivalry for the same things.” – Barclay

“When men choose pleasure rather than God as a way of life, the laws of God are disregarded, and the desire for pleasure drives men to do things they never dreamed they were capable of doing.” – Vaughan

The public problems in the church were disrupted fellowships. And those public problems have private causes, the self-pleasing heart. – Motyer

You do (not) have –

“James makes it clear in this last statement that the reason why men, after all their coveting, envying, and struggling, still do not possess what they desire is found in the neglect of prayer. They hunger for satisfaction but are seeking it in the wrong place.” – Vaughan

ἔχετε echete You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. **You do not have** because you do not ask.

ἔχω echō **have**

verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural

Sense: to have – to have or possess, either in a concrete or an abstract sense.

BDAG have, own; have, have as; have, hold (to), grip; have on, wear; can, be able; consider, look upon, view; have; to have; include in itself, bring about, cause; it is, the situation is; be (in a certain way); hold fast, be next to, be next

LXGRCANLEX have; hold; to have; it is; to be in a certain way; to look upon; to be; to be next to; to hold fast; to hold on to; to sieze; to consider; to hold a view; to wear; can; to set; to take; to be able to; to include in itself; to cause; to experience

Do ask –

αἰτεῖσθαι aiteisthai You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you **do not ask**.

αἰτέω aiteō **ask; ask for**

verb, present, middle, infinitive

Sense: to ask (request) – to make a request or demand something from somebody.

BDAG ask; ask for; demand

LXGRCANLEX ask; to ask; to ask for

Verse 3

αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε, διότι κακῶς You ask and do not receive, because αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν you ask with wrong motives, so that δαπανήσητε. you may spend it on your pleasures.

Do receive –

λαμβάνετε lambanete You ask and **do not receive**, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

λαμβάνω lambanō **receive; take**

verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural

Sense: to receive – to get something or come into possession of; whether physical or abstract.

BDAG take, take hold of, grasp, take in hand; remove; take, acquire; receive, accept; take up, receive; choose, select; receive; receive, make one’s own, apprehend/comprehend; receive, get, obtain

LXGRCANLEX take; to receive; to take; to lay hands on; to take possession of; to seize; to take away; to take hold of; to collect; to select; to come to believe; to acquire; to receive back; to try an experiment

With wrong motives, wrongly (ESV), amiss (KJV) –

κακῶς kakōs You ask and do not receive, because you ask **with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

κακῶς kakōs **badly; severely; wrongly**

adverb

Sense: badly (wrongly) – in an evil, wicked, or improper manner.

BDAG bad, badly; wrongly, wickedly

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bad; wrongly; badly; wrongly

Pleasures (NASB, NIV), lusts (KJV), passions (ESV) –

ἡδοναῖς hēdonais You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

[ἡδονή](#) hēdonē **pleasure**

[noun, dative, plural, feminine](#)

Sense: joy (source of) – something or someone that provides a source of happiness.

[BDAG](#) pleasure, delight, enjoyment, pleasantness; agreeable taste

[LXGRCANLEX](#) pleasure

You may spend, you may consume (KJV) –

δαπανήσητε dapanēsēte You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that **you may spend** it on your pleasures.

[δαπανάω](#) dapanaō **spend**

[verb, aorist, active, subjunctive, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to exert ⇔ spend – to put to use, conceived of as paying out with that resource.

[BDAG](#) spend, spend freely; wear out, destroy

[LXGRCANLEX](#) spend; to spend; to destroy

Has anyone here experienced “unanswered prayers”? _____

“The craving for pleasure in the end shuts the door of prayer. If our prayers are simply for the things which will gratify our desires, they are essentially selfish—and, therefore, it is not possible for God to answer them. **The true end of prayer is to say to God: ‘Your will be done.’ The prayer of the person who is dominated by pleasure is: ‘My desires be satisfied.’** It is one of the grim facts of life that a selfish person can hardly ever pray aright; no one can ever pray aright until self has been removed from the centre of life and God has been put there instead.” – Barclay

Summary of 1-3

Just as was the case when James exposed the root cause of sin, here, James states that our own lust is the cause of unanswered prayer and conflict in the church.

“The ultimate choice in life lies between pleasing oneself and pleasing God, and a world in which people seek first and foremost to please themselves is a battle ground of savagery and division.” – Barclay

This matter reminds me of the difference between love and manipulation. Love is doing something for the good of someone else. Manipulation is doing something for our own good. And that something can be the very same thing.

We can ask God for something good, but the motive behind the prayer is everything.

Two Reasons for “Unanswered” Prayers

Prayers are not really ever “unanswered”, but we often look at them that way. James here addresses two of the reasons prayers appear unanswered:

James 4:2b-3 – You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

We do not ask.

How often do we wonder why God isn’t acting in a situation, and yet, if we were to be honest, we haven’t really even prayed about it? _____

How do you fix this? Just ask.

We ask for our benefit.

God is not bound to answer our prayers when our prayers are intended for our own benefit. And how many of our prayers are, in fact, purely that? _____

We can do our best to camouflage our selfishness, but God knows our hearts and our motives.

In these cases, it is completely possible that what we are asking God for is, in fact, His will. But He still will not give it to us if our motives are not right. We would only spend it on our own pleasures.

How do you fix this? Change your motives (heart). Ask for God’s glory, God’s service, consideration of others.

B. The Real Cost of Living for Yourself Instead of God – 4:4-5

James 4:4-5 – ⁴You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

<4:4> μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς ἐάν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται. <4:5> ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει, Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν,

Verse 4

μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία	You adulteresses, do you not know
τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς	that friendship with the world is
ἐάν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ	hostility toward God? Therefore
κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.	whoever wishes to be a friend of the
	world makes himself an enemy of
	God.

As opposed to his usual, “My brothers”, here James takes on quite a different tone, “You adulteresses!”

“The abrupt and harsh ‘you adulterous people’ marks the beginning of one of the most strongly worded calls to repentance that we find anywhere in the NT.” – Moo

Why the feminine? We are the bride of Christ. And so flirting with the world is committing spiritual adultery against the Lord!

Do you know –

οἴδατε oidate You adulteresses, **do you not know** that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

οἶδα oida **know**

verb, perfect, active, indicative, second person, plural

Sense: to know (reflectively) – to know or have knowledge about (someone or something); normally as acquired through reflection or thinking.

BDAG know; can, be able; understand, recognize, come to know, experience; recollect, recall, be aware of; respect, honor

LXGRCANLEX to know; know; to know how; to acknowledge; to understand; to respect

World –

κόσμου kosmou You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship **with the world** is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

κόσμος kosmos **world**

noun, genitive, singular, masculine

Sense: world system – the people constituting the world whose values, beliefs, and morals are in distinction and rebellion to God’s.

BDAG adornment, adorning; orderly arrangement, order; the world, the (orderly) universe; the world; totality, sum total

LXGRCANLEX order; the world; world; adornment

“The idea is that of *worldliness*. If material things are the things to which we dedicate our lives, clearly we cannot dedicate our lives to God. In that sense, those who have dedicated their lives to the world are at enmity with God.” – Barclay

“To be a ‘friend of the world’ is to value the approval of and cherish a relationship with persons and forces which are either indifferent toward or openly hostile to God.” – Vaughan

Hostility, enmity (ESV, NIV, KJV) –

ἐχθρα echthra You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is **hostility** toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

ἐχθρα echthra **enmity**

noun, nominative, singular, feminine

Sense: hostility (state) – a state of deep-seated ill-will.

[BDAG](#) enmity

[LXGRCANLEX](#) enmity

Wishes (NASB, ESV), will (KJV), chooses (NIV) –

βουληθῆ boulēthē You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever **wishes** to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

[βούλομαι](#) boulomai **wish; want**

[verb, aorist, passive, subjunctive, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to desire with intent – to desire something which one has in mind to acquire, accomplish, or fulfill.

[BDAG](#) wish, want, desire; intend, plan, will

[LXGRCANLEX](#) wish; to desire; to wish; to will; to want; to intend

“The *Greek* is emphatic, “shall *be resolved* to be.” **Whether he succeed or not, if his wish be to be the friend of the world**, he *renders himself, becomes* (so the *Greek* for “is”) by the very fact, “the enemy of God.”” – JFB

An enemy –

ἐχθρός echthros You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself **an enemy** of God.

[ἐχθρός](#) echthros **enemy**

[adjective, nominative, singular, masculine](#)

Sense: enemy – a person who hates another and wishes him injury.

[BDAG](#) hated; hating, hostile

[LXGRCANLEX](#) hated; hostile; enemy

Makes himself (NASB, ESV), becomes (NIV), is (KJV) –

καθίσταται kathistatai You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world **makes himself** an enemy of God.

[καθίστημι](#) kathistēmi **appoint; put in charge**

[verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to be made – to be made or caused to be or to become.

[BDAG](#) bring, conduct, take; appoint, put in charge; make, cause

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bring, take; appoint; to appoint; to make; to set; to cause to be; to bring

While it is impossible for us to lose our relationship with God once we have been reconciled with him, “we who are AD children can live BC lives.” “We must not, in other words, deceive ourselves into thinking that we can live in intimate fellowship with him when the set of our hearts (*whoever wishes*) is towards *the world*. From such unimpressive and unsuspected sources great rivers of consequence flow! He does not say ‘whoever wills’, as though some mammoth and critical decision had to be made each time. **It is just this same circle of pleasures, desires, wants, wishes—the priority of the daily bread and butter of the self-pleasing life—that is what takes us into the world, the arena in which Christ’s Lordship is not recognized and where his writ does not run.**” – Motyer

“God tolerates no rival. When believers behave in a worldly manner, they demonstrate that, at that point, their allegiance is to the world rather than God.” – Moo

Matthew 6:24 – ²⁴“**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**”

“Pursuit of pleasure leads not merely to indifference to religion but to downright hostility to God, destroying the capacity for worship and service.” – Gore, et al

Verse 5

ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει· Or do you think that the Scripture
Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ speaks to no purpose: “He jealously
κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν; desires the Spirit which He has made
to dwell in us?”

He wants all of our heart! Give yourself to God!

There is no such quote in our OT. Probably a summarization on his part.

Do you think, do you suppose (ESV) –

δοκεῖτε dokeite Or **do you think** that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

[δοκέω](#) dokeō **think; suppose**

[verb, present, active, indicative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to suppose (ungrounded) – to think or believe something; especially on uncertain or tentative grounds.

[BDAG](#) think, believe, suppose, consider; seem, be recognized as; it seems to me

[LXGRANLEX](#) think; to think; to be disposed; to seem best; to seem; to appear; to be influential; to be pre-eminent

Jealously –

φθόνον phthonon Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He **jealously** desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

[φθόνος](#) phthonos **envy; jealousy**

[noun, accusative, singular, masculine](#)

Sense: jealousy (righteous) – an appropriate desire for what a person has a right to.

[BDAG](#) envy, jealousy

[LXGRANLEX](#) envy, jealousy; envy

Desires, yearns (ESV), lusteth (KJV), longs for (NIV) –

ἐπιποθεῖ epipothei Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously **desires** the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

[ἐπιποθέω](#) epipotheō **desire; long for**

[verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to long – to desire strongly or persistently.

[BDAG](#) long for, desire

[LXGRANLEX](#) long for; to long for

Spirit –

πνεῦμα pneuma Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the **Spirit** which He has made to dwell in us”?

[πνεῦμα](#) pneuma **spirit; Spirit**

[noun, nominative, singular, neuter](#)

Sense: spirit – the spirit or animating force of a person or deity.

[BDAG](#) blowing, breathing; breath, (life-)spirit; spirit; Spirit, spirit; the Spirit

[LXGRANLEX](#) breath; spirit; spirit; Spirit; wind; breath

There is debate about what this word is referring to, either God’s Holy Spirit or our human fallen spirit. I vote the former.

He has made to dwell –

κατώκισεν katōkisen Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which **He has made to dwell** in us”?

[κατοικίζω](#) katoikizō **cause to dwell**

[verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to cause to dwell (location) – to cause to exist or be situated near or within something.

BDAG cause to dwell, establish, settle

LXGRCANLEX cause to dwell; settle; to cause to dwell

“The Spirit which he made to dwell in us jealously yearns for the entire devotion of the heart.” – Vaughan

“Verse 5 explains why flirtation with the world is so serious a matter by bringing to mind **the jealousy of the Lord, which demands total, unreserved, unwavering allegiance** from the people with whom he has joined himself.” – Moo

“The meaning is that God is the jealous lover who will not tolerate a rival. The Old Testament was never afraid to apply the word *jealous* to God. Moses says of God and the people: ‘They made him jealous with strange gods’ (Deuteronomy 32:16). He hears God say: ‘They made me jealous with what is no God’ (Deuteronomy 32:21). In insisting on his sole right to worship, God in the Ten Commandments says: ‘I the Lord your God am a jealous God’ (Exodus 20:5). ‘You shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God’ (Exodus 34:14). Zechariah hears God say: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy’ (Zechariah 8:2). *Jealous* comes from the Greek *zēlos*, which has in it the idea of burning heat. The idea is that God loves human beings with such a passion that he cannot bear any other love within the hearts of men and women.” – Barclay

C. How to Return to God – 4:6-10

If nothing changes, then nothing is going to change!!!

After accusing his audience of being self-centered pleasure seekers who have left their first love and calling them to repentance, he then reminds them that **“while God’s demand is all-encompassing, his grace is more than sufficient to meet the need.”** – Elwell

“James goes on to meet an almost inevitable reaction to this picture of God as the jealous lover. If God is like that, how can anyone give to him the devotion he demands? James’ answer is that, if God makes a great demand, he gives great grace to fulfil it; and the greater the demand, the greater the grace God gives.” – Barclay

James 4:6-10 – ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and

weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

<4:6> μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; διὸ λέγει,

Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται,
ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

<4:7> ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν, <4:8> ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθάρισατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. <4:9> ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενήθησατε καὶ κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν. <4:10> ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

Compare to this passage in 1 Peter:

1 Peter 5:5–9 – ⁵You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

As I have been considering this passage in the light of our New Year Challenge to put God first and my own need for repentance, I wondered if James’ order was of any significance or if we might even be able to pick the one or two commands as the ones that we need where we are. Hopefully as we study this today, you’ll see the import of his particular order, and the necessity of each of the thoughts to reaching the intended outcome.

Verse 6

1. God’s Grace Is Super Abundant!

μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει· Ὁ But He gives a greater grace.

θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται Therefore it says, “God is opposed to
ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. the proud, but gives grace to the
humble.

Greater, more (ESV, NIV, KJV) –

μείζονα meizona But He gives a **greater** grace. Therefore it says,
“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

μέγας megas **great; loud**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#), [comparative](#)

Sense: greater – greater in size or importance or degree.

[BDAG](#) large, great; great; surprising

[LXGRCANLEX](#) large, great; great; large; important; great one

He gives –

δίδωμι didōsin But **He gives** a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

[δίδωμι](#) didōmi **give; grant**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [indicative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

Sense: to grant – to allow to have (as a privilege).

[BDAG](#) give, donate; give, bestow, grant; give; produce, make, cause, give; entrust; pay, give; render account; put, place, deposit; appoint; yield, produce; give up, sacrifice; go, venture somewhere; draw/cast lots; grant, allow; institute; give up, give back; extend, offer

[LXGRCANLEX](#) give; to give; to produce; to grant; to allow; to draw lots; to appoint; may he give; to pay; to cause oneself to go; to put; to cause

Grace –

χάρις charin But He gives **a** greater **grace**. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

[χάρις](#) charis **grace**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: grace (outworking) – the resulting activity that is a necessary consequence of genuine, beneficent goodwill; especially used of the outworking of God’s goodwill.

[BDAG](#) graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness; favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill; (a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction; favor.; thanks, gratitude

[LXGRCANLEX](#) grace; sake; kindness; favor; thanks; thankfulness; gift; credit; benefit

Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don’t deserve.

“God’s generous and effective help for men.” – Vaughan

Grace is the desire and strength to obey God.

“What comfort there is in this verse! It tells us that God is tirelessly on our side. He never falters in respect of our needs, he always has *more grace* at hand for us. He is never less than sufficient, he always has more and yet more to give. *Whatever we may forfeit when we put self first, we cannot forfeit our salvation, for there is always more grace.*” ... “His resources are never at an end, his patience is never exhausted, his initiative never stops, his generosity knows no limit: *he gives more grace.*” – Motyer

James’ quote is from Prov. 3:34:

Proverbs 3:34 – ³⁴Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.

Proud –

ὑπερήφανος hyperēphanois But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to **the proud**, but gives grace to the humble.”

[ὑπερήφανος](#) hyperēphanos **arrogant; proud**

[adjective](#), [dative](#), [plural](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: arrogant person – a person characterized by feelings of unwarranted importance out of overbearing pride.

[BDAG](#) arrogant, haughty, proud

[LXGRCANLEX](#) arrogant, proud; arrogant; proud

“What is this destructive pride? The word for *proud* is *hyperēphanos*, which literally means *one who shows himself above other people.*” – Barclay

“The ‘proud’ are those who arrogantly defy God and refuse to admit His sovereignty over their lives.” – Vaughan

Thinks more highly of himself than he ought. (Rom. 12:3)

Is opposed to, resists (KJV) –

ἀντιτάσσει antitassetai But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says,

“God **is opposed to** the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

ἀντιτάσσω antitassō **oppose; resist**

verb, present, middle, indicative, third person, singular

Sense: to oppose – to be against; express opposition to.

BDAG oppose, resist

LXGRCANLEX oppose, resist; to oppose

“God sets Himself in battle array and deals with them so as to defeat their plans and frustrate their aims.” – Vaughan

“This pride shuts itself off from God for three reasons. (1) *It does not know its own need.* It so admires itself that it recognizes no need to be supplied. (2) *It cherishes its own independence.* It will be indebted or obligated to no one and not even to God. (3) *It does not recognize its own sin.* It is occupied with thinking of its own goodness and never realizes that it has any sin from which it needs to be saved. A pride like that cannot receive help, because it does not know that it needs help, and therefore it cannot ask.” – Barclay

Humble –

ταπεινός tapeinois But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace **to the humble.**”

ταπεινός tapeinos **humble; lowly**

adjective, dative, plural, masculine

Sense: humble person – a person characterized by humility.

BDAG lowly, undistinguished, of no account; pliant, subservient, abject; humble

LXGRCANLEX lowly; humble; humble; lowly

The opposite of proud or arrogant. One who thinks correctly about his place, with respect to God and others.

“But grace has a constant characteristic—**we cannot receive it until we have realized our need of it and have come to God humbly pleading for help.** Therefore, it must always remain true that God sets himself against the proud and **gives lavishly of his grace to the humble.**”

2 Chronicles 12:5–7 – ⁵Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, “**Thus says the LORD, ‘You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.’**” ⁶So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.” ⁷When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, “**They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them,** but I will grant them some *measure* of deliverance, and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak.

Verse 7

“The benefits of grace and more grace are ours along the road of obedience and more obedience. **The God who says ‘Here is my grace to receive’ says in the same breath, ‘Here are my commands to obey.’**” ... “The Bible, as so often, **not only tells us what is true but also how to respond to what is true.** The truth is a **superabundant supply of grace (6); the response is an obedient walk with God, itemized in verses 7–9.**” – Motyer

“This paragraph consists of a series of brief exhortations uttered with the staccato of military commands.” ... “**Nowhere does James sound more like an Old Testament prophet than here.**” – Vaughan

2. Active Allegiance

ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ· ἀντίστητε δὲ Submit **therefore** to God. Resist the τῷ διαβόλῳ, καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν· devil and he will flee from you.

All relevant translations use the same English words for these key Greek words in this verse.

Submit (Imperative (22.5.7)) –

Imperative number 27!!!

ὑποτάγητε hypotagēte **Submit** therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

ὑποτάσσω hypotassō **subject; subordinate**

verb, aorist, passive, imperative, second person, plural

Sense: to be submissive – to be or become inclined or willing to submit to orders or wishes of others or showing such inclination.

[BDAG](#) to subject, to subordinate; attach, append, subjoin

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to subordinate; to subject; to obey

“To place ourselves under God’s lordship, and therefore to commit ourselves to obey him in all things.” – Moo

“The English translation *submit* does not do full justice to the Greek it translates, chiefly because some ways in which we use the idea of submission point to the end of struggling and the onset of passivity. In this way, we ‘submit’ to superior forces: further resistance is useless.” ... “The verb (*hypotassō*) speaks of a subordinate’s readiness to await commands and to do the will of the superior.” – Motyer

“To subordinate ourselves to Him, to bring our wills under His control, to yield cordial obedience to His commands.” – Vaughan

Resist (Imperative (23.5.7)) –

Imperative number 28!!!

ἀντίστητε antistēte Submit therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you.

[ἀνθίστημι](#) anthistēmi **oppose; resist**

[verb, aorist, active, imperative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to oppose – to be against; express opposition to.

[BDAG](#) set oneself against, oppose; resist

[LXGRCANLEX](#) oppose; resist; to oppose; to resist

“Take your stand against.” – Vaughan

“If the translation *submit* is too passive, the translation *resist* is, if anything, too active! It is not a word for one who is carrying the attack over into the enemy camp, but for one who is manning the defences, knowing that enemy pressure is ceaseless and that he is constantly under fire.” – Motyer

Devil –

διαβόλω diabolō Submit therefore to God. Resist the **devil** and he will flee from you.

[διάβολος](#) diabolos **devil**

[adjective, dative, singular, masculine](#)

[BDAG](#) slanderous; the adversary/devil

[LXGRCANLEX](#) adversary/devil; devil; slanderous

How do we resist the devil? Eph. 6:10-17:

Ephesians 6:10–17 – ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

He will flee –

φεύξεται pheuxetai Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and **he will flee** from you.

[φεύγω](#) pheugō **escape; flee**

[verb, future, middle, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to flee – to run or move away quickly, so as to escape.

[BDAG](#) flee; escape; flee from, avoid, shun; vanish, disappear

[LXGRCANLEX](#) flee; escape; to flee; to flee from; to escape

James gives us a promise we can count on: If we resist the devil, he will flee from us!

“Christians must have no doubt in their minds whose side they are on; and by their lives they must leave no doubt in the minds of others that they are God’s enlisted subordinates and the devil’s unyielding opponents.” – Motyer

Verse 8

3. Deliberately Cultivated Fellowship

ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι.	Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
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Zechariah 1:3 – ³“Therefore say to them, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts.

Draw near (Imperative (24.5.7)) –

Imperative number 29!!!

ἐγγίσατε engisate **Draw near** to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

ἐγγίζω engizō **draw near; come near**

[verb](#), [aorist](#), [active](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to draw near – to be moving toward and not be far distant from a destination.

[BDAG](#) draw near, come near, approach

[LXGRCANLEX](#) draw near; approach; to come near

He will draw near –

ἐγγιεῖ engiei Draw near to God and **He will draw near** to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

ἐγγίζω engizō **draw near; come near**

[verb](#), [future](#), [active](#), [indicative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

And James gives us a second promise: If we draw near to God, he *will* draw near to us! But note who has to act first.

Psalm 145:18 – ¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

“Like the father of the prodigal son, God stands always ready to welcome back his children who turn from their sinful ways.” – Moo

“*More grace* is given to those who set their feet on the path of obedience.” – Motyer

“Indeed, if we are true to James, we will see this command to *draw near* as the first obedience required of those who have subordinated themselves to God and propose to resist the devil. For James is not snatching haphazard commands out of the air. He is setting out for us an ordered programme of obedience. **The first element in the conflict is this central battle to live near God, the battle for regularity and discipline in Bible reading, prayer, private and public worship, feasting at the Lord’s Table, devoting ourselves to Christian fellowship,** cultivating every appointed avenue whereby we can draw near to him.” – Motyer

4. Thoroughgoing Purification of Our Lives

Psalm 24:3–4 – ³Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.

Cleanse, wash (NIV) (Imperative (25.5.7)) –

Imperative number 30!!!

καθαρίσατε katharisate Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

καθαρίζω katharizō **purify; cleanse; make clean**

[verb](#), [aorist](#), [active](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to cleanse (of evil) – to purge of evil.

[BDAG](#) make clean, cleanse; make clean, heal; make clean, declare clean

[LXGRCANLEX](#) make clean; to make clean; to cleanse; to purify

Your hands –

χειρας cheiras Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse **your hands**, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[χείρ](#) cheir **hand**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [plural](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: agency ⇔ hand – the means or agency for accomplishing some end understood as a human hand which is often a means itself.

[BDAG](#) hand (of); in hand; continually

[LXGRCANLEX](#) hand

Sinners –

ἁμαρτωλοί hamartōloi Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you **sinners**; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[ἁμαρτωλός](#) hamartōlos **sinner**

[adjective](#), [vocative](#), [plural](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: sinner – a person who has disobeyed any divine command or neglected any duty (whether intentionally or unintentionally).

[BDAG](#) sinful; the sinner; irreligious

[LXGRCANLEX](#) sinful; sinner

“The hardened sinner, the one whose sin is obvious and notorious.” – Barclay

Purify (Imperative (26.5.7)) –

Imperative number 31!!!

ἀγνίσαιτε hagnisate Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and **purify** your hearts, you double-minded.

[ἀγνίζω](#) hagnizō **purify**

[verb](#), [aorist](#), [active](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to purify (moral) – to make pure or free from sin or guilt or other undesirable traits.

[BDAG](#) purify; to dedicate oneself

[LXGRCANLEX](#) purify; to dedicate; to purify

Hearts –

καρδίας kardias Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify **your hearts**, you double-minded.

[καρδία](#) kardia **heart**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [plural](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: self ⇔ heart – the locus of a person’s thoughts (mind), volition, emotions, and knowledge of right from wrong (conscience).

[BDAG](#) heart; interior, center, heart

[LXGRCANLEX](#) heart

Double-minded –

Same as 1:8

δίψυχοι dipsychoi Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you **double-minded**.

[δίψυχος](#) dipsychos **double-minded; doubting**

[adjective](#), [vocative](#), [plural](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: double minded – characterized by a duality of selves (as in one’s desires or thinking) that are in opposition to one another; especially that results in a lack of decisiveness.

[BDAG](#) doubting, hesitating

[LXGRCANLEX](#) doubting, hesitating; double-minded

As opposed to God having our “whole heart.”

“Like Old Testament priests, we are to “wash [our] hands”; to seek forgiveness for, and put away from us, outward sins. And at the same time, the inner attitude must be made right—our hearts are to be purified.” – Elwell

“James demands a moral reform which will embrace both their outward conduct and their inner desires.” – Barclay

“In this thoroughgoing purification, notice who is to be the agent: *cleanse your hands. you sinners.* This is not the work of the Holy Spirit; it is the work of the energized believer. Just as James said to us in 1:21 that we are to go to it like a gardener, and hoe out the weeds from our lives, so here we are commanded to clean up our conduct and our hearts.” – Motyer

“Logic might suggest that we must clean up our lives and then draw near to God. James’ logic is otherwise, for it is when we know the reality of his presence and come under its holy influence that we are at last in a position to face the demands of holiness, and find ourselves motivated by the desire to be like our God.” – Motyer

Verse 9

5. Lament Our Sin and Repent of It

ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε· ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν·	Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
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Be miserable, be afflicted (KJV), be wretched (ESV), grieve (NIV) (Imperative (27.5.7)) –

Imperative number 32!!!

ταλαιπωρήσατε talaipōrēsate **Be miserable** and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

[ταλαιπώρω](#) talaipōreō **lament; feel miserable**

[verb, aorist, active, imperative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to be miserable – to be very unhappy; full of misery.

[BDAG](#) endure sorrow/distress, be miserable

[LXGRCANLEX](#) endure sorrow; to feel miserable

“What James is demanding is a voluntary restraint from lavish luxury and excessive comfort. He is talking to people who are in love with the world, and he is pleading with them not to make luxury and comfort the standards by which they judge all life. It is discipline which produces the scholar; it is rigorous training which creates the athlete; and it is a wise abstinence which produces the Christian who knows how to use the world and its gifts aright.” – Barclay

Mourn (Imperative (28.5.7)) –

Imperative number 33!!!

πενθήσατε penthēsate **Be miserable and mourn** and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

[πενθέω](#) pentheō **mourn; grieve; be sad**

[verb, aorist, active, imperative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to grieve (feeling) – to feel grief or sorrow.

[BDAG](#) be sad, grieve, mourn; mourn over

[LXGRCANLEX](#) be sad, grieve; to mourn

“James is demanding that these self-satisfied, luxury-loving, unworried hearers of his should be confronted with their sins and should be ashamed, grief-stricken and afraid, for only then can they reach out for grace and go on to a joy far greater than their earthbound pleasures.” – Barclay

Weep, wail (NIV) (Imperative (29.5.7)) –

Imperative number 34!!!

κλαύσατε klausate **Be miserable and mourn and weep;** let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

[κλαίω](#) klaiō **cry; weep**

[verb, aorist, active, imperative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to bawl – to cry loudly.

[BDAG](#) weep, cry; weep for, bewail

[LXGRCANLEX](#) weep; to weep

“The words in general suggest a deeply repentant state of mind, a sober moral earnestness in dealing with the reality of sin.” – Vaughan

“James is insisting that the griefs and the needs of others should pierce the armour of their own pleasure and comfort. We are not truly Christians until we become aware of the poignant cry of that humanity for which Christ died.” – Barclay

Laughter –

γέλως gelōs Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your **laughter** be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

[γέλως](#) gelōs **laughter**

[noun](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: laughter – the vocal activity of laughing; the manifestation of joy or mirth or scorn.

[BDAG](#) laughter

[LXGRCANLEX](#) laughter

Mourning –

πένθος penthos Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into **mourning** and your joy to gloom.

[πένθος](#) penthos **mourning**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: mourning – lamentation, often as the resulting state of sorrow over the death or departure of a loved one.

[BDAG](#) grief, sadness, mourning

[LXGRCANLEX](#) grief, sadness; mourning

Let be turned, change (NIV) (Imperative (30.5.7)) –

Imperative number 35!!!

μετατραπήτω metatrapētō Be miserable and mourn and weep; **let** your laughter **be turned** into mourning and your joy to gloom.

[μετατρέπω](#) metatrepō **turn around**

[verb](#), [aorist](#), [passive](#), [imperative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

Sense: to turn (change) – to undergo a transformation or a change of position or action.

[BDAG](#) turn around

[LXGRCANLEX](#) turn around; to turn around

Joy –

χαρά chara Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and **your joy** to gloom.

[χαρά](#) chara **joy**

[noun](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: joy (source) – anything that causes cheer and dispels gloom.

[BDAG](#) joy

[LXGRCANLEX](#) joy

Gloom, heaviness (KJV) –

κατήφειαν katēpheian Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to **gloom**.

[κατήφεια](#) katēpheia **gloominess; dejection**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: melancholy – a feeling of thoughtful sadness.

[BDAG](#) gloominess, dejection

[LXGRCANLEX](#) gloominess, dejection; gloominess

“Properly, a *casting down of the eyes.*” – Vincent

“They express the contrast between the loud unseemly gaiety of the pleasure-seeker, and the subdued mien and downcast look of the penitent.” – Oesterley

“True Christian joy comes not with the ignoring of sin, but with the experience of the forgiveness of sin; and we have to see the serious effects of our sin before we can truly turn from it and find forgiveness.” – Elwell

“The intensity of the appeal is intended to startle halfhearted believers into a sober searching of soul.” – Vaughan

“The purpose of God is to lead us *down* into the lowest place of self-awareness and lamentation (9). This is the goal of the program: the decisive taking of sides (7) leads into the practice of the presence of God (8a). This in turn prompts the longing (8b) to be like him in holiness. As always, the more we pursue his likeness, the more deeply and sorrowfully our sinfulness and shortcomings are exposed (9). But the Lord sets the downward path before us because there is no other way up (10).” – Motyer

“True Christian joy can never be ours if we ignore sin; it comes only when we have squarely faced the reality of our sin, brought it before the Lord in repentance and humility, and experienced the cleansing work of the Spirit.” – Moo

Verse 10

ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου, καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.	Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
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Matthew 23:12 – ^{12a}Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

Humble yourselves (Imperative (31.5.7)) –

Imperative number 36!!!

ταπεινώθητε tapeinōthēte **Humble yourselves** in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

[ταπεινώω](#) tapeinoō **humble; make humble**

[verb, aorist, passive, imperative, second person, plural](#)

Sense: to be brought low (humbled) – to be or become reduced in rank, character, or status.

[BDAG](#) lower; humble, humiliate, abase; humble, make humble; constrain, mortify.

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to lower; humble; to humble; to lower

“To ‘humble ourselves before the Lord’ means to recognize our own spiritual poverty, to acknowledge consequently our desperate need of God’s help, and to submit to his commanding will for our lives.” – Moo

He will exalt you –

ὑψώσει hypsōsei **Humble yourselves** in the presence of the Lord, and **He will exalt you.**

[ὑψώω](#) hypsoō **lift up; exalt**

[verb, future, active, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to exalt ⇔ raise up – to exalt someone, conceived of as lifting the person up.

[BDAG](#) lift up, raise high; exalt

[LXGRCANLEX](#) lift up; exalt; to lift up; to exalt

“Only when people realize their own ignorance will they ask God’s guidance. Only when they realize their own poverty in the things that matter will they pray for the riches of God’s grace. Only when people realize their weakness in necessary things will they come to draw upon God’s strength. Only when they realize their own sin will they realize their need of a Saviour and of God’s forgiveness.” – Barclay

Conclusion

James calls all of his audience to recognize their pursuit of selfish pleasure and what are the symptoms and outcomes of it. He then relates that state of heart to what it really is: adultery against God. But if we will recognize our true dire state, He gives us abundant grace, enough to overcome every obstacle to following Him. And finally, he prescribes 10 steps of obedience to return to a right place with Him.

Psalms 27:8 – ⁸When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”

Are you willing to turn back to God? If not, are you willing to be made willing?