

# James 4 - Humility and Submission

"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because he cares for you." 1 Pet 5:5-7 ESV

## 4v1-5 WARS AND FIGHTING INCONSISTENT WITH OUR CALLING:

**James 4:1-5** is now the climax of his condemnation. He strikes right at the heart of the problem. Envy and strife in the ecclesia and between individuals is shown for what it is. The combatants may dress it up with smooth words of justification, but the reality is as James states it - it is "war". He even calls it "the devil". The teachings of Christ are so opposite to what was happening amongst believers. **Matt 26:52**: "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." cp. **Rev 13:10. Jn 18:36**: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." **1 Pet 3:15-17**: "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

**Lessons for us:** In **Mt 24:49** Jesus warns of the last days where *evil servants* smite their *fellowservants*. A careful comparison with **Matt 18:28-33** reveals this to be a reference to a brother refusing to forgive his *fellowservant* and who acts in hostility towards him. This is no doubt why we have the reference in **James 5:11** to Job who prayed for his friends despite their failings. James concludes (in **5:17-21**) with Elijah and the principle of praying for our brethren and hiding a multitude of sins.

**v1-5 Wars and Fightings:** Anyone who says he is in the truth but hates his brother is actually in darkness: **1 Jn 2:9-11**. Cain hated his brother Abel: **Gen 4:8; 1 Jn 3:12-15**. Jesus however, loved his enemies: **Mt 5:44; Lk 23:34; Jn 13:35**. A careful read of **1 Cor 13** and **2 Tim 3:1-13** reveals some remarkable contrasts. We learn in **Psa 133** and **Jn 17** that unity is a precious thing to maintain. Disunity and division is a serious error: **Prov 6:19; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:3-6**. James shows how worldly influences (the *earthly wisdom* of **3:15-16**) were affecting their relationships. The competitiveness, self-indulgence and materialism in our world can have a deceptive influence on ecclesial life and on how we interact with others.

**v1 War in your members:** Symbol of baser lusts in conflict with *the mind*. The same principle is in **Rom 7:23** in the context of Paul's battle between the thinking of the flesh and of the spirit: **Rom 7:20-8:17**. The carnal mind and the spiritual mind are at *enmity* with one another as a result of the sin in Eden: **Gen 3:15. v2-3 Lust:** The 3 lusts of **1 Jn 2:15-16** are also unrestrained in the last days we live in: **Lk 17:26-30; 2 Tim 3:1-7**. Their prayers were self-indulgent. Compare this with the prayers of **Elijah** and **Job: 5:11,17-20**. See the *Background and Overview* notes.

## CHAPTER 4.

<sup>1</sup> We are to strive against covetousness, <sup>4</sup> intemperance, <sup>5</sup> pride, <sup>11</sup> detraction, &c.; <sup>13</sup> and, mindful ever of the uncertainty of this life, to commit ourselves and all our affairs to God's providence.

**F**ROM whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

<sup>2</sup> Ye lust, and have not: ye <sup>3</sup> kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

<sup>3</sup> Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Not in the original Greek text

<sup>4</sup> Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

<sup>5</sup> Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

<sup>6</sup> But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

<sup>8</sup> Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

<sup>9</sup> Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

**v2-3** NIV "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." Jesus Christ prayed "not my will but thine be done" **Lk 22:42**. Our prayers must be according to the will of Christ and through his name: **Jn 14:12-14; 1 Jn 5:14**. Prayers not acknowledging God's will may result in God giving what we ask, with disastrous results: **Psa 106:14-15**.

**v4 The world:** Defined in **1 Jn 2:15-17**. Overcoming the world involves tribulation, but believers overcome by faith knowing Christ has already overcome on our behalf: **Jn 16:33; 1 Jn 5:4**. He overcomes the world because he is *the lamb* - one who is *submissive to God's will*: **Mt 26:39; Rev 7:13-17; 13:8; 17:14**. Overcoming the world is the goal of those promised the Kingdom in the 7 letters: **Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7**. The final victory of those who overcome the world is in **Rev 11:15; 15:2**. **Enmity: Gen 3:15** Two opposing forces in this struggle: **1. Seed of the serpent:** Those ruled by the natural impulses of human nature and who challenge God's Word, and **2. Seed of the woman:** Those transformed by God's Word.

**v4 Friendship with the world:** Spiritual adultery: **2 Cor 11:2-3**. This is the double-mindedness of **1:8**. See notes on **1:8,14**. No man can serve 2 masters: **Mt 6:24**. Elijah cried, "How long will you go limping between 2 different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" **1 Kgs 18:21**. James uses **Elijah** in his conclusion: **5:17-20**. **Jezebel** is a symbol of unfaithfulness by bringing the world into the ecclesia: **Rev 2:20-22**.

**v5** ESV "Do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?" Not a direct quote but an overall summary of **Ex 20:5; 34:13-16; Zech 1:14; 8:2**. They were acting as if they didn't believe God's words. Separation from the world is a consistent principle: **Gen 3:15; Dan 4:17; Rom 8:7; 12:2; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; 1 Jn 2:15**.

Resist the Devil and he will flee from you 4:7

1. The devil has the power of Death: Heb 2:14

Jas 1:15 "SIN bringeth forth death"

1 Cor 15:56 "The sting of death is SIN"

Rom 5:21 "SIN hath reigned unto death"

Rom 6:23 "The wages of SIN is death"

2. The devil sins from the beginning: 1 Jn 3:8

Rom 5:12 "By one MAN sin entered into the world"

3. The devil a murderer from the beginning:

Jn 8:44; 1 Cor 15:21 "By MAN came death"

Rom 7:11 "For SIN... deceived me, and slew me"

4. Jesus was tempted of the devil: Lk 4:2

Heb 4:15 "in all points tempted like as we are"

Jas 1:14 "But every MAN is tempted, when he is drawn away of HIS OWN LUST and enticed..."

"It is written"

The Power of

God's Word to

resist the devil

Prov 2:1-5; 3:1-6

Psa 119:105

Matt 4:1-13

Jn 15:3; 17:14-17

1 Cor 4:15; 15:1-2

Eph 5:26; 6:13-18

1 Thess 2:13

1 Tim 4:6,16

1 Tim 3:15-17

Heb 4:12

**Envy:** Caused the Jews to deliver up Christ to be crucified: **Mt 27:18**. Envy, strife causes division: **Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 3:3; 11:18**.

## v6-10 THE SOLUTION IS HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION

**v6 Grace:** Citation from **Prov 3:34**. God's grace is conditional on repentance: **Isa 55:6-7; Acts 3:19**. **Proud:** See notes on **Jas 3:5**. **Humble:** **Isa 57:15; 66:2; Mt 5:3-5; Mk 10:15; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 3:4**.

**v7 The devil:** Symbol of fleshly human desires: **Mt 13:19,39; Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 2:13-14. 1 Jn 3:8**. Jesus "destroyed the works of the devil." He defeated sin on our behalf. We must also flee temptation: **1 Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22**. **Submit:** **Mt 5:38-45; Rom 6:13**. Christ was *the ultimate example* of submission to his Father's will - *the lamb*: **Lk 23:46; Jn 10:15-17; Rev 5:8-9**. We must also be submissive to rulers and each other: **1 Pet 2:13; 5:5-7**.

**v8 Purify:** **Mt 5:8** "Blessed are the pure in heart". God's Word is what purifies us: **Jn 17:19; 2 Cor 7:1; Jms 4:8; 1 Pet 1:22**.

**v9** James exhorts us to expend energy in considering our position before God. Once humbled, we are in a state where God can work with us: **Psa 18:24-27; 119:67,71; Dan 4:33-37; Joel 2:13**.

<sup>10</sup> "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

<sup>11</sup> "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."

<sup>12</sup> There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: "who art thou that judgest another?"

<sup>13</sup> "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

<sup>14</sup> Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

<sup>15</sup> For that ye ought to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

<sup>16</sup> But now ye rejoice in your boastings: "all such rejoicing is evil."

<sup>17</sup> Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

**v10** Principle from **Prov 18:12**. Meditate upon **Psalms 73** in the context of **James 4:1-10**.

**v11-12 PRESUMPTIOUS JUDGMENTS:** Emphasis on *brother / brethren* - Same as in **1 Jn 3:10-17**. That example is Cain and Abel. Abel is not mentioned by name, but "*his brother*". The issue here is the same - love for the *brethren*. Those of the devil follow in the footsteps of Cain. See also **Mt 7:1-5; Rom 2:1**.

**v13-17 WARNING AGAINST PRESUMPTIOUS SPEAKING:** Jesus taught this principle: **Mt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-31**. "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring": **Prov 27:1**. Prayer should be an important part of our lives. The success or failure of any venture is subject to God's will. **Lk 18:1; Acts 21:14; Phil 4:6; 1 Jn 5:14-15. v16 Boastings:** **Prov 27:1**. Only other occurrence of Gk is **1 Jn 2:16** "pride of life".

We will see in **James 5** that the solution to all these problems is found in the lives of **Job** and **Elijah**: Prayer, forgiveness and allowing God to shape our characters in the experiences of life.

Colour code: Blue (God & Jesus); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation). Prepared for Study Week 2012 - Listen to Live. For a PDF file, go to [www.studyweek.net](http://www.studyweek.net) or email [acdangerfield@webshield.net.au](mailto:acdangerfield@webshield.net.au). Much assistance for this study has been obtained from notes by John Martin, NZ youth conference notes and talks by Carl Parry, John Martin and David Bailey.