

“In the Sight of the Lord”

4:1-10 - ENVY AND STRIFE

4:1-5 - Cause of contentions

Having identified the striving and envy amongst the teachers, (in contrast to the peace of Godly wisdom), James now reaches the climax of his condemnation; revealing that his readers had not been sowing the fruit of righteousness in peace (Jam 3:18; cp also Jam 1:20) but rather that they were in a state of war, and that their whole attitude and behaviour was caused by their friendship with the world, thus making themselves enemies of God (and therefore not true children). Notice this time he does not use the term “My brethren”, in order to emphasise his denunciation.

Verse 1: From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?



Wey: “What causes wars and contentions among you? Is it not the cravings which are ever at war within you for various pleasures?”

Wars: *polemos* (4171) - warfare. Thayer’s describes this as a “dispute, strife, quarrel”. This word denotes “contentions” varying in degrees from verbal controversy to open warfare (cp Matt 24:6; 1 Cor 14:8). This word is used throughout the book of Revelation for literal wars (cp Rev 9:7; 11:7; 12:7; 17:14 etc.). The Ecclesia was reflecting the turmoil that was happening between the Jews and the Romans. Among the Jews also, there were many factions and great hostility between them. This had obviously rubbed off on the believers, so that a similar spirit had been manifested by them. The submissiveness demanded of Christ’s followers is often overlooked in times of strife, as the battle turns from seeking one another’s good to a battle of “each for their own” (cp 1 Cor 10:24).

Fightings: *mache* (3163) - a battle, striving, controversy. This word is mainly used for verbal disputes (cp John 6:52; 2 Tim 2:23-25; Tit 3:9). Fighting should not have been within the ecclesia but rather kept outside of it (2 Cor 7:5).



There is a time to contend for the faith (cp Jude 3) but only on the basis of faith, not fleshly motives. In defending the faith, one is fighting for God and not for self, therefore the conduct of such warfare must be in a manner He would approve of (cp 2 Cor 10:3-6; Eph 6:10-18).

Lusts: *hedone* (2237) - noun: pleasures, (sensual) delights. (Used again in vs 3). The worldly pleasures of pride and self-esteem had preoccupied the Ecclesia (it is rendered ‘pleasure’ in Luke 8:14 and Titus 3:3; see also Psalm 62:10). This is the actual thing they lusted after (vs 2).



War: *strateuomai* (4754) - to serve in a military campaign. "Taking the field in your members" (Roth). Fleshly pleasures had created campaigns of controversy in the midst of the Ecclesia. The state of evil that had developed gave no satisfaction. Those who indulged in such wars knew it was wrong, yet they had been so overcome by desire to gain pleasures, that it was difficult to turn away and found it a hard habit to break. Paul and Peter use the same metaphor for the individual contests between the flesh and the spirit (cp Rom 7:23; 1 Pet 2:11). The Ecclesia was allowing the flesh to build up its forces and not allowing the spirit to war for them. Their communal battles, which were fought over personalities and pleasures, were a result of personal wars which had been fought and lost. A brother may win a victory in a controversy, yet lose a miserable victory in himself. It is only through Christ that we can overcome such battles (cp Rom 7:24-25), for he has already overcome the world (John 16:33), and it is through faith in him that we can do the same (1 John 5:4).

The question James asks is: "From whence" - i.e. "above" (3:17-18) or below "earthy" (3:14-16)? The answer, as he goes on to say, is from your lusts, which are of "below", as are the thorns in the parable of the sower. The cares and riches and pleasures (same word - *hedone*) choke the good seed and bring forth no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14).



Our environment is constantly under battle. What are some of the things that cause conflict amongst us? Are they caused by the enmity between the flesh and the spirit, or are they caused purely by lust? How can we tell the difference?

Verse 2: Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.



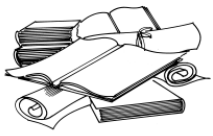
RSV: "You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war".

Lust: *epithumeo* (1937) - verb: to set the heart upon, that is, long for (rightfully or otherwise):- covet, desire, lust (after). The noun form of this word is "*epithumia*" (1939) - it is used in Jam 1:14-15 and 1 John 2:16-17. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life had caused them to lust after the pleasures of the world. This is also the spirit of the last days (2 Tim 3:1-7). The believers desired riches and pre-eminence. They should rather have acted with the spirit of Paul who coveted no man's possessions, but rather looked for an inheritance in the future, while supporting the weak in the present (Acts 20:32-36; see also 1 Tim 6:17-19).

And ye have not: God had not answered their requests (vs 3). They had prayed for Him to fulfil their material desires and He had rightly refused. This frustrated desire causes a jealous spirit.

Kill: *phoneuo* (5407) - to be a murderer. From the context (vs 1-3) the word seems most likely to be literal as all James' phrases suggest actual violence (either physically or verbally). Contrast this with the clearly figurative interpretation of "adulteresses" in vs 4. This is not to say that murder was common in the Ecclesia - it would only take one incident to justify James' language. The source of their trouble came from their frustrated personal desires, causing jealousy for another's possessions, and given the opportunity, the ultimate result will eventuate (cp Cain - Gen 4:8; see Prov 1:19; Isa 59:1-14).

Violence is common for mankind (cp Mark 15:7; Acts 21:38; Gal 5:15,19-21). These vices had been brought into the Ecclesia (cp David - 2 Sam 11:15; cp 1 Pet 4:15). They should rather have "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24), instead of killing their brethren.



Even if the Ecclesia was not involved in physical violence (as some commentators suggest - for example see Bro. H.P. Mansfield, *James to Jude Expositor*, Pg 60) James' words stress how God views their contentions (cp Matt 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15).

Desire to have: *zeloo* (2206). Strong's definition states "to have a warm feeling for or against, (from a root word "zelos" - zeal), covet, be jealous over."

Thayer's and the Diaglott however are much stronger:



The Diaglott says "Ye strongly desire".

Thayer's states:

"To burn with zeal

- To be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger
- To desire earnestly, pursue
- To envy"

Obtain: *epitugchano* (2013) - to chance upon, that is, (by implication) attain.



This word is only used in 3 other places elsewhere. Using Englishman's, look up the occasions. What should they have been seeking after and trying to obtain?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Covetousness (desiring what others have) was another cause of the Ecclesia's problems. They not only lusted for the things they did not possess, but foolishly, things that were beyond their reach. They forgot the great joy, benefit and incredible riches to be discovered in Christ. They forgot he who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor 8:9; cp vs 1-5).



In their efforts to satisfy their fleshly desires, the Ecclesia had become a quarrelling, ruthless battlefield. We need to take heed to Christ's warning in Luke 12:15 and be content with what we have (cp Phil 4:11; 1 Tim 6:6-8; Heb 13:5). God will provide for our needs (cp Matt 6:31-34). We need to focus our desire on being rich in faith (cp Jam 2:5) otherwise we will find ourselves worse off (cp 1 Tim 6:9-12). Faith is necessary to recognise the real purpose in life, to realise how temporary and limited are the things of the present, and how eternal and glorious are those things of the Truth's future (2 Cor 4:18). It makes a reality of hope. It has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim 4:8; see also Rom 8:24-25; 2 Cor 6:10). Notice that the men and women of Hebrews 11 had little of this world's goods (vs 36-37), but of them it is declared: "of them the world was not worthy" (vs 38).

Yet ye have not, because ye ask not: We are exhorted to make our requests known unto God (cp Phil 4:6) but there are certain conditions:

1. "Delight thyself in Yahweh" (Psa 37:4);
2. "Believing, ye shall receive" (Matt 21:21-22);
3. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Jam 1:5-8);
4. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psa 34:4)



What would the true desires of our hearts be if we truly delighted in Yahweh?

If they had truly sought God and His Will, they would have been blessed with what they needed, and would have been able to obtain the desires of their heart.

Verse 3: Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ye ask: James anticipates their reply that they have already asked in prayer. They did engage in prayer, but not in the correct manner, nor with the correct motivation.

Receive: *lambano* (2983) - to take, to get hold of (what is given). This is the same word as in Jam 1:7. Their prayers were not in the right spirit (cp Ps 66:18). They were not of singleness of mind with God (cp Jam 1:5-7). The prayer of the righteous avails much (Jam 5:16; see Psa 34:15; Prov 15:29).

Amiss: *kakos* (2560) - badly, diseased, miserably, sick - translated also as "evil, harm, wicked". This fittingly describes the state of their prayer (cp Isa 59:1-2). Their prayers were selfish and iniquitous because, though asking God, they had judged His character by asking for their wants with evil intent. It was for their self-indulgence and they thought that He was there to provide all

their desires. This is the same as not asking at all. A prayer must be given according to the will of Christ (1 John 5:14) and through his name (John 14:12-14). We must pray that we can try to live in the spirit of his life and therefore keep the principles of the Truth. A prayer not acknowledging God's Will, not given in the name of Christ nor given by a person trying to live as he did, is a hypocritical prayer and will not be answered. However, sometimes God will give us what we ask, with disastrous results (cp Psalms 81:12; 106:14-15; Ezekiel 14:1-8).

Consume: *dapanao* (1159) - to expend, that is, (in a good sense) to incur cost or, (in a bad sense) to waste. How often are our prayers worded with our own motive in mind? The ideal prayer would be "Not my will but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

There was no thought of glorifying God (cp John 14:13; 1 John 3:22). Had they studied the Lord's Prayer, they would have known the essentials of a good prayer that would please God. Instead they chose to do it their way, like Cain.



Thought to think about and do

How often do we pray asking for what we most desire, without taking into consideration that God knows what is best for us? Compare Christ's prayer in Luke 22:42. What are the things that God wants us to pray for (cp 1 John 5:14-15)?

The above situation of vs 1-3 is what happens when there is only wisdom of judgement and not the wisdom of meekness. It leads on to the next verse - the outcome of such a situation is adultery.

Verse 4: 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.



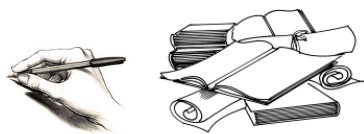
RV: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God".

The word "Adulterers" is omitted in some of the best texts (cp Diag, Roth, RV, RSV, Wey). Why? Because irrespective of gender, a believer constitutes part of a community, the ecclesia - the virgin bride espoused to Christ and, as such, is addressed in the feminine gender (2 Cor 11:2; Isaiah 54:5).

Adulteresses: *moichalis* (3428). James is showing that they have become the defiled bride of Christ (cp 2 Cor 11:2-3; Eph 5:22-32; Rev 19:7; cp Israel - Jer 2:2-3,31-37; ch 3; Ezek 16,23; Hos 2). The bitterness and antagonism that adultery causes in a marriage, is indicative of the feelings Yahweh has towards His people when they prove unfaithful. Marriage necessitates a oneness of mind, but the believers were requesting something that had been prompted from another "husband". Compare Christ's condemnation in Matt 12:39. The punishment for adultery under the Law was death (see Lev 20:10), and that too shall be the fate of those of Christ's bridal community who have been unfaithful to him in his absence, though they may have been moral in all other relationships. Those to whom James wrote would doubtless have been appalled at the expression used as descriptive of their conduct. They probably considered themselves as hardworking, conscientious people striving to be a success in life whilst worshipping God.

Friendship: *philia* (5373) - fondness. From "*philos*" (5384) - dear, friend - actively fond, friendly. This is spiritual adultery. Christ showed what our position with regards to the world should be (John 15:18-19, cp vs 15; cp Jam 2:23).

World: *kosmos* (2889) - arrangement. This is what the world stands for, its organisation, policies, and beliefs (cp 1 John 2:15-17; John 17:14).

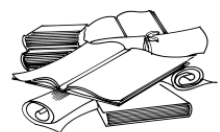


If you have not done so already, it would be a good word study to study the English word "world" in the New Testament. There are a few different Greek words used. Using Strong's and Englishman's, find the different occasions and meanings. You may want to colour which words mean the different meanings throughout the New Testament.

Enmity: *echthra* (2189) - hostility. (cp Rom 8:7-8; see Gen 3:15). This is a battle that began at the very foundation of the world between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and has continued down through the ages. Who are we to let our hearts be turned back to Egypt, and turn our backs on the very God who has brought us out of darkness into a marvellous light (see Acts 7:39; 1 Pet 2:9-10), and how can we dare to fight against Christ who abolished the enmity, making peace, that we may be reconciled to God (Eph 2:12-17)?

Will: *boulomai* (1014) - to be willing (passive sense). "To will deliberately" (Vine). They did it intentionally!

Is: *kathistemi* (2525) - to place down, design, constitute, appoint. This is the same word as "made" in Rom 5:19.

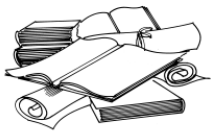


See *Elpis Israel*, Pg 135-146 - "Constitution of Sin" and "Constitution of Righteousness". The Ecclesia was going back to its old constitution. Compare Demas (2 Tim 4:10). See also Page 1, paragraph 3 to Page 2, paragraph 2.

Enemy: *echthros* (2190) - hateful, adversary. We cannot serve two masters (cp Matt 6:24; Rom 6:12-13; 8:8; Gal 5:17).



In today's environment, what does it mean to have friendship with the world? Why is it at enmity with God?



"God and the world are sworn enemies. Hence to be 'the friend of the world is to be the enemy of God'. No one who is on God's side can be a friend of the world; he will entirely disrelish the world, and the world will heartily hate him. This arises from mutual incompatibility." - Bro. John Thomas.

Verse 5: Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain,



Diag: "Or do you suppose that the Scripture speaks falsely?" (cp RV, Roth).

The Greek text of this verse is unclear and there have been various translations put forward. The most reasonable meaning is that James first asked if his readers thought that the Scripture said in vain, that there was enmity between the world and God. Then he asks if the spirit that they had been begotten with, lusts to envy, like they had been doing. The answer of course is "no", and so James shows them that in contrast with their character, God's Spirit gives far greater grace (vs 6).

Vain: *kenos* (2761) - to no purpose. This is related to "vain" (2756) in Jam 2:20 - empty ("with reference to quality") (Vines).

The Greek is better rendered as a question referring to the previous point concerning the enmity between God and the world (cp Diag, RV, Roth). James asks the believers if they thought that the Scripture had no purpose in stating the principle, that God's children should be hostile towards the world (cp Gen 3:15; Rom 8:7). The answer of course is that there was a purpose. The world does not want to manifest God's character and will not bring glory to His name. Far from being the world's friend, we should not have anything to do with its motivation and activities, but rather look to the time when it shall be crushed in the head. The principle is emphasised throughout Scripture by the call to separation from the world and unto God (cp 2 Cor 6:14 - 7:1; Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 2:9). The believers were acting as if they didn't believe God's Word to be true. They were not DOING the Word because they hadn't HEARD or understood it (Jam 1:22).

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, a king was commanded to copy out his own copy of the Law and read it all the days of his life. Why? So that he might "learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this Law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left..." (vs 19-20). If the believers of James had done likewise, they would not have had the issues they were having then.



Do we always act as if we believe what God says about friendship with the world? Have we swapped the friendship we have with God for the world's friendship? Can you think of any Bible characters who did this?

The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?



Diag: "Does the spirit that dwells in us strongly incline to envy?"

Dwelleth: *katoikeo* (2730) - to house permanently, reside.

Lusteth: *epipotheo* (1971) - intensely crave, long for, desire.

Envy: *phthonos* (5355) - ill-will, jealousy, "envy, is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word (cp Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10; Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 3:3; 1 Pet 2:1); envy desires to deprive another of what he has" (Vines).

James is referring here to God's spirit generated by His Word (cp vs 6 where the subject is clearly God). Using a rhetorical question (cp Jam 3:11-12), James is highlighting the cause of the failure of the Jewish believers. The spirit of man desires to the point of envy (cp Ecc 4:4; Gal 5:21; 1 Pet 2:1) and this was what they were manifesting. But they had been begotten by the Word of Truth (cp Jam 1:18). The spirit generated by that Word does not desire to the extent of envy for what the world has. The believers were acting inconsistently with their calling by manifesting the spirit of the world (and they had blamed God for it! - cp Jam 1:13). The spirit of God and the spirit of man were at war within their members. God had caused the enmity ("I will put enmity" - Gen 3:15) therefore we must fight to resist the devil as God has done (cp vs 7) and then bring ourselves back to our God walking humbly before Him (Mic 6:8).



What is our attitude to the things the world offers? Do we see them as God does? (Developing God's perspective is the single most important element in crucifying the flesh).

4:6-10 - Solution is to submit to God

Having highlighted where we go wrong, James now shows us the process that we need to undergo to correct our relationship with our Father. God's way is far more satisfying than what the world can offer. He will oppose those who are proud and refuse to submit to Him, but will exalt those who humble themselves and seek the means to rid the spirit of the world from their lives.

Verse 6: But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.



Diag: "Indeed, it bestows superior favour".

But: This is a point of contrast with the last statement. God's spirit instead bestows grace to him who humbly returns to Him.

Grace: *charis* (5485) - favour, liberality.

This answers the question of vs 5. Rather than lusting to the point of envy, the spirit of Godliness develops grace within us. Not only does it give true satisfaction in this life, but also in the life to come.

Wherefore He saith: "Therefore it is said" (Diag) - "It" being the Scriptures (this is a quote from Prov 3:34).

Resisteth: *antitassomai* (498) - to range in battle against, oppose (this is a military term - cp vs 1-2). God will keep His Word for it hasn't been said in vain - He will fight in battle.

Proud: *huperephanos* (5244) - "showing one's self above others, with an over-weening (arrogant) estimate of one's means or merits" (Grimm-Thayer). Pride only leads to shame (cp Prov 11:2). God will not force His affection where He is not welcome or loved.



Grace: Same word as above. Though He will fight, God will give grace to those who turn to Him, on one condition: they must come forward in humility (Psa 10:12-18).

Humble: *tapeinos* (5011) - depressed, humiliated. Thayer's states: "brought low with grief... lowly in spirit" (See Isa 66:2; 2 Chron 32:24-26).

This is a quote (according to the Septuagint version) from Prov 3:34 (cp 1 Pet 5:5-6). God opposes those who are too proud to leave the world (cp Prov 16:5,18-19), hence James' readers were not receiving what they sought (cp vs 1-3). But those who humble themselves will be blessed by God with His Divine favour (cp Isa 57:15; Matt 23:12). Notice that God's favour is not given indiscriminately. There is a need to submit to His will in humility. When a person does this, God will extend Himself to assist those who seek His help.



What are ways in which we can become humble? How should we show this humility to God, in the ecclesia and in the world?

Can you think of any character that manifested this trait? Can you think of anyone who didn't?

Verse 7: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit: *hupotasso* (5293) - to rank under - thus to endorse the higher status of the one above and submit to the discipline and orders he commands. This is a military term (Rom 6:13 (mg); 2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-18; 1 Tim 1:18).



Who is our military leader? How do we submit to God?

In contrast with submission to human authority, submission to God shows strength of faith. It involves the rejection of our servitude to sin (cp Rom 6:16-19; see also 1 Pet 5:5-11). We are commanded to "depart from evil and to do good" (see Psa 34:13-15,18; 37:27; Isa 1:16-17; Eph 4:27-28; 1 Thess 5:21-22).

Resist: *anthistemi* (436) - to stand against, oppose - another military term. The only way to overcome our lusts is to view them as a bitter enemy. The battle can only have one victor.



Compare Peter's use of the word concerning the Roman authorities (**1 Pet 5:8-9**), who were arresting Christians on charges of sedition and subjecting them to all kinds of persecution.

Devil: *diabolos* (1228). This refers to all aspects of sin (cp Mark 7:21; Rom 7:23-24; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8). This was the dominating spirit which dwelt within them (cp vs 1-5). It should have been God's spirit.



James based the principle of resisting the devil on our Lord's temptation. The principle set forth is that constant resistance to evil will gradually minimise its influence on our desires. This does not mean we can change our nature, but rather with self-control, we can limit its power. Each new onslaught will have less force only if we keep our resistance strong; but to concede defeat and to practice evil, makes it more difficult to depart from this way of death.



Paul and the other writers often compare our spiritual warfare with that of two armies fighting. Using a concordance, look up such words as war, armour, sword etc. to discover how we should be fighting the world and its lusts. What weapons should we use? How are we to wield these weapons in our own life, ecclesially, and in the world?

Flee: *pheugo* (5343) - to run away.



1 Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim 6:10-11; 2 Tim 2:22; see vs 20-26.

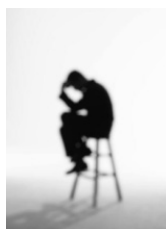


By fortifying ourselves with the armour of the spirit, our lusts will find no place vulnerable to attack (cp Eph 6:11; 1 Peter 4:1-2), and by taking a positive approach to the battle, we are able to send them retreating as Christ did (cp Matt 4:10-11; Luke 4:13). Consistent resistance to their influence will minimise their power over us. On the other hand, if we submit to our nature, every battle becomes harder to overcome until we find ourselves submitting to the devil and resisting God. Our ultimate objective should be to subdue the lust of the flesh to death entirely (Col 3:5; 1 Cor 15:54-57).



What are the practical things we can do to “resist the devil”? What good things can we do instead, to draw nigh to God?

Resist the devil	Draw nigh to God
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•



Thought to think about and do

Do we follow Christ’s example when we encounter temptations and counter every lust with a firm “It is written...!” (Luke 4:8,13)? Are our minds filled enough with the Word for this to come automatically, or are we deceived because we can’t distinguish the Truth from a lie because we have not taken the time to know the commandments of God? Are we actually disobeying, despite knowing the commands of God and treating the Truth as a lie?

Verse 8: Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.

Notice the balance of poetry in these verses -

Resist the devil
and he will flee from you
Draw nigh to God
and He will draw nigh to you.

Separation is a two-fold process.

There is another balance of ideas corresponding the devil with our own actions and thoughts -

Submit to God
Resist the devil
Draw nigh to God
Cleanse your hands, purify your heart

Draw nigh: *eggizo* (1448) - make near, that is, approach. (Contrast Jam 1:14; cp Heb 7:19). We must draw nigh in an acceptable way (see Isa 29:13; Heb 10:22).

This phrase is used in the Septuagint for the approach of the High Priest before God to minister before Him (Exo 19:22; Eze 44:13). However now, not only the High Priests, but we ALSO can draw nigh unto God (Heb 7:19). God draws us (John 6:44) by His love (1 John 4:10,19) which He commends to us (Rom 5:8). However, once we have been drawn and are in a relationship with Him, the relationship will depend on us continually approaching and drawing nigh unto Him. He has consistently promised to help those who seek Him (cp 1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 15:1-4; Isa 55:6-7; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7). Once we turn to Him He will hasten to meet us (cp Luke 15:11-32). Our reaction to His call determines our future relationship with Him. He desires our spontaneous affection, not our forced obedience. When we are the children of God, then our faith will enable us to overcome the world (cp 1 John 5:4). We cannot win the battle against our nature by our own strength, but through Christ all things are possible (cp Phil 4:13).

Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

James uses another parallel -

Cleanse ...	hands ...	sinners	(cleansing of outward vices).
Purify ...	hearts ...	double-minded	(purifying inward defilement).

Both aspects are necessary in drawing near and submitting to God (cp Psa 24:3-6; 73:1-17; see also Lam 3:40-41).



Cleanse: *katharizo* (2511) - translated also as "purge, purify". (See Isa 1:15-18; Psa 51:2).



Here are a few relevant occasions where this word is used. What should we be cleansing from ourselves and rather doing instead of defiling ourselves?

- 2 Cor 7:1 - "cleanse" _____
- Tit 2:14 - "purify" _____
- Heb 9:14 - "purge" _____
- 1 John 1:7,9 - "cleanseth", "cleanse" _____
- Eph 5:26-27 - "cleanse" _____

There was little use drawing nigh like they had (vs 3) with the blood still on their hands. There was a need to cleanse this attitude of envy that had caused strife. It is the Word of God which cleanses us (cp John 15:3; Eph 5:26).

Hands: Clean hands figuratively denote actions that conform to the requirements of Yahweh. To wash or clean the hands was emblematic of putting away transgression (Matt 27:24; cp Deut 21:6-9; Psa 26:6) It is necessary to approach God in the appropriate way (cp Exo 30:17-21; Lev 16:4). We need to "draw nigh in Truth" (Psa 145:17-18). To call upon Him in truth is to match our actions to our words (cp Isa 29:13; Psa 18:20; Matt 15:1-9; Eze 33: 30-32).

Sinners: See Jam 1:13-16.

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners!" This was a call to reform their WAYS.



Can you think of 3 people who cleansed their way from their evil doings? What did they do? Was it an example to other people?

1.	
2.	
3.	



What are ways in which you can change the way you act? What are things you should cleanse in the way you act towards God and towards your peers?



Purify: *hagnizo* (48) - to make clean. (Cp 1 John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:22-25; see also Jer 4:14).

Hearts: *kardia* (2588) - thoughts or feelings. (See Ps 51:6-10; Eze 36:25-28).

Double minded: *dipsuchos* (1374) - two spirited. This was a war in their members! (See notes on Jam 1:8). Our mode of thinking must be pure. Their hearts had been corrupted (2 Cor 11:3) because they had not hid God's Word in their heart that they might not sin against Him (Psa 119:11; see also 37:3). We can't befriend both God and the world (Jam 4:4; 1 Kings 18:21; cp 2 Cor 7:1). Thus, James urges them to purify their mode of thinking to worship God and to serve Him in singleness of heart (Acts 2:46; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22).

"Purify your hearts, ye double minded!" This was an urge to reform their MINDS.



What are ways in which you can change the way you think? What are things you should not have in your mind? What should you be filling your mind with instead?



Note Psalm 73 in the context of James 4:1-10: We must be careful not to envy the rich wicked men. Though they look as if "they are not in trouble" (vs 5), their end shall be destruction and desolation (vs 18-19). However believers may feel they are slipping (vs 2) but they are guided by God's counsel (vs 24) and are "holden by God" (vs 23). "It is good for them to draw near to God" (vs 28) instead of going a whoring from Him (vs 27). Christ has given his life to cleanse and sanctify us, that we might no more be adulteresses but rather "holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:26-27).



Verse 9: Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

Afflicted: *talaiporeo* (5003) - verb: to be wretched, that is, to realise one's own misery. Thayer's - to toil heavily, to endure hardship and labours. A related word *talaiporos* (5005) - the adjective-enduring trial, that is, miserable - is found in Romans 7:24 and Revelation 3:17 as "wretched".



What was the difference between the two attitudes found in Romans 7:24-25 and Revelation 3:17?

Rom 7:24-25	Revelation 3:17



To be afflicted was an attitude demanded of Israel on the Day of Atonement. They were expected to review their state and to sorrow over their shortcomings. Where are we told that this was expected of them (at least twice)? What do they say?

1. _____ :

2. _____ :

James is exhorting us to expend energy in considering our present state. A complete recognition of our unrighteousness in God's sight is the first step in drawing closer to God. It is not until we can fully appreciate what we are, that we can be humbled into a state of mind that God can work with (cp vs 10; see Psa 18:24-27; 119:67,71).

Mourn: *pentheo* (3996) - to grieve.

Weep: *klaio* (2799) - to sob, that is, wail aloud. Judah shall mourn and weep in the day that they realise who their Messiah is (Zech 12:10-14).

This is our natural reaction when we realise our position before God, and is a necessary part of the process (cp 2 Cor 7:10). Christ promises comfort for those who do (cp Matt 5:4; Luke 6:21).

Your laughter: This is the laughter of the fool (Ecc 7:6).

Mourning: *penthos* (3997) - grief.

Your joy: *chara* (5479) - cheerfulness.

Heaviness: *katepheia* (2726). Thayer's says: "a downcast look expressive of sorrow". Such was the attitude of the despised republican (Luke 18:13-14).

The laughter and joy of those to whom James wrote was due to their friendship with the world. It is a hollow joy that seeks to forget the realities of life (cp Ecc 7:2-6; Prov 14:13; Isa 22:12-13; Luke 6:25). True happiness can only be found in submission to God (cp Psa 51:1-12; Isa 61:1-3; see also Lam 3; 5:15-16).

Verse 10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.

Humble: *tapeinoo* (5013) - see verse 6. (See Isa 57:15).

Sight: *enopion* (1799) - in the face of, in the presence of. It is how God perceives us that is important (cp Acts 4:19; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 3:4; 1 John 3:22). The brethren had left God out of their lives (as we shall see in the rest of the chapter).

Lift: *hupsao* (5312) - to elevate. (Cp Jam 1:9; see also Job 5:11; Eze 21:26).



Humbling ourselves is the summary of what James has outlined in the previous three verses. It is a Divine principle that humility comes before honour; the cross before the crown (cp Prov 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23; Matt 11:29; 23:12; Luke 18:14; Phil 2:8-9; 1 Pet 5:5-6). Christ has shown us the way by his example (1 Pet 2:21-25). By humbling ourselves in our own estimation, God will exalt us in His. It is God who is actually exalted (cp Isa 2:10-17). Through manifesting His character we are lifted up with His exaltation. This is a great cause of comfort to those who feel the weakness of the flesh but desire to overcome it.

In chapter 4 verses 11-17 we see James conclude his comprehensive treatment of the human vices arising from pride and ambition. Having shown that contentiousness reveals inconsistency and hypocrisy, and that the true way of peace is through wisdom accepted in humility, he now turns to the two manifestations of human arrogance which involved the improper use of the tongue:

1. *Presumptuous Judgements*
 - Vs 11-12 - *Uncharitable judgements on our brethren*
2. *Presumptuous Projects*
 - Vs 13-17 - *Unqualified confidence in our future plans*

4:11-12 - JUDGING OTHERS

4:11 - Warning against speaking evil or judging

Once we recognise our own personal failings, we will appreciate better the failings of others and be less hasty to condemn them. All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). There is only one judge who is able to administer true judgement. At the judgement we will all be in need of mercy (see Jam 2:12-13.)

Verse 11: Speak not evil one of another, brethren.

Speak evil: *katalaleo* (2635) - slander. This is a characteristic of the flesh (cp Rom 1:30 - "backbiters") and of the Gentiles against the believers (cp 1 Pet 2:12; 3:16). It had entered into the Ecclesia (cp 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1).



The flesh is comforted by the fact that others have failings. It has a tendency to lift itself up by pulling others down. This also takes the focus away from the gravity of sin (cp Matt 7:3-4; see also Psa 50:20-21; 140:11-12). Paul warns against comparing ourselves with others (cp 2 Cor 10:12). Christ is the standard that we are to aim for (cp 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 4:13). We are to love and care for one another, without division (1 Cor 12:24-26)

Brethren: *aldephos* (80). Used 19 times in this epistle and its related word *adelphē* (79 - "sister") once.



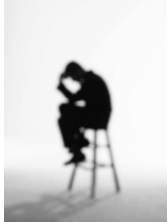
What is James point in calling them "brethren" and "brother" in this context? (See also 1:16)



Think of examples of speaking evil of one another throughout the Scriptures. What would be a better way of speaking about others?

He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother,

Judgeth: *krino* (2919) - to try, condemn, punish. This word has the idea of the complete judicial process. The same word is used throughout this verse and in vs 12. (Cp Matt 7:1-2; Luke 6:37).



Our brethren are Christ's servants, not ours. Therefore he is the one who will judge them ultimately (cp Rom 14:4, 10-13; 1 Cor 4:4-5). This is not to say that we do not judge the doctrines or actions of others (cp John 7:24; 1 Cor 5:7-13) but rather to help restore them to the right way in the "spirit of meekness" (Gal 6:1). James himself did not hesitate to rebuke (Jam 5:1-6). However the final decision of who will be accepted or rejected lies with Christ. WE cannot judge the motives of our brethren; it is impossible for the flesh to do.

Such judgement against our brethren implies two things -

1. that we have condemned God's law, and
2. that we have assumed God's position as the one judge.

speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law:

This is the Law of Liberty as expressed in the two greatest commandments (cp Matt 22:36-40). James has already written about this (see Jam 1:25; 2:8-13). They were breaking the first in assuming God's authority as Judge and in judging their brethren they were breaking the second.

Persistence in evil speaking calls this Law in question and in effect says that the Law to love thy neighbour is not worthy of keeping, and implies God had spoken falsely when creating this law.

This has serious implications for those who do speak evil of it. Christ came to fulfil the Mosaic Law (cp Matt 5:17), for he had "magnified the Law and made it honourable" (Isa 42:21) by himself being perfectly obedient to its requirements and therefore brought into force the Law of Liberty. This was done through his life, death and resurrection, which provided grace and mercy in the forgiveness of our sins (cp John 1:17; Acts 3:26; John 8:31-36; Rom 6:16-18). Because all men have sinned (cp Rom 3:23) those who speak evil of the Law are passing judgement against the very means that is necessary for them to have their own sins forgiven (cp Matt 6:12; 18:21-35; see also Eph 4:31-32).

but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

A judge of the Law sets up his own standards and compares the Law by these. It is the doers of the Law which shall be justified, not the judges of the Law (cp Rom 2:1,13; Jam 1:22).



4:12 - God is the only judge

Verse 12: There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?



RV: "Only one is lawgiver."

Wey: "The only real Lawgiver and Judge is He who is able to save or to destroy. Who are you to sit in judgement on your fellow man?"

The brethren were adopting the position rightfully belonging to God (cp Psa 9:7-8,19-20; 50:6; Isa 33:22).

Save: *sozo* (4982) - to deliver or protect. This means that God is able to deliver or destroy in the ultimate sense. This implies that God is able to save those who the brethren were condemning. No man is able to save another in this sense (cp Psa 49:6-9; Heb 7:25).

Destroy: *apollumi* (622) - to destroy fully. God is also able to destroy those who unrighteously condemn others. Man is not able to do this either (cp Matt 10:28).



Another: Roth: "neighbour" - we are supposed to love, not judge, our brethren (chap 2:8).

When all these aspects are considered, there is none who is able to take the position of judge, and condemn the brethren (cp Rom 2:1-13). Our attitude toward each other should be one of humility (cp Phil 2:3).



What is our feeling towards God knowing that He alone has the power to save or destroy us? Which of the two does He most desire to do? Why? Find references to prove your answer.

4:13-17 - PRESUMPTUOUS SPEAKING

Being aware of our own nature will highlight the uncertainty of life and will prevent us from placing confidence in our own plans for the future (cp Luke 12:16-21). We must remember our dependency upon God (cp 1 Tim 6:17).

4:13-14 - Vanity of relying on the future

Verse 13: 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:



Roth: "Come now! ye that say Today or Tomorrow we will journey unto this city here, and will spend there a year, and will trade and get gain".

Go to now: James is commanding his readers' attention to this point. (Cp Jam 5:1).

We will go: *poreuomai* (4198) - to travel, journey. This hearkens back to James' point concerning the rich man in his ways or "journeyings" (a related word). He is preoccupied with the fleeting things of this life, his mind is full of business pursuits, but he will be swept away into oblivion (cp Jam 1:10-11).

Continue there a year: the exact time is given without consideration to God's providence.

Buy and sell: *emporeuomai* (1710) - to travel in trade. The Jews are known for their pursuits in trading. They even broke the Law in trading on the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-17; Amos 8:4-6).

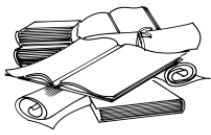
Gain: *kerdaino* (2770) - to get gain. This was the focus of their activities (cp Jam 4:1-3).



This word is translated a number of different ways throughout the New Testament. Using Englishman's, find a few relevant verses that relate:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • | • |
| • | • |
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What can we learn from them? What should we be losing and gaining instead?



"Many of those who display their goods in the Eastern bazaars are travelling merchants. They come from other cities, and after having disposed of their stock in trade, either for money or other commodities, proceed to another city, where they set up in business again. They supply themselves in every instance with the merchandise best suited to a particular market, and thus, after repeated peregrinations (journeys), if successful in their adventures, they acquire a competence (enough money for a comfortable income) and return home to enjoy the fruits of it" (*Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Pg 467).

Here was pride and confidence in the flesh. There was certain finality about their plans and they had made no provision for the overriding purpose of God. Notice the repetition of the word "and". The brethren were so involved with the things of this life, that they had forgotten that their calling was for a greater purpose. We must be willing to forsake the life we have planned so as to gain the Life that awaits us.

Verse 14: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow.

Know: *epistamai* (1987) - to put the mind upon, to comprehend.

We can't even guarantee what will happen tomorrow (cp Prov 27:1). How much more uncertain is that which will happen in a year's time? James is not teaching that we shouldn't plan for the future but that we should set our efforts on the things of God's Kingdom (cp Matt 6:31-34).

For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Vapour: *atmis* (822) - mist. This word only elsewhere appears in Acts 2:19.

The analogy James is using is that of the morning mist that floats in the air and is soon dissipated by the sun. Life has little substance and soon disappears (cp Ecc 1:2,14 - vanity = *kebel* - emptiness, vapour).



Can you find references which show that our life is but a "vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away"? We have given you an example:

Isa 64:6

"we all do fade as a leaf...our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Realising this fact, how important it is that we use our time wisely (cp Psa 31:15; 90:12; Eph 5:15-17; Col 4:5; 1 John 2:17; cp Luke 12:13-31).

4:15 - Life in perspective

Having brought to the brethren's attention their unbalanced view of life, James next directs their minds to the correct perspective.

Verse 15: For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Ought to say: Prayer should be an important part of our lives, for the success or failure of any venture is subject to His Will.



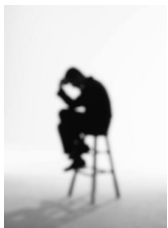
Phil 4:6; Acts 2:42; 1 John 5:14-15; Luke 18:1.

Will: *thelo* (2309) - to determine, choose or prefer. (cp Prov 19:21).

James is not putting this phrase forth as a formula (cp Jam 2:16) but as a principle that we should live by. The apostle Paul sometimes used it (cp Rom 1:10; 15:32; Acts 18:21; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7; Phil 2:24; Heb 6:3) but not always (cp Acts 19:21; Rom 15:28; 1 Cor 16:5). The main fact was that he was deeply aware of his need to do the Father's will. Our future plans should always be compared with God's purpose to ensure that we are doers of the Word. An inward consciousness of Divine providence will guide our lives to DO His Will. The warning James gives in the last verse of this chapter shows the necessity of this.



List the things that we plan ahead for in our lives. Are they wrong in themselves? Do they take into account God's purpose?



Thought to think about and do

Do you use the phrase "God Willing" or "if the Lord wills" in your daily life, for any plan or opportunity? The great leaps in our life as well as the little ones? "Thy Will be DONE" should be the motto of our lives.

"Life is so full of uncertainties that there are no guarantees; failure is as possible as success; indifferent health as fitness; tomorrow's plans can be brutally overthrown by untimely death, so much so that the wise man as he looks ahead seeks for Divine guidance in the spirit of 'Thy will be done' and then prepares to accept the offering of each day as it comes" - Bro. W.W. Gillingham.



We must remember that God rules in the kingdom of men (cp Dan 4:17). What we want to do is subject to whether He permits it or not (see Lam 3:37). James brings this point home by showing how much we depend on God - if He wills we shall LIVE!! (Cp 2 Sam 15:25-26; Job 34:14-15; see also Num 9:17-23; Job 1:21).



Consider what it means to be dependent on God for our every breath. How should we conduct ourselves in view of this?

4:16-17 - Sinfulness of arrogant boasting

Verse 16: But now ye rejoice in your boastings:



RSV: "As it is, you boast in your arrogance".

But: In contrast James now shows them what they are doing.

Rejoice: *kauchaomai* (2744) - to vaunt (in a good or bad sense), boast, glory. (Cp Jam 3:14).

Boastings: *alazoneia* (212) - self confidence. That is, empty braggart talk. According to Vine's it denotes quackery or vain pretensions and arrogant claims based upon nothing substantial (See Prov 25:14; also 1 Cor 4:5-8; 5:6-8). This word only elsewhere appears in 1 John 2:16. Boasting in our present and future mortal lives show that we are obsessed with the pride of life - we are not of the Father but of the world (see Jam 4:4).

The brethren were proud of their plans but didn't realise that they were dependent upon things out of their control - such as the purpose of God, and time and chance (cp Ecc 9:11-12).



There are other things we should be glorying in. Look up "rejoice" in Strong's and make a list of these. How can we make this sort of glorying part of our lives?

all such rejoicing is evil.



Rejoicing: The Diaglott refers to this as “boasting”. James refers to their idle and evil arrogance, rather than any kind of joyful rejoicing.

Evil: *poneros* (4190) - hurtful, evil (in effect or influence).

This sort of attitude can spread through the Ecclesia, take our minds away from God and focus them on the temporalities of this life, which in the end will “vanish away”.



Have a good look at Psalm 52, as this is a good cross reference. This Psalm has many connections with James 4 as well as the rest of the Epistle. Which of the two attitudes found in this psalm do we want to be more like?

Verse 17: Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Knoweth: *eido* (1492) - to see, by implication, to know, be aware of.

Good: *kalos* (2570) - valuable or virtuous. This is the same word as “worthy” in Jam 2:7. We must do GOOD things worthy of His Name.

Sin: *hamartia* (266) - Thayer’s: a missing of the mark. (cp Jam 1:15; see also Rom 14:23).

This statement brings James' argument to a natural conclusion. The believers had the issues made clear before them. Knowledge brings responsibility (cp Luke 12:47-48; John 9:41; 13:17; Rom 1:20-21,32). They had no cloak for their sin (cp John 15:22; Heb 10:26). Indifference to God’s Law and our duty to others is a sin. It is a sin of omission (see 2 Pet 2:21). Once again James emphasises the point that “doing” is necessary. It is not just a matter of not doing evil. In not doing good, it is just as bad in God's sight. Our actions and thoughts must reflect the character and purpose of the Father who has begotten us.



"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc 12:13-14).

Having studied this much of James, how has it affected your understanding of God's character? Have you allowed it to change your life?

Chapter 4 finishes James' admonition of the Ecclesia. He completes his Epistle with words of encouragement to lift up the believers.