

James 4

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Tape #8222
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Let's turn now to James, chapter four. Now the fourth chapter really begins in chapter three. In reality, you know, that's it's just a continuation. When James wrote this, he didn't write, chapter three, verse one, verse two. But he just wrote a letter. It was divided later by men into chapters and into verses to help you to reference the thoughts, the verses. So they are just there for our help, in referencing. But James in chapter three was talking about strife and envying. And he told us that if we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. For this kind of wisdom doesn't come from above, it's earthly. It's sensual, it's devilish. For where there is envying and strife, there's confusion. There's confusion and every evil work. For the wisdom that is from above, is first of all, pure. And then it's peaceable. It's gentle. It's easy to be entreated. It's full of mercy and good fruit. It's without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace to them that make peace.

Now in contrast to that, *From whence* (he said) *come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* These desires of our flesh, the envying that we have, the coveting. It's interesting that in giving the Commandments, the Lord sort of ends them with thou shalt not covet or envy.

We talk about worldliness and if we should ask the question, what is worldliness? In your mind when you think of worldliness, what do you sort of classify or think of, as he is a very worldly person? Do you think of a person, who say, spends a lot of time in night clubs, in the theatre? That's really not a definition of worldliness as far as the Bible is concerned. But so often, we are prone to think of worldliness in, you know, a person is living a life that is, say he drinks a lot. When I was a child, we were taught that we should not go to shows or dances. That is worldliness and that constitutes worldliness. And so I did not go to shows or dances, but in reality that isn't what truly, those are things that I still don't do and approve of, but they are not really worldliness as such.

When the Bible talks about worldliness, it's talking about envying. It's talking about striving. It's talking about the desires of the flesh.

So, James is telling that this is the root source of all of the wars. All of the fightings, the wars are between nations, the fightings are between individuals. And from whence come the wars and fightings among you? Do they not rise out of your own lusts, the desires that you have, the desires for that which someone else possesses? Envying what they have.

²*Ye lust, and have not:* He said you desire and you have not.

ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, And so all of this internal strife, coming out of the desires of our flesh. Our envy of what other people have and our determination that we will make it ours. If we can't do it legally, we will seek to do it illegally—the fights and the wars among us.

But he said, you do all of this and still you don't have.

And then he said something interesting. He said, yet you have not, *because ye ask not.* Now, those things that I desire are things that I should, actually, make a matter of prayer. And then let God decide whether or not to satisfy that desire or to replace that desire to deny that desire.

The Bible said whatsoever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and then you shall have them. And prayer is really expressing to God our wishes, our desires. And hopefully, our desires are in line with His desires, ideally! If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. If He hears us, then we've received the petitions that we have desired of Him.

But it's the expression of our desire. But when I express my desires to God, God is not obligated to grant my desires. I present my desires to God. But then He has the right to deny them, accept them, or replace them, change them. And that's commitment. I often when I pray say, Lord, I don't really know what Your will is in this matter, but I'd like to offer a few suggestions. This is what I would like to see. But, what I

would like to see what may not be what He wants!

Now I do not desire to change God's will through prayer. That's not my desire at all! And I couldn't even if I desired to. But prayer should never be to try to change God. Prayer is to open the door to allow God to do those things that He is desiring to do for me, in me and through me!

And so a lot of times, we struggle to get what we want. We strive what we want. We fight to get what we want. And many times it's just so simple, we don't have what we want because we haven't asked. And so you have not because you ask not.

But then he goes on to say, ³*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Now God does answer prayer. That's the basic encouragement for prayer. Why do I pray? Because God answers prayer! And sometimes God answers in denial.

When Paul was praying (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) that God would remove the thorn in the flesh or the stake in his flesh, God said, Paul, My grace is sufficient for you. And My strength will be made perfect in your weakness. The Lord didn't remove the stake in Paul's flesh, but He gave to Paul His strength to endure it.

And so God does not always answer our prayers just like maybe we would want Him to answer. I do not control nor am I desiring to control God! He is not a servant of mine. I am His servant! He isn't obligated to do anything for me. That He does do things for me is just a sign of His tremendous love and grace, because I deserve nothing.

I take issue with those people who believe that through prayer, they can force God to do things. That's never the object or the purpose of prayer! It's never to get my will done. It's always to get God's will done!

And so much of our asking is selfish. I'm asking just out of selfish motivations, because I am envious. I'm lusting after something. And I'm praying, oh, God, you know, please give me that car! It's seventy-five thousand dollars, but God, you know, I would look so nice driving that sports car! And after all You want to get the best for me. And God knows that a Ford or a Chevy will get me there just as easily and probably more comfortably.

I think the most uncomfortable car I ever drove, was one of those seventy five thousand dollar sports car that some friend of mine came by in, and asked me if I would like to drive it? It was so difficult to get into. And it's wasn't really comfortable. You are so low to the ground, you feel every bump. I'd take my Oldsmobile any day, you know.

You ask and receive not because you ask amiss. If you've praying for something for a long time and it hasn't been forthcoming, it doesn't that mean God isn't going to do it, but it might be wise to examine your heart and your motive. And see if what you are asking is something that the desire is stemming from your own flesh. And it really isn't something that would benefit others but something that would benefit you, because many times we ask and receive not, because we are asking amiss.

Then he speaks to them concerning their relationship with God. God wants and has always wanted a loving relationship with His people. God wants you to love Him supremely. He wants your love for Him to exceed every other love in your life.

His first commandment was, thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Now a god is that which a person is devoted to. That which a person adores, that which is the supreme master passion of a person's life. And there are many people who are governed by different master passions. Some people are governed by greed. Some people are governed by their lusts, by their flesh, by their sexual desires. Some people are governed by their desire for power, to control others is the master, consuming passion of their lives. Some people are controlled by their desire for fame. They want to be worshipped. They want to be adored. And that's the whole master passion of their life. And that master passion becomes their god.

Now in the olden days, they were honest enough to name these passions and give them names, so that when a person said, well, I worship Ashtoreth, you would understand that that person's life was mastered by his desire for pornography. And that controlled his life. He loved looking at pornography. And he was honest enough to say, well, I worship Ashtoreth.

If a person was worshipping power, he was honest enough to say, well, I am a worshipper of mammon. Or if he was worshipping pleasure, he would be honest enough to say, well, I worship Molech.

Today they say, well, I'm an atheist. Oh no, no, you're not an atheist. You are worshipping Molech. You

are worshipping Baal. You are worshipping Ashtoreth or Mammon or any of the other many, many gods, that people have recognized. That this is the master passion of my life! This is what I desire more than anything else. This is my chief love. My life is devoted to this. What ever your life is devoted to, that which is preeminent in your life, is your god.

And so to have a love for anything in life that exceeds your love from God, from a Biblical, spiritual sense, was to commit fornication or adultery. The idea is that you were to be married to God. God spoke of Israel as His wife. In the New Testament, it speaks of the church as the bride of Christ. But if you are the bride of Christ and you have a love for other gods that exceed your love for Jesus Christ, you are committing spiritual adultery. Because here you say, well, I am married to Jesus, but oh, I love.....this other god, this master passion. Your love for that exceeds your love for Jesus Christ. So that's spiritual adultery.

So he said, ⁴*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* If you love the world, the things of the world, all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. These are the things that the Bible sort of classifies as worldliness. The desires of your flesh, the desires of your eyes, the pride of life, they are of the flesh and are not of God. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, John said, for he who has the love of the world in his heart, has not the love of the Father!

So don't you realize that friendship of the world, that is the world controlled by Satan, the world system, that is governed by Satan is enmity with God? *whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* For the world is under Satan's authority and control, and is being directed by Satan, controlled by Satan.

Paul in writing to the Ephesians in chapter two, said and you has he made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sin. For in times past you walked according to the course of this world, which is directed by the prince of the power of the air. So you at one time were walking according to the fads and the fashions of the world, walking after the things of the world, which fads and fashions and all, are being controlled and governed by Satan. The prince of the power of the air, who even now, he said, is working in the children of disobedience. So if you have a love for the world and the things of the world, you have not the love of the Father. And if you seek to be a friend of the worldly system, you are an enemy of God because no man can serve two masters. He will love the one and hate the other or hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon! God said thou shalt have no other gods before Me! You are not to make any graven image to bow down to it and to worship it. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. If you will be a friend of the world, you will find yourself an enemy of God because you see, there are two governing forces in the universe.

There are two kingdoms. And your allegiance is to one or the other. You live in the kingdom of God, which means that your life is submitted to the authority of God. You've surrendered yourself to the authority of God. God rules in your life. Or, you are living in the kingdom of darkness, which means that Satan is ruling your life and your life is controlled by Satan. You can't have it both ways! It's one or the other. And as God looks at us tonight, He sees that each of us are living in one kingdom or the other. And He sees you as living in the kingdom of light and life, or He sees you as living in the kingdom of darkness and death. It's just that straight! No man can serve both God and mammon. It's one or the other.

Verse five is an interesting verse and one that's a little difficult, especially in the King James. ⁵*Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* First of all there is no Scripture that we know of that says the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. There are many Scriptures that have been suggested as possibilities that James was sort of free quoting from some passage. Or that James is quoting from some Scripture that we have lost the source of that Scripture.

A more literal translation of this passage, would be, do you think that the Scripture saith in vain, the Spirit that dwells in us in, well, is jealous? And it could be that James is thinking of the passage in the law, the Ten Commandments, where God said thou shalt not make any grave image to bow down to worship it, or to serve them, for I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God. In other words, the Spirit that is in us is jealous concerning our love! God doesn't want us to have any other love that would take away our love for Him. He is a jealous God! He wants your love and the Spirit that is in you is desiring that love and is envious

should you love something else and should some other love replace your love for Him. And that probably is what James is making reference to here in verse five.

⁶*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* God knows our frame. He knows we are but dust. And none of us live up to God's standards. None of us are all that God would have us to be. Paul said, for we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. None of us have fully attained.

But if I love God, and if my desire is to serve God, and I slip up, something comes along that attracts me for a time. And I get caught up in some other interests, that sort of takes me away from Him for a while, He gives more grace, the graciousness of God towards us.

Wherefore he says, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. ⁷*Submit yourselves, or humble yourselves, therefore to God.* Because God gives grace to the humble. Just submit to Him.

And he says, *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* I think that one of our problems is that we often do not put up enough resistance when Satan comes along with his temptation. There is a passage in Hebrews (Hebrews 12:4) that said, you have not yet resisted unto blood in striving against sin. We so often just sort of give in, without even putting up a fight. We so easily yield to Satan.

But the Bible tells us we are to resist him. And if we resist him, he will flee from us. It seems like we are so cowed by Satan's powers. We see in the world today how Satan's control over the media and over so many things. And we think, what can we as Christians do? Look at how they control the education. Look at how they control all of the media today? And look what they are doing? Look at how they are leading us down to destruction--morally, spiritually? And we sort of just, cave in.

It's important to know that on the cross, Jesus defeated the powers of darkness. It's important that we know that! Because in this spiritual battle, Jesus is the victor! And we can enter into His victory and Satan really is only exercising usurped authority. His powers were taken from him, when Jesus triumphed there through the cross! But Satan continues to hold on tenaciously, unto he is forced off of the territory. But through the victory of Jesus Christ, we can come against him! We can resist him! And he has to flee! He doesn't have any real rights. It's only usurped authority. And so I can resist Satan through Jesus Christ. And he has to flee! He has to release! He has to let go! He has to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ!

Conversely, ⁸*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.* That's why we are here tonight, isn't it? To draw near to God! And what a glorious thing to realize. In as much as we are here tonight to draw to near to God, God is drawing near to us. He desires this loving relationship with each of you. And so he draws us by his Spirit to Himself. And as we are drawn to Him, He draws near to us. And we enter into this sweet and blessed communion—oneness, Koinonia with God!

Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.* You see, drawn by the world, drawn by the Lord, a double-minded man, he told us earlier, is unstable in all of his ways. And there are people that find themselves in this position of being drawn. Drawn towards God, when they are around the people of God. Oh, yes, yes, praise God, hallelujah, bless the Lord! But when they are in the world, they can join in with, you know, the dirty jokes and all of the things of the world. They can fit, they try to fit in both camps. They are double minded.

So he encourages us, cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double minded. ⁹*Be afflicted,* That is, yourself, you know, sort of a penitence kind of a thing.

and mourn, and weep: Have you ever wept over your weaknesses, spiritually? I have! I have wept over my failures, when I have stumbled.

Be afflicted and mourn and weep, *let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* That is, if you are double minded, if you find yourself in that position of being torn and oooh, how, I tell you, how sin can tear you up inside!

As David was living under the guilt of his relationship with Bathsheeba, he said (Psalm 32:3-5), night and day Your hand was upon me. My moisture turned into the drought of summer. I became dry! The heavy hand of God was on me. Until he said, I confessed my sin! And then You forgave my sin.

So let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. And ¹⁰*Humble yourselves in the*

sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. God resists the proud! He gives grace to the humble! One of the characteristics that God hates is—there are six things, yea seven, are an abomination to Him (Proverbs 6:16-19)--A proud look. God resisteth the proud. God hates pride. Pride is the exaltation of self over against God. It's thinking that you are better than somebody else, in the sight of God. In the sight of God, we are all the same! God is no respecter of person. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

¹¹*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.* You see if I speak evil of you and I begin to judge you, that in a way, (you know, if I speak of someone, well, I say, they have done this! And that's not right!) I'm judging them. That's puts me in a position of superiority over them. Can you see that? I am better than they are. I have the right to look down and say, they're evil! And that puts me in the position of a judge. And yet the Bible says, judge not, lest you be judged. So my by judging, I am disobeying the law. And I don't become a doer of the law, but actually I am violating the law, because I am judging when I was told by the law, not to judge.

¹²*There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy:* Paul said (Romans 14:4), who are you to judge another man's servant? Before his own master, he either stands or falls. And yea, God is able to make him to stand.

If you were my servant, then I would have the right to tell you what to do and how you should do it and to judge you. But you are not my servant. You are God's servant. So who am I then to judge how you serve God? God will be the judge of your service. It is God who will either accept or reject what you are doing. So to be a judge of another man's servant is wrong. Judge not. Don't speak evil, one of another because if you speak evil, you are judging your brother and you're speaking evil of the law.

There is one lawgiver. He is able to save. He is able to destroy. God is able to make him to stand, Paul said. And God is able to cast down.

who art thou that judgest another? And so who are you to judge another?

¹³*Go to now* (he doesn't tell where), *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:* You set up your plan.

It's interesting, I so often receive invitations to speak somewhere, a year or so in advance. And they are trying to set up their calendar. And I appreciate that. But I don't know where I am going to be a year from now. And so quite often because it is so far away, I'll say yes, hoping that the Lord will come in the meantime and I won't have to worry about it. But somehow they have a way of coming around. Tomorrow night, I have to go down to San Diego and speak at some camping kind of a thing. And they asked over a year ago. I said, oh yeah, you know, I like camping and all. And now it's come. And I'm still here. So I've got to go. But the older I get the more hesitant I am of setting appointments out in the future, because I don't know what my calendar might bring up a year from now. And like one letter I have on my desk, it says maybe if not in 1999, you can do it in the year 2000. I don't even know if I'll be here in the year 2000.

So he is talking about people who are setting out their plan for life, not taking into consideration God's will. So go now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there for a year. We'll buy and sell and get gain. I mean we've got our five year program all laid out here.

Jesus spoke of certain rich man who had become so prosperous that he didn't have room in his barns to store all of his goods. And he said, what shall I do? I don't room to store all of my possessions. I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and I will build bigger barns. And when I have filled them, I will say to my soul, take your rest. You have sufficient goods laid up for many years. But Jesus said, God said unto that man, you fool! Tonight your soul will be required of you! And who's going to spend all of the substance that you leave behind?

And I don't want God saying to me or of me, you fool! You know you've set up this long-range plan. You're not going to be around to see it fulfilled. We need to always put in the planning area, "if God wills".

¹⁴*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.* Have you ever noticed how rapidly vapor vanishes? Next time you get out the vaporizer, as the steam comes off the vaporizer or you put on the teakettle and the

steam comes out, notice how quickly the steam evaporates into the air—five seconds, seven seconds? What is life? It's like a vapor, it's just there for a moment and then vanishes. Seven seconds compared with eternity! It's just as there, we're us here just a moment. But then there's eternity.

You know, it's sort of a shocking kind of a thing to realize that I have lived one one-hundredth of the earth's history. Isn't that amazing? If you are sixty years old, you have lived one one-hundredth of the world's history. Imagine Adam lived almost one sixth of world's history! What is life? It's but a vapor. Man's time on earth is a vapor, especially when you compare it to eternity.

So what is life? It's but a vapor, that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.* So we ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and we'll do this or that—if the Lord wills! And we should always take that factor into all of our planning. If this is the will of God, this is what we hope to accomplish. These plans are subject to the will of God. My life is subject to the will of God—if the Lord wills.

¹⁶*But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.* ¹⁷*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* This is what we call the sin of omission. Now there are many sins of commission. I commit an evil. But there are also many sins of omission. Things that I should do that I don't do are just as sinful as things that I do that I shouldn't do. And as a child of God, there are many things that are required of me. And if I know to do good and I have the opportunity to do good, and I don't do it, it is just as sinful as doing something I should not have done—sins of omission. And we're all of us, guilty of both. Sins of omissions, sins of commission. But he giveth more grace if we will humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, He will lift us up!

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the exhortation, practical exhortation that James gives to us in practical Christian living. Help us Lord, to be everything that You would have us to be. Help us Lord, to give us the strength to do those things You desire us to do. Lord, we want to draw close to You. And we appreciate You drawing close to us. Guide us Lord, according to Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.