

JAMES CHAPTER 4

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VII. Avoiding Evil Behavior (4:1-17)

- A. The **Source** of Evil and Division (4:1-3)
- B. The **Cure** of Single-mindedness and Humility (4:4-10)
- C. **Judgmental** Behavior (4:11-12)
- D. **Worldliness**, arrogance and the cure (4:13-16)
- E. A **definition** of sin (4:17)

A. THE SOURCE OF EVIL AND DIVISION (4:1-4)

KJV—1 From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? [come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members? 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. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts.

NASB—1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 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. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask [with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

NIV—1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 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. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

1. THE OPENING QUESTION—WHERE DO FIGHTS AND QUARRELS COME FROM?—v 1

NASB—1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

a. This is not just a theoretical question—but pointed right at his readers

1. Where do those quarrels **among you** come from?

- o James uses the phrase **εν υμιν** here—those fights that in *your* midst!
- o These are quarrels occurring among members of his own church!

2. **Where** does it come from—**ποθεν**

- o This can also mean—“How is it [possible]”
- o The question suggests that this is an alien import from outside—an abnormal condition
- o “Where in the world did this come from—how in the world did this happen?”

3. This is a reminder—a warning

- o Christians can behave in an unchristian manner
- o Churches are not immune to worldly problems—that are imported into them

b. Fights and quarrels

NASB—1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

1. The words are **πολεμος** and **μαχη**

2. **πολεμος**

a. Meaning = war, battle, dispute, strife

b. Usage

1. Root word for ‘polemics’—when we defend the faith

a. Note—polemics defend against *internal* heresy—not apologetics against outside attack

b. Sometimes Christian polemics can be even more bitter than fighting outsiders!

2. Other passages—usually related to battles and wars between armies

o “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars” **Mk 13:7**

o In Revelation—used several times for war/battle between God’s hosts and Satan’s forces

3. **μαχη**

a. meaning = fight, combat, strife, contention

b. Usage

4. Comparison of **πολεμος** and **μαχη** [wars and battles]

a. **πολεμος** is used more for the whole course of conflict—the overall war

b. **μαχη** is used more for the strife and shock of battle itself—the actual engagement

o This can range from intense shock—to relatively minor engagements

o This can mean ‘contentions’ that do not rise to the level of harsh battle

c. Note: the terms are not just synonymous—can be used exclusively from one another

1. It is impossible to have a war without conflict/battles/strife—but there might be long periods of no actual strife—as in the Cold War

2. It is possible to have strife without being engaged in a ‘war’—sometimes we have contention in our midst without even realizing we have a real problem bordering an all out divisive fight

2. THE ANSWER—THE SOURCE OF STRIFE—**v 1**

NASB—1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? **Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?***

a. James uses a **rhetorical** question—“isn’t it?”—which is not just a question—but the answer

b. The answer = your desires that war in your members

c. Desires

1. The word = **ηδονη**

a. Meaning = pleasure—or desire for pleasure

b. Usage

1. The root word for—hedonism, hedonistic

2. Used elsewhere

- o **Lk 8:14**—desires for other things—are the thorns that choke the Word
- o **Tts 3:3**—we were formerly this way—we served divers lusts and pleasures

3. This suggests

- o Something that takes us over and controls our emotions and passions
- o Something that diverts us from our better interest and purpose—unhealthy desire

2. What type of desires are these?

NASB—1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

a. **Your own** desires

1. Not something foreign/imported
2. Not something you can blame on someone else
3. Something for which you must take ownership/responsibility

b. Desires that *cause* conflict—“desires that fight within you”

1. The word ‘fight’ is not either word used earlier in the verse
2. **στρατευω** = fight, lead an expedition, to soldier
3. This is not overall war—not the contention—but the actual fighting/engagement
4. They are the actions that *lead* to contention/strife—not the progression:

From desire/lust → engagement/fight → contention/strife → war
ηδονη → **στρατευω** → **μαχη** → **πολεμος**

c. They are *internal*—within your **members**

NASB—1 *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

1. ‘members’ = **μελος** = limbs, parts of the body
2. This has two dimensions—personal and interpersonal
 - a. Desires that war within each person—causing internal conflict—war within oneself
 - b. Desires that war in the body of the church—causing conflict between church members

3. HOW THIS WORKS—HOW DESIRE CAUSES THESE PROBLEMS—vv 2-3

2 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. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

a. Again—look at the progression

[Inner desire] → [passion] your lust → frustration: do not have → [action] murder
[Inner desire] → [passion] envious → frustration: cannot obtain → [action] fight/quarrel

b. Two products of desire [the desire **ηδονη** in verse 1]

1. Lust and envious

2. Lust = **επιθυμew** = to desire, to long for, to covet

- o **Mt 5:28**—if a man looks lustfully at a woman, he has already committed adultery in his heart
- o This is the word Paul used for “do not covet”—from the 10 commandments—in **Rom 13:9**

3. Envious = **ζηλω** = burn with **zeal**, earnestly desire, covet—also translated **envy**

- o This is the verb form of the noun **ζηλος**
- o The noun is in 3:14—“there are strife and **envy** among you”
- o Again in 3:16—“where strife and **envy** are there is confusion”

c. Both of these passions are blocked—by not having—not be able to obtain

d. The two results

1. Murder

- o This can be actual killing
- o Or some type of character assassination or viciousness
- o Jesus equates anger at one’s brother with murder—both actions subject to judgment—**Mt 5:21-22**

2. Fight and quarrel

The verb forms of the two nouns in verse 1 [**πολεμος** and **μαχη**] = **μαχομαι** and **πολεμew**

e. The source of frustration = not having what we want/need

f. Two scenarios that cause this frustration

1. We do not have—because we do not ask

2. We do ask—but we do not receive

a. Reason we do not receive—we ask with the wrong motive

b. The wrong motive = to ‘squander’ (or spend) it on your ‘pleasure’

c. Pleasure = **ηδονη** = the *same* word in verse 1 that started the chain—desire [hedonism]

NOTE the progression:

Desire → lust and envy → frustration do not have → murder and fight/quarrel
[hedonism]

↓
↓

Do not ask or do ask—but with wrong motive = spend it on desire
[hedonism]

B. THE CURE OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND HUMILITY(4:4-10)

KJV—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. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

NASB—4 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. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

NIV—4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1. A STRONG ACCUSATION—AND AN IMPLIED CONTRAST—v 4

KJV—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.*

NASB—4 *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.*

NIV—4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

a. Strong accusation:

1. 'Adulterers'

a. This could be a label for those identified in vv 1-3—those whose desires cause quarrels and conflict

b. But this is possibly a *general* call for repentance—for *all* the wrong behavior identified in the book

- o Those who show partiality to the rich
- o Those who emphasize faith without works
- o Those who misuse their tongues
- o Those who follow the wisdom of the world
- o Those who cause quarrels and conflicts

2. Surprising term—we might expect ‘trouble-makers’ or ‘self-indulgent’ or ‘hedonists’

3. But those terms would focus strictly on the **results** or the human **motivations**

4. Instead, James goes back to the **real heart of the problem**—what is our most important relationship?

5. The concept of ‘adultery’—unfaithfulness to *God*

a. In the OT—Israel was described as adulterous when it was idolatrous

1. Example Hosea and Gomer

2. Isaiah’s description of Israel

Is 54:5-6—*For your Maker is your husband — the LORD Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit — a wife who married young, only to be rejected,’ says your God.*”

b. In the NT—Jesus calls His day an ‘adulterous and sinful’ generation

Mk 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father’s glory with the holy angels.

Mt 12:39 But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

6. Use of the plural for both sexes—‘adulterers’ and ‘adulteresses’

a. This points to each and every individual—every male and female

b. It doesn’t label the *whole* church as unfaithful—but each and every individual who is guilty of this

7. What is this adultery?

a. Friendship with the world—**φιλια + κοσμος**

1. Friend = **φιλια**

- o Two words for friend in Greek
- o The other means ‘fellow’ or ‘clansman’
- o This one can carry connotation of one who loves
- o “one who loves the world”

2. World = **κοσμος**

- o Can mean the universe—created order
 - o But in this context = all human society, mores, institutions, worldliness
- b. Those who ‘lust’ and ‘desire’ things—are friends of the world
- c. This passion is so strong—that they abandon their first love—for God

This sounds similar to what was said to the Church of Ephesus:

Rev 2:4—Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

b. Implied stark contrast—either/or—no compromise

1. Stated condition: a passionate friendship with the world—makes one an *enemy* of God

a. Stark contrast between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’—warlike environment—with battle lines drawn

b. Friend = one who is **loved**—vs—‘enemy’ = means literally one that is **hated**

2. This also implies the *opposite*—to be a friend of God = an enemy of passionate desire for the world

3. There is no compromise: **either** be a friend of the world and an enemy of God
or be a friend of God and an enemy of the world

4. Marriage analogy: one cannot be married to two persons and be faithful to both

5. Implications

a. We cannot serve both God and the world

Mt 6:24—*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.*

b. We must be **single-mindedly** devoted to God

2. THE JEALOUSY AND GRACE OF GOD—**vv 5-6**

5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

a. God is a jealous God

1. OT concept—God is jealous—His *name* is ‘Jealous’

Ex 34:4—For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God

Dt 4:24—For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

2. Here—His Spirit desires with envy

a. Different words are used than ‘desire’ and ‘zeal/envy’ in verse 1

b. But the imagery is clear

- o Just as humans ‘desire’ and ‘envy’ things of the world
 - o Even so—God’s Spirit—that is in us—is passionately jealous for His own
- c. This is a positive kind of desire and jealousy—unlike verse 1
- d. It seeks to keep/recover those who are being lured away
- b. The result of God’s jealousy
1. Unlike the jealousy in verse 1—which selfishly seeks pleasure for itself
 2. God acts graciously—He *gives* of Himself freely—unmerited favor
 - a. He does not respond to our infidelity with vengeance and wrath
 - b. He does not return our unfaithfulness with rebuke and anger
 - c. Instead, He wants to recover us with His love—He is ever faithful, even when we are not
 3. OT basis for this text:

Ps 138:6—*For though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar.*

Pr 3:34—*Though he scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.*

3. This grace is available—but only to those who are *willing* to receive it
 - o He opposes the proud
 - o But He gives grace to the humble
4. We must have an humble attitude
 - o One that recognizes that we are sinners needing forgiving
 - o One that is grateful for the opportunity to be restored to God’s favor
 - o One that is willing to be faithful and obedient
5. This sets the stage for **verses 7-10**—actions of humility and repentance that:
 - o Spring from a contrite and humble heart—that receives God’s grace
 - o Are enabled/empowered by God’s grace—not by our own human ability
 - o Are not the **cause**—but the **result**—of God’s grace

3. ACTIONS OF HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE—CALL TO REPENTANCE

- a. The basis for this passage is **Pr 3:34**

KJV—3:34—*Though he scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted*

NIV—3:34—*He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.*

- b. This is also quoted by **I Pe 5:5** and followed by a similar list of commands

NIV—I Pe 5:5-9—5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you,

clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**” **6 Humble** yourselves, therefore, **under God’s mighty hand**, that he may lift you up in due time. **7** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. **8** Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **9 Resist** him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

KJV—**7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. **9** Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. **10** Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

NIV—**7** Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

NASB—**7** Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

c. Meaning of passage

1. Based on the idea that: **God gives grace to the humble**
2. Consequently—one must submit to God
3. The following actions show how to do this submission

d. Structure of passage

1. It begins with submission (v7) and ends with humility (v10)
2. Series of matching couplets—based on the idea that

Couplet One

Submit to God	↔	Resist the devil
Draw near to God	↔	He will draw near to you

Couplet Two

Cleanse your hands	↔	Purify your hearts
Grieve, mourn, wail	↔	Change your laughter to mourning

Humble yourselves	↔	He will exalt
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e. Couplet One

1. Talks about our relationship with God—submit to God and draw near to Him

2. First part of couplet one

a. Text: “submit to God—resist the devil, and he will flee from you”

1. Mutual relationship between commands

a. We cannot resist the devil without first submitting to God

- God gives us the power and protection to resist the devil
- God causes the devil to flee

b. Resisting the devil is the first action of submitting to God

2. Wording

Submit—**υποτασσω** = set under

Resist—**αντιστημι** = stand/set against

3. Parallel passages—resist the devil

I Pe 5:9—resist him, stand firm in the faith

Ep 6:13—take up the whole armor of God, so that you will be able to withstand in the evil devil

4. One of James’s central thoughts: the power of Satan and supernatural forces are behind evil

a. This began in **1:13-15**—**desire** → sin → death

- A person is tempted when he is lured by his own desire
- Desire conceives and gives birth to sin
- Sin fully grown brings forth death

b. This noun “desire” is the same root for the verb “desire”—in **4:2**

These **desires** in chapter 4 are the cause for fights and quarrels

c. Now—we discover one of the root causes for it all—Satan

3. Second part of first couplet:

a. Text: “draw near to God—and He will draw near to you”

b. Contrast with first half of the couplet

1. The first half ended with *resist* the devil

2. The new command = “draw near” to God

c. Relationship to the first half of the couplet

1. This is *not* after resisting the devil

2. It is another command—not a consequence of the first one

3. It is *part* of the first command in this way—we must draw near in order to submit
 4. *Both* submitting to God and drawing near to Him *must* precede resisting the devil
- d. Meaning of ‘draw near’ = **εγγιζω**
1. Taken from the word to “squeeze”
 2. Used in passages that say the Kingdom of God is “at hand”—or “near”
- e. The promise is like the one in the first half
1. Just as the devil will **flee**, if you **resist** him
 2. So—God will **draw near** to you, if you **draw near** to Him

4. APPLICATION—how to resist the devil—how to draw near to God

a. Mutually dependent actions

- o We cannot draw close to God if we are not intent on resisting the devil
- o We cannot resist the devil unless we are intent on drawing near to God
- o We cannot draw close to the devil if we are drawing near to God
- o We cannot draw near to God if we are drawing near to the devil

b. Resisting the devil

1. **First** step = submit to God

- o Total dependence on God
- o Continuous communication with God—prayer
- o Reliance on Holy Spirit to protect and guide—and follow His prompting

2. Recognize the threat

- o This is spiritual warfare beyond our human ability to win without God
- o It is against powers and principalities and spiritual forces of darkness—Eph 6:12

3. Be intentional—*resist* means that this is not passive but *active* opposition

4. Put on the armor of God

a. Put away the deeds darkness and put on the armor of light—Rom 13:12

b. The elements of the armor—Eph 6:14

- Truth [girded loins]
- Righteousness [breastplate]

- Gospel of peace [feed shod]
- Faith [shield]
- Salvation [helmet]
- Word of God [sword of the Spirit]

5. Put away *all* deeds of the flesh—Gal 5:19-20

6. Do not just resist *sin* but also the *counsel* to sin—resist the temptation to be tempted

7. Be pro-active—don't wait until temptation comes—the best defense is an attack

c. Drawing near to God

1. First—remember that He *is* near at hand

a. God is not far off—but is near each one of us—**Acts 17:27**

b. Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near—**Is 55:6**

c. His word is near us—**Rom 10:8**—Dt. 30:14—in your mouth and heart—the word of faith

2. Ways to draw closer to God

- o Prayer and meditation
- o Read and meditate on His word
- o Worship
- o Ministry—in as much as you have done it to one of the least of these—**Mt 25**
- o Suffer for Him—know power of resurrection and fellowship of sufferings—**Ph 3:10**
- o Bear fruit—then we are on the vine—connected to Him—**Jn 15**
- o Obey His word—then we abide with Him—**Jn 15**

f. Couplet Two

Cleanse your hands	↔	Purify your hearts
Grieve, mourn, wail	↔	Change your laughter to mourning

1. **Summary:** first part of couplet tells the state of humility God wants us to be in; the second part of the couplet tells us specifically how to get to that state of humility

2. First part of couplet—the *state* of humility we should be in

a. Summary: first part (clean hands)—deals with our outward activities; second part (purify hearts)—deals with inner motivation/commitment

b. Cleanse your hands, you sinners

1. Harkens back to ritual preparation in OT—to offer sacrifices

2. Example: priests were required to cleanse themselves before ministering

Read Ex 3:19-21

3. Why call them 'sinners'?

This refers to those who **do** sinful acts—actively rebel against God.

4. Problem: later Pharisees and ‘Jews’ took this ritual preparation too far

Quote Mk 7:1-5—how they focused on washing and rituals

So it is not enough to *do* the outward things—the heart must be right also

c. Purify your hearts, you double-minded

1. Harkens back to OT demands for heart to be right also

Read Ps 24:4

Read Ps 73:13

2. The heart deals with inner motivation—intent of the action—from the heart come evil and good

Sermon on Mount—Mt 5:8—blessed are the pure in heart—for they will see God

From *inside* come all evil things—**Mk 7:21-23**—“evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft . . .”

3. Why call them ‘double-minded’?

a. They are persons who *seem* to be good—*act* occasionally like Christians

b. But they do not have eyes single-mindedly set on Christ and obedience

c. One eye on God—the other eye on the world

Jesus warned—**Mt 6:24**—“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one . . .”

d. Reminder—this is like the ‘double-minded’ man in **Jas 1:8**

1. This word is found only in these two passages

2. It means—two-minds—or two-souls—or two hearts

3. In **Jas 1:7-8**—this person is

One who wavers in faith

One who is unstable in all his ways

This person should not expect anything from the Lord

2. Second part of the couplet—*how* to get into that proper state of cleanliness/purity of heart

o Be miserable, and mourn and weep

o Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom

a. Summary: all these attitudes and actions of repentance

b. Reminder of Sermon on Mt—**Mt 5:4**—“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”

c. The meaning of first three words—put yourself in this state

- o Be miserable—feel afflicted, a heaviness (as under a laborious load)
- o Mourn—to lament, to feel sorry about something
- o Weep—cry as a sign of grief, bewail as for the dead

d. *Change* your attitudes

1. Relinquish any sense of happiness or joy—and be the opposite

- o Laughter to mourning
- o Joy to gloom

2. There must be no vestige of happiness with worldliness—it must be actively eradicated!

e. The purposes

1. To feel a genuine sense of guilt and sadness for our sinfulness

2. To bring us to a proper state of humility—see next verse

3. Product of verses 8-9 (draw near cleanse, purify, be miserable, mourn, weep, etc)

a. Humility—this is an active, conscious submission of total self to God—Humble yourselves

- o Demote yourselves
- o Abase and lower yourselves before God
- o The opposite of what the rich (and their puppets) have been doing in Chapter 2

b. God’s rule of opposites

- o Just as you do the opposite—go from joy to gloom, laughter to mourning—and produce humility
- o So God will do the opposite—he will exalt you—He will raise you up [put you on the heights]
- o Exalt = raise to the pinnacle of prosperity, dignity, honor and happiness

C. JUDGMENTAL BEHAVIOR

4:11-12—KJV—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. **12** There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

4:11-12—NIV—11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

4:11-12—NASB—11 Do 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. There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

1. Subject: speaking evil of brother/neighbor—judging one another
2. Speaking evil against = καταλαλεω

- a. Word means—to speak against—to run down—to ‘criminate’—to speak falsely with intent to harm
- b. Used 2 other times in NT—means to speak falsely against someone—in order to make good appear bad

1. In I Peter 2

- a. It is also connected with the same kind of sinful desires James has just identified
- b. Part of a warning to Christians—watch your behavior—do not give pagans cause to accuse you
- c. Refers to pagans falsely attacking Christians

*I Pe 2:11-12—Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they **accuse** you of doing wrong [they **speak against** you as evil doers], they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

2. In I Peter 3

- a. Be ready to give a witness to those around you
- b. But do so with spirit of gentleness
- c. Not arrogantly or belligerently—like the fighting spirit James saw in his congregation

I Pe 3:15-16—But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

c. So—James is warning his church against behavior that is:

1. Ungodly—like that of the pagans who falsely accuse Christians
2. Slanderous—saying evil things against those who are good

3. Logical sequence of thought

- Do not—speak evil—slanderously—against another
- This is parallel to being judgmental
- To speak slanderously/evilly against a brother is to judge him falsely
- To speak slanderously/evilly against a brother—is to speak *against* the law
- To speak against the law in this way—is to sit above the law and to judge the law
- Conclusion: speaking evil against a brother = is to sit in judgment on the law
- Whoever judges the law in this way—does not actually *do* the law—but only sits in judgment
- This kind of slanderous attitude distorts our view/understanding of the law

- Besides—you are not the judge—you are not impartial—only God is the one Lawgiver and judge
- Only God has power to save and destroy—not you
- So you should not be judgmental against your neighbor in this way

[Implied question—what do we do with our neighbor?]

[Implied answer—love neighbor as self]

3. Why this is here

a. Speaking evil causes contention and strife in the body

1. It is like character assassination—like **murder**—**James 4: 2**
2. It is like the ‘**proud**’ that God opposes—in **James 4:6**
3. This slanderous judgment is the opposite of **humility**
4. It is the opposite of a humble repentant attitude—**vv 6-10**—that remedies desire/pleasure/strife

b. Speaking evil—is like cursing someone—seen in **James 3:9-10**

With the tongue—we bless the Lord but we curse men

4. Further explanation of ‘speak against’—the noun usage

a. Speaking evil against—**καταλαλεω** = to slander

b. The noun—is ‘slanderer’ or ‘backbiter’—**καταλαλος**

Rom 1:30—slanderers—on of many characteristics of a depraved mind

II Cor 12:20—Paul fears he will find this when he comes to Corinth—with strife, jealousy, anger, etc

I Pe 2:1—put aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander

5. Secondary application—speaking judgmentally

a. Be careful not to ‘judge’ in a ‘judgmental’ way

1. Jesus said not ‘judge’—[not the same word—**κρινω**] lest we be ‘judged’—**Mt 7:1-2**
2. Elsewhere—‘do not judge’ is commanded—in these circumstance

Rom 12:1-4—do not judge others, or you condemn yourself—because you practice the same things

Rom 14:1—passing judgment on disputable things—that are strictly a matter of personal conscience

I Cor 4:5—do not pass judgment hastily—wait for Lord—who will discern hearts

[Implication here is that we can never judge the heart or motives of people!]

3. This does not mean we are not to ‘judge’ in exercising church discipline
 - a. Paul says not to judge outsiders (those outside church)—but we *do* judge in the church—I Cor 5:12
 - b. We *should* exercise church discipline according to the standards of Mt 18:15-18
 1. But this is a matter of *private* consultation first—not public humiliation
 2. Then one or two—then the church—when it becomes public—it is corporate
 3. The purpose should always be redemptive—to reclaim the sinner
 4. It is *not* a matter of one person sitting in judgment over another or others

Analogy:

- The umpire judges the game—the team manager or owner must not try to ‘judge’ it
 - There is only one judge of the game—otherwise it is unfair and undisciplined
 - But the team manager and owner must ‘judge’ and administer discipline in the team
- c. Jesus said—He who is without sin, cast the first stone—Jn 8:7—woman caught in adultery
 1. This was because of the **judgmental** attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees
 2. Because they were **publicly humiliating** the woman—not trying to redeem her
 3. They were **not without the same kinds of sin**—and could not sit in public judgment
 4. They were also **breaking the law**—where was the man?—where were the witnesses?
 5. They were using it just as a **sham to entrap Jesus**—not to seek real justice

4. What James—and Jesus are talking about—do not judge others
 - a. People who **set themselves above the law and lord it over others**—like a judge
 - b. None of us can do that—for three reasons
 1. We are all subject to the law
 2. We are all law-breakers
 3. Only one is not subject to the law—The Lawgiver and Judge—God—He is the only Judge

Ps 75:7—But God is the judge; He puts one down and exalts another

Is 33:22—For the Lord is our judge . . . our lawgiver . . . our king—He will save us

II Tim 4:8—*in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

6. So—maybe three things are being condemned here

- a. Actual slander—speaking ill falsely against a brother
- b. Sitting in judgment over others—with a ‘judgmental’ attitude
- c. Playing God—usurping His role as judge is blasphemous!

D. **Worldliness**, arrogance and the cure (4:13-16)

KJV—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: **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. **15** For that ye [ought] to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. **16** But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

NIV—13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

NASB—13 Come 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." **14** Yet 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. **15** Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." **16** But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

1. Structure of passage

- A presumptuous, worldly, and proud/overly confident attitude—v 13
- Two limitations that should make/keep us humble—v 14
- The correct attitude—humility and submissiveness to God—v 15
- The opposite evil: *beyond* arrogance—boasting in your arrogance—v 16

2. A presumptuous, worldly and proud/overly confident attitude—v 13

a. Presumptuous because—we will go—[will] spend a year—and [will] engage

- It assumes we will have tomorrow—or a year—which is not promised or certain
- It assumes that we can will things to happen simply because we want them to occur

b. Worldly because

It focuses first on worldly business—and making a profit as the primary motive
It derives from the desires and lusts James warns against in **4:1-2**

c. Proud and overly confident because

- It puts our will first—without consulting anyone else (especially God)
- It is overly confident—because we assume that what we do will naturally succeed
- This attitude is just the opposite of the humility James has just called for in **4:10**
- So it feeds the desires that cause strife and contention—in **4:1**

d. Biblical example—Parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:16-21)

The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying “What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?” Then he said, “This is what I will do: I will gear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul’, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.,” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your souls is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?” So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

e. Biblical principle—Sermon on Mount

Mt 6:19-21—*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

3. Two limitations that should dampen pride—v 14

a. 14 a—We do not know the future

Only God knows for certain what will happen

b. 14 b—We do not know how much time we have

1. We do not even know if we have tomorrow—certainly not a year!
2. Life is transitory—even if we have a year—time will run out sooner or later!
3. James has already made this point—specifically to his rich readers:

1:10-11—*And the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like the flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.*

4. So *both* time and riches are fleeting!

4. The correct attitude: humility and submissiveness to God—v 15

a. Out of humility—we ought to say and do whatever the Lord wills

1. He is *Lord*—this terminology defines our relationship—we are his servants
2. This fits the pattern James has prescribed above
 - a. Submit therefore to God—**4:7**
 - b. Humble yourselves before the Lord—**4:10**

b. Out of practical need—we ought to depend on the Lord

1. He knows the future—and can help steer us in the right direction
2. He knows what is best for us—whatever His ‘will’ is for us—it is the very best thing

5. The opposite evil—beyond arrogance: “rejoice in your boastings”—“boast in your arrogance”
 - a. It is bad enough to be arrogant—it is even worse to be foolish—stupid enough not to brag about our folly!
 1. Literally—this means to ‘glory/boast’ in our ‘bragging/boasting’
 2. The noun—boastings/arrogance—**αλαζονεια**—means to be a ‘braggart’
 3. It means—insolent and empty assurance—impious and empty presumption—depending on earthly power
 4. Taking pride in the fact that we are just a big bag of wind!
 - b. It is blasphemous—to ‘boast’ in this way—we should boast on in God and godly things
 1. Boast (the verb) = glory—**καοχαομαι**
 2. Other usages—of ‘glory’—i.e. boasting

I Cor 1:29—no flesh should *glory* in His presence

I Cor 1:31—He that *glories*, let him *glory* in the Lord

I Cor 3:18-21—*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness;” and again, “The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.” So then let no one **boast** in men.*”

3. What we should boast about

Rom 5:3—*glory* in our tribulations because they build patience (and bring character and hope)

II Cor 11:30 and **12:5, 9**—Paul *gloried* only in things related to his infirmities

Gal 6:14—God forbid that I should *glory*, except in the cross of Jesus Christ

James 1:9—the brother of humble circumstances should *glory* in his high position—i.e. the position of humility before God is the most exalted position.

E. A succinct **definition** of sin (4:17)

1. This encompasses all the wrong behaviors James has warned against in chapter 4
2. The summary statement of sin

James 4:17—*Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

3. This begins with the assumption of what is *right* not what is wrong.

So, we should be striving to do that which is right, not just avoiding what is wrong!

4. It also says that sin is **not** doing what is right.
 - a. These include sins of *omission*—not doing what God calls us to do

- b. They are also sins of *commission*—**not** avoiding those things which are wrong and doing them
5. This does not mean wrong behavior can be excused by ignorance
- a. Everyone knows what is basically right—everyone has a conscience
 - b. And God gives enough light to all persons to know basically what is ‘right’

Rom 1:20-21—*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

- c. All people have a law written on their hearts—an instinct for right—for which they are accountable

Rom 2:12-15—*For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judge by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the thing of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them in the day when according to the gospel, god will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*

Parallel teaching point

- o Remember in Romans—Abraham was justified *before* the covenant of circumcision—**Rom 4:9-12**
- o So clearly Abraham was justified by **faith**—not by **works**—not by the act of circumcision
- o In the same way Abraham was justified *before* the giving of the Law
- o So Abraham was not justified by keeping a code—but by following God in faith
- o The same was true of all who followed God before the Law—examples: Enoch and Noah
- o So it is possible to be obedient without knowing the Law—but by responding to God in conscience
- o This does not mean that one is saved without Christ
- o This does not mean that a person is saved only by obedience to conscience
- o But it does mean that persons had faith apart from the Law and the coming of the Gospel
- o Christ will judge the hearts of all regarding their faith in God shown in the faithfulness to Him
- o So nobody is without excuse for being faithful to what they know of God
- o This is as far as we can take this reasoning
- o We cannot say it is possible for **Christ** to save them without explicit knowledge of the Gospel
- o But we also cannot sit in judgment on the hearts of other people—only Christ can do this

- 6. But there is a greater accountability for those who know right—and do not do it

- a. James’s reference to teachers being more accountable—**James 3:1**

- b. Jesus’ parable of three types of unfaithful stewards—**read Luke 12:42-48**

- **vv 45-56**—Disobedient steward, beats other slaves, gets drunk—will be assigned with unbelievers
- **v 47**—One who knows Master’s will and is not ready—will receive lashes
- **v 48**—One who did not know Master’s will and disobeys—will receive fewer lashes
- To whom much is given, much will be required

- 7. Similar statements summarizing sin

a. By Jesus—sin is not believing in Him—another example of what we do **not do**

John 16:8-9—*And He [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they **do not believe** in Me . . .*

b. By Paul—sin is whatever is not done in faith—another example of what is **not** done (not in faith)

Rom 14:23—*But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

c. By John

1. Sin is transgression of the law

I Jn 3:4—*Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.*

Here ‘transgression’ = **ανομία**—without the law

This can be either because of **ignorance** of the law, or being without it through **violation** of it

Standing outside the law—sometimes translated ‘iniquity’

Used also of ‘man of sin’ (lawless one) who comes at the end times—**II Thess 2:8**

2. Unrighteousness is sin

I Jn 5:17—*All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death.*

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

VII. Avoiding Evil Behavior (4:1-17)

A. The **Source** of Evil and Division (4:1-3)

The pleasures that wage war in your members

And the frustration of not having

B. The **Cure** of Single-mindedness and Humility (4:4-10)

Submit to God

Resist the devil

Draw near to God

Cleanse your hands—actions

Purify your hearts—motives

Repent

Humble yourselves before God—and He will exalt you

C. **Judgmental** Behavior (4:11-12)

Do not slanderously judge

God alone judges

D. **Worldliness**, arrogance and the cure (4:13-16)

Do not be presumptuous, arrogant or proud

Follow the Lord’s will

E. A **definition** of sin (4:17)

Sin is knowing what is right and not doing it