

Cancelled!

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[0 : 00] James chapter 4. This is verses number 1 through 12. And Emily is serving us this morning. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among us?

! Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the scripture says, he yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us. But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[1 : 06] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to mourning. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.

But who are you to judge your neighbor? Thank you. Let's pray. Our Father, we are grateful for the privilege of gathering together in this particular space, with this group of people, at this particular time.

We're grateful for your word. We're grateful for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we are grateful for the Holy Spirit, who has given us life and now dwells inside of us.

Father, we are grateful to have voices that we can lift to you, and hands that we can clap, and as Josh reminded us, feet that we can stomp, and we can celebrate and make a joyful noise, because we recall the great price that was paid for our sin.

[2 : 26] We recall that our Savior, the one who humbled himself to death, is now alive. And we recall that he is interceding for us, and that he has promised to return, to take us to be with him.

Oh, we have so much to celebrate, and so we give you thanks. As we turn our attention to the preaching of your word, would you please help us? Would you please help me?

Guard me from saying anything that would be foolish or unhelpful or distracting. Would you help each of us, as we sit under the preaching of your word, to be sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

And Holy Spirit, would you please do work among us this morning? And would you please start that work in my heart? We ask this, Father, for your glory and for our good.

In the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Several years ago, I worked for an accounting company that was also a professional consulting company.

[3 : 39] And we had an office in Utah. And at one point in my employment there, I flew to Salt Lake City so that my colleague and I could travel to Rexburg, Idaho to visit a customer.

To pass the time in the car, Alan and I began discussing our religious beliefs. We talked about sin. We talked about Jesus' death on the cross. We talked about the afterlife. At one point, my friend said, you know, as a Mormon, I've never understood why you evangelicals make such a big deal about grace.

But now I get it. You make a big deal about grace because you really, truly believe people are sinful. Yes.

We really, truly believe that people are sinful. Beginning in chapter 3, James addresses a serious sin within the communities of Jesus' followers, their teachers, their leaders.

[5 : 07] Have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition down, down in their hearts. And this bitter jealousy can be translated harsh zeal.

This is the kind of emotional outrage that confronts those who don't align with our group's values or share our party's agenda.

selfish ambition is a different kind of thing. It is a win-at-all-costs, no-holds-barred determination to achieve your party's goals.

James describes this counterfeit wisdom as earthly, unspiritual, and demonic.

And the result of this type of teaching, the result of this type of leadership, James says, it is disorder and wickedness.

[6 : 11] the harsh zeal and the party-focused ambition within the community of Jesus' followers, that will not stay hidden in the heart.

Sinful attitudes produce sinful actions. But no worries. Because when you are zealous for the right cause, the ends always justify the means.

Right? Chapter 4, verse 1. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this that your passions, your party-focused cravings for power and control, your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have. You are committed to winning at all costs, to putting your opponents away once and for all. You desire and you do not have and so you murder.

[7 : 32] You covet and you cannot obtain. You're zealous for your party's agenda, but you're not getting what you want and so you fight and you quarrel.

You do not have the wisdom that is from above, but it's only because you don't ask for it. Oh, you're asking for things.

You ask, but you do not receive. God doesn't answer your prayers. Why not? Because you ask wrongly. Because your motives are corrupt.

You spend and spend and spend all of your requests asking for more zeal and ambition to achieve your passions, your party-focused cravings for power and control.

We know from James 3, verse 13, that he expects teachers and leaders of God's people to behave in a particular way.

[8 : 38] He expects the leaders, the teachers of God's people to model a way of life. A way of life that yields good works, good works that arise from the meekness, the gentleness, of wisdom.

Wisdom from above is made visible through gentleness. We also know that Jesus forbids in Mark chapter 10, lording it over others.

Why? Because this kind of zealous authoritarianism that is willing to fight for power and control.

This is the distinguishing characteristic of ungodly leaders, Jesus says.

If you seek God's justice by talking and acting in ungodly ways, you are being false to the truth, James 3, 14.

In other words, you are denying the very gospel that you claim to be defending. If your leadership does not produce gentleness, reasonableness, good works, and peace, and if instead your so-called wisdom results in volatility and vitriol and vice and violence, that's demonic, James says.

[10 : 24] And your friendship with the world's ways of exercising authority makes you an enemy of God.

No wonder James says, verse 4, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. God or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the scripture says he yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.

Verse 5 is challenging and it's tempting to just sort of scoot past it and get to verse 6 because verse 6 is very clear.

But if we do the work and understand verse 5 and we see what James is trying to accomplish here, it makes verse 6 all the more wonderful. So let's just pause briefly and let's see what we can discern about verse 5.

[11:57] First, James writes this, the scripture says, do you see that there in verse 5? The scripture says, when we see this, we should be expecting a quote or an allusion to an Old Testament text.

But we don't find the words of the Old Testament in verse 5 at all. So we might ask, well, okay, well then, what is doing the yearning?

What yearns? jealousy. And the original text is ambiguous here. It could be that the Holy Spirit yearns with jealousy.

And it could be that the human spirit, the life that God put inside of you because you're a human being, that human spirit is yearning towards jealousy.

And it could be that God himself is yearning with jealousy about the human spirit that he put inside of you. It's ambiguous.

[13:08] So we have more work to do. The Old Testament does indeed describe God as jealous. Exodus 25, 32, 14.

However, this particular Greek word is never, ever used for God's jealousy. Not in the New Testament, not in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

This specific word for jealousy always refers to sinful human behavior. That's helpful. And, although James may allude to the work of the Holy Spirit back in chapter 1 and verse 18 when he talks about God giving us life, and verse 22 when he talks about the implanted word, he may be subtly referring to the Holy Spirit, but James uses this exact same word for the Holy Spirit, sorry, for the human spirit in verse 26.

Remember when we talked about faith? And James wrote, the body apart from the Spirit is dead. I think he's referring to the human spirit. So then what about this word yearns? It would be nice if this word was used somewhere else in Scripture to help us, but it is not.

[14:43] It is only used right here in this one verse. However, it is used in other classical Greek writings, and so we do get some help.

It means strong desire or craving. If that sounds familiar, it's because yearns is related to passions. Back up in chapter 4, verse 1, and again in verse 3. I paraphrase that just a little bit as cravings for power and control.

but it's an even stronger word than that. So it seems that verse 5 refers to the human spirit yearning jealously.

We might paraphrase it like this. Do you suppose the spirit speaks without reason? The spirit, sorry, do you suppose the Scripture speaks without reason?

[15:48] The spirit God made to dwell in us pulls violently towards jealousy. The bitter jealousy that leads to disorder and wickedness.

James really believes that people are sinful. This is the thread that he has been weaving with throughout his letter. He started back in chapter 1 in verse 14 Remember?

We all have this desire inside of us and that desire conceives sin and that sin gives birth to death. Is there hope for leaders who use the world's ways to advance their cause and as a result have made themselves God's enemies?

Is there hope for these partisan teachers who are motivated by their cravings for power and control and self-glory?

people are! burning desire and the violent pull towards sin that still remains deep down inside of us.

[17:47] Oh, my dear, beloved, beleaguered brothers and sisters, brothers, we really believe people are sinful and so we make a really big deal about grace.

Verse 6, but he gives more grace.

Therefore, it says, Proverbs 3, 34, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

what should we do if we find ourselves in this situation of needing so much more grace?

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

[19:00] cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded be wretched in other words lament because you realize that your future prospect in continuing in your sin is awful and inescapable be wretched when you realize that lament it and mourn and weep!

Let your laughter be turned to mourning! and your joy to gloom! Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

He gives more grace. Grace is goodness that God shows towards those who don't deserve it, towards those who could never ever earn it.

grace. This is grace. And God gives more of it. In light of God's grace and this call for humble repentance, James speaks again, especially to the leaders, especially to the teachers.

He is concerned about those in positions of authority who use their influence to make degrading judgment calls on others. Look at verse 11.

[20 : 35] Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one law giver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy, but who are you to judge your neighbor?

James does not forbid careful discernment that identifies and warns about ungodly leaders with sinful behaviors.

He is not forbidding that. After all, that's actually what he's doing, isn't it? James is concerned about how the teachers speak about others and about how their example is destroying the community.

These teachers, these leaders are putting labels on those who disagree with the party or those who don't agree strongly enough with the cause or with those who agree but are obviously too cowardly to do anything meaningful about it.

[22 : 11] The teacher's harsh zeal and their selfish ambition and their cravings their desires their yearnings towards sinful jealousy have driven them to assume the place of God they and they alone know best and everyone else is dangerous and unworthy of trust.

Do you know what this is? This is first century cancel culture. And canceling others is still the way influential leaders treat those outside their group isn't it?

And their ungodly example motivates their followers behavior. What's James' concern?

When you judge another person's heart when you judge their motives when you act like you can see into their heart and mind their very soul and know what they're thinking and know what's motivating them and then you speak accusingly based on what you assume is happening inside of them publicly making your judgment of their character known you are putting yourself in the place of the law in other words that's the law's job it's the law's job to help us discern what's going on inside of our hearts the spirit works through God's law to help us understand but you're taking the law's place you're not a doer of the law anymore now you've become a judge and as a judge you have a very real problem because there is only one law giver there is only one judge and by your critical judgmental uncharitable speech about others you have put yourself not only in the place of the law but in the place of

God you have broken not only the second great command love your neighbor as yourself you have also broken the first great command love the Lord your God with all that you are and have no wonder James warns at the end of verse 12 who do you think you are there is one law giver there is one who is able to save or to destroy for eternity I am so grateful that our God does not pursue sinners with hateful vengeance I'm so glad that our God is not seeking revenge or gleefully waiting to dole out the punishment that sinners deserve

[25 : 32] God loves sinners and sent his son Jesus to rescue us if you are not a Christian you can be saved today not unsurprisingly by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone draw near to God and he will draw near to you aren't you glad my brothers and sisters that even after salvation he gives more grace we do not submit to God voluntarily do we we need God's grace to abandon our friendship with the world so instead of fighting for control or power or using harsh speech to domineer and control others we can ask

God for the grace to submit to him to his word to his spirit transforming work in our lives he gives more grace you do not have the strength that you need to stand up to the devil's schemes on your own but here's the good news he gives more grace more grace to resist the devil and what a blessed promise James gives us here in this text resist the devil and what he will flee from you what a beautiful promise that is you may find yourself like the prodigal son in the pig pen this week filthy starving shocked at how far your sin has brought you when

God gives more grace and there is that moment of awakening and the spirit pricks your heart and you realize what have I done draw near as the author of Hebrews says draw near to the throne of grace grace and there you will find mercy and grace to help in time of need and you will discover that God like the father in that famous parable is already drawing near to you he gives more grace so that we can take sin seriously lamenting its devastating effects on ourselves on our relationships

on our family on our communities on our country on our churches here is hope for us by his resurrection

Jesus broke the power of sin Romans 5 assures us of this child of God sin no longer controls you there was a time when sin didn't have to come knocking at your door it just came barging into your heart and you were powerless to resist it but the resurrection of Jesus changes all that sin no longer controls you and he gives more grace more grace to slay your sin more grace to crush that sinful desire inside of your heart that violently pulls you towards sin!

and if you have been wounded by the massed crusaders of cancel culture and if your reputation within the Christian community seems irreparably!

[30 : 04] damaged and if you feel like an exile even from the church he gives more grace you can know exactly who your friend is he's the one with the scars it's our savior Jesus my friend Alan was right followers of Jesus really believe that people are sinful and that's why we make such a big deal about grace because when sin increases as Paul will later write grace abounds all the more in the book of James we are learning that steadfastness through suffering results in the delightful gift of becoming wiser with

Jesus and this wisdom is shaping us in humble holiness and gentle reasonableness and merciful goodness and we make our faith visible we make it visible by the words we speak and by the practical needs that we meet and by watching which leaders we choose to follow we testify to our father's goodness and we testify to his ongoing continuing work of redemption as we offer hope and healing through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and so my beloved brothers and sisters may our faith be not alone whether your teaching and leadership has been divisive and it has caused quarrels and fights or whether you've been part of a division towing the party line for the sake of the party line or participating in

Christian cancel culture using whatever means necessary to advance the cause he gives more grace grace to reject the temptation to elevate ourselves and put ourselves in the place of God by assuming that we can see what others are thinking or believing what's going on inside of them their hearts let's refuse to speak evil against others and instead let's use our mouths to proclaim the gospel that calls every sinner with forgiveness and hope by God's grace let's be doers of the word and not hearers only let's pray