

James 4 - Worldly Wisdom; The Believer's Obligations; Do Not Boast of Future Plans

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James 4

(2) Wisdom in spiritual life (4:1-12)

(A) Wrangling (4:1-3)

1 What is the source of **quarrels** and **conflicts among you**? Is **the source** not your **pleasures** that **wage war** in your body's parts?

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

1 Where do those fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your selfish desires that are at war in your bodies, don't they?

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

- James teaches the factionalism originates in the sin nature (our flesh)

- "...quarrels" - a protracted state of hostilities
- "...conflicts" - outbursts of hostility
- The fact that both words are plural indicates that this was a continuing problem
- The people were fighting and arguing out of selfishness, envy, and selfish ambition. They put their desire for pleasure above their desire for God; they resented others and were obsessed with pleasing themselves
- "...among you" - James is specifically talking about "quarrels" and "conflicts" between Christians, those in the church, denomination, or organization that cannot seem to get along with each other
- After raising the first question, James gives the answer to it in the form of the second question, which assumes a positive response:
- "...the source" - James provides three reasons why Christians can't get along with each other: relational sins that come from our sin nature (v1b-2a); prayerlessness, giving way to relational sins rather than going to God in persistent prayer (v2b); and, misdirected prayer, or praying for our own selfish desires rather than praying for our hearts to be made right (v3).
- These sources are the complete opposite of what secular psychology will tell you. Psychology looks at personalities and tests personality types, then tells you to put people with similar scores to work together, then conflicts will cease. But this analysis doesn't view the problem through the lens of God's Word.
- James doesn't mention anything here about personality types, he talks about the source of the conflicts: our hearts. We're sinful by nature (Mark 7:20-23; Gal 5:19-21; Cf. Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9). Scripture says nothing about working with the wrong personality type.
- When we get saved, God makes no attempt to reform our old nature. He doesn't slap a coat of paint on our old nature, because our old nature is unredeemable. It's like putting lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig. God gives us a completely new nature, so we become "dual-natured" with the ability to please our new nature and forsake our old nature. The goal of the Christian life is to live to please our new nature and reckon as dead the deeds of the flesh, which have been crucified.
- The desire to return to the old nature is there, it'll always be there, but as believers we now have the capacity to say No. Why would we want to go back to the old nature...it's deceitful, it's sick, and we can't even understand how wicked we are most of the time.
- "...pleasures" - *hēdonē*, the origin for the word "hedonism": the belief that pleasure is the chief good in life; refers to one who lives only for pleasure, who desires that which is not his, which is unlawful for him to have
- "...wage war" - deals with pleasures that are like soldiers carrying out a military campaign in order to satisfy their cravings

James is echoing Jesus' statement on where relational sin comes from...

Mark 7:20-23:

20 And He was saying, **"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.**

21 **For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,**

22 **deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.**

• "...slander, pride and foolishness" - relational sins

23 **All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."**

2 You **lust** and **do not have**, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because **you do not ask**.

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.

2 You want something but do not get it, so you commit murder. You covet something but cannot obtain it, so you quarrel and fight. You do not get things because you do not ask for them!

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.

- James now points out the result of worldliness...

— The desire of these people, which was the root cause of the fights, remains unfulfilled. This is what happens when we're "in the flesh." Working to satisfy the flesh is pointless—it's a waste of time.

— "...lust" - sinful desires; desiring what God has forbidden; we often think of it sexually, but it doesn't have to be sexual in nature, it can be desiring someone's prestige, status, talent, reputation, position, etc.

— Once we're jealous or envious of someone, then we begin taking shots at them behind their back, creating dissension...they have a better reputation, are better looking, etc. and we become jealous of that, so we begin to bad-mouth them behind their back, causing division.

— When we do this, we "commit murder" in our heart

— So you have a church where there's bickering, conflict, hostility, antagonism, and the secular psychologists want to use that to showcase their personality profiles and inventories. James says the reason that church is in that position is because you have a lot of members of that church who aren't living according to the desires of the nature.

— They've gone right back to the desires of the old nature, and got involved in the relational sins: jealousy, envy, outbursts of anger, desiring something someone else has,

and not getting what you think you deserve, so you begin slandering people behind their back. These things are what become the source of conflict.

- So rather than being envious of something that someone else has and moving into relational sins, what should I do instead? I should take that situation to the Lord in prayer.
- "...you do not ask" - prayerlessness is the second source of our arguments and conflicts
- Prayer often seems like a pointless activity, but it has endless power; Christians today completely underestimate the power of prayer
- James will state later in his epistle that the "prayer of a righteous man" is very powerful
- Elijah altered the weather for 3-1/2 years simply through prayer (Cf. 5:17-18); prayer requires faith, but often we don't pray on the basis of faith, but on the benefit of our sin nature
- If I see someone being blessed, and I think there is an inadequacy in me because they are being blessed, if I go to the Lord and ask Him for something, would the Lord answer me? I think you'd be surprised on how often the Lord will answer you (Matt 7:7-11).
- Maybe the reason why you don't have the reputation, status, or wealth that someone else has is because you never took the time to ask God for those things? But if we do this, we need to heed the warning of v3...
- Jesus spoke a parable in Luke 18:1-8 about the persistent widow. This parable teaches us much about persistence in our prayer life. James is surfacing this same point because we don't pray as we should, rather we try to resolve things in our sin nature.
- This is the second time James has commanded his readers to "ask God" (1st time: 1:5-8 was related to wisdom during times of trials). When we go through trials, we often don't see the trial through God's perspective. Instead of seeing them that way, we charge God foolishly and accuse Him of trying to destroy us. The problem is that we don't have the wisdom of God while in trials, so James commands us to ask God for His mind on our suffering.
- Here, James is urging his readers to pray and ask when they feel envious or jealous of how God has blessed another believer, but not them. If you truly want that same blessing, instead of being jealous and beginning to whisper to someone else about it and tear the person down, pray and ask the Lord to give you the same blessing He gave them. Verse 3 says that if you do that with pure motives, with the intent to bless others like the other person is doing, then He will give you that blessing.

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

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

3 You ask for something but do not get it because you ask for it for the wrong reason—for your own pleasure.

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

- Often we go to God in prayer and He doesn't answer us because we're asking for selfish reasons

— We should be careful in our prayers that they aren't misdirected, praying for things to fulfill our lusts rather than for what pleases God (1 John 5:14)

— We shouldn't ask God for blessing so that we can be blessed, but rather so that we can bless other people

(B) Worldliness (4:4-6)

(a) Worldliness makes one an enemy of God (4:4)

4 You **adulteresses**, do you not know that **friendship** with the **world** is **hostility toward God?** **Therefore** whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an **enemy of God**.

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.

4 You adulterers! Don't you know that friendship with the world means hostility with God? So whoever wants to be a friend of this world is an enemy of God.

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.

- "...adulteresses" - James is writing to believing Hebrew Christians, and calling them "adulteresses"

— They know the OT and knew how Israel in the OT was called an adulterer by God (Ezek 16; 23; Hosea). They understood James' analogy very clearly.

— He calls them adulterers based on the OT concept of spiritual fornication caused by befriending the world

- James' question of rebuke requires an affirmative response

- "...friendship" - *philia*, to love; to have affection for

- "...world" - *kosmos*, the world system, which Satan fully controls (see note: **Names & Titles Demonstrating Satan's Post-Fall, Earthly Authority** below)

— The "world" is one of the enemies we receive the moment we become a Christian (the flesh and the devil are the other two)

— Why would you spend your whole life striving to meet the value system of the world when the whole thing will be melted down one day? (Cf. 1 John 2:15-17)

— The world system is extremely powerful; Demas loved this present world and deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10). Demas was a believer because he was part of Paul's ministry team. He was compromised by the world system, so he went back to it.

- "...hostility toward God" - personal hostility with God; being divided in allegiance between God and our flesh
 - This division is more than disobedience – it's directly hostile to God
 - Even good deeds we perform are not truly a fulfillment of God's law because they are produced in the flesh for our selfish interests
 - "...Therefore" - the logical result of one's attitude; denotes a point of personal decision
 - "...enemy of God" - a consequence of friendship with the world is that we become an enemy of God. The opposite is also true (John 15:18-19).
 - The Greek middle voice emphasizes that this is a self-chosen position
 - Christians are going to be hated and judged by someone, either by God (James 4:4) or by the world (John 15:18-19)
 - An **Arminian or strong Calvinist** would read this verse of a believer who is friendly with the world and think that they had lost their salvation. James doesn't state that because he believes in eternal security. He does, however give us a second consequence for being friends with the world (v5)...

Names & Titles Demonstrating Satan's Post-Fall, Earthly Authority

(Job 1:7; 2:2; Luke 4:5-8; Rom 8:19-22)

1. Prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
2. God of this age (2 Cor 4:4)
3. Prince and power of the air (Eph 2:2)
4. Who the believer wrestles with (Eph 6:12) (we need to put on the armor of God because we're living in enemy territory)
5. Roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)
6. Whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19)

(b) Causes of worldliness (4:5-6)

(i) Not the Holy Spirit (4:5)

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose, "He **jealouslydesires** the Spirit whom He has **made to dwell in us**"?

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"?

5 Or do you think the Scripture means nothing when it says that the Spirit that God caused to live in us jealously yearns for us?

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

- A second consequence of being in friendship with the world is that we alienate the Holy Spirit who indwells us

- James' quote here is not found anywhere in Scripture or any other writing; it's simply expressing a common idea, in quotations, that is common throughout the OT
- "...jealously" - James' point is that the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, isn't interested in just occupying the broom closet of our lives...He wants to indwell us fully
 - When the Spirit is relegated to the broom closet (alienated) in the life of a worldly believer, He jealously desires to fully indwell us
 - James is encouraging his readers to not shrink the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives by living a life pleasing to the world
 - "...desires" - *epipotheō*, "to long for greatly" or "to crave"; it refers to the strongest possible desire and yearning, the longing affection of a lover
 - As applied in this verse, it describes God's unwillingness to share man's affection with the world
 - "...made to dwell" - God purposed the Holy Spirit to dwell in the believer
 - "Spirit" functions as the subject of the verb: "as the Holy Spirit, whom He made to dwell in us, yearns enviously, or jealously"
 - The point is that the Holy Spirit, given to the believer at conversion, yearns enviously for the believer's total devotion and loyalty against worldliness
 - "...us" - James includes himself along with his readers, both are saved and have the Holy Spirit indwelling them

An example of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the OT:

1 Sam 16:13-14:

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily **upon** David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

14 Now the Spirit of the LORD **departed** from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.

- Both Saul and David were saved men
- "...upon" - notice that the Spirit came "upon" David, He didn't "indwell" ("in") David
- "...departed" - the Spirit could leave people

Notice Jesus' words in the Upper Room describing the new operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church:

John 14:16-17:

16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be **with you forever**;

- "...with you forever" - much different than Saul's experience

17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because **He abides with you** and **will be in you**.

- "...He abides with you" - the disciples knew about the Holy Spirit, they weren't ignorant of His work; Jesus was noting the different work of the Spirit to them
- "...will be in you" - notice the different preposition "in" as opposed to "upon"

Work of the Spirit in the OT		
	OT/GOSPELS	TODAY
Reception of all of the Spirit at the moment of salvation?	Subsequent to salvation (Exod. 31:3)	At moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9)
How long is the indwelling?	Temporary indwelling (1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11)	Permanent indwelling (John 14:16)
Who is indwelt?	Selective indwelling (Joel 2:28)	Universal indwelling (1 Cor. 12:13)

Two Sins We Commit Against the Holy Spirit

1. Grieve (Eph 4:30)
 - The Holy Spirit is a Person who has feelings and emotions
 - "Grieving" means to bring sorrow or pain to the Spirit through our worldly decisions
2. Quench (1 Thess 5:17)
 - "Quenching" is putting out the Spirit's fire; it is diminishing the operation of the Spirit in one's life due to sin

(ii) Pride (4:6)

6 But He gives a **greater grace**. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

6 But he gives all the more grace. And so he says, "God opposes the arrogant but gives grace to the humble."

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

- Quoted from Prov 3:34 [LXX]...

- The cause of worldliness: pride

— Pride says, I know better than God. It is the very sin that got Satan thrown out of heaven...

— "...greater grace" *mega charis*, why does James tell his readers that they will receive "greater" grace? They already have "grace" because they are saved, but James tells them that they will receive "greater" (*mega*) grace if they avoid worldliness, which is rooted in pride, because God is opposed to the proud.

— The proud do not believe they need God's grace; these are the same people who are friends with the world, so God sets Himself in battle array against them. By contrast, the humble realize their need for God's grace, which God lovingly provides

— God's view on pride is very clear in the Bible (Prov 6:16-19; 8:13; 16:18; 29:23); it is often what stands between God and man

— Submission requires humility, but we as human beings often have a problem with admitting that we cannot do things on our own

Original State and First Sin (Is 14:12-15)

I will...

1. **Ascend** to heaven (v13)
2. **Raise** my throne above the stars of God (v13)
3. **Sit** enthroned on the Mount of the Assembly (v13)
4. **Ascend** above the tops of the clouds (v14)
5. **Make** myself like the Most High (v14)

Hall of the Humbled

- Satan (Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17; 1 Tim 3:6)
- Uzziah (2 Chr 26:16)
- Herod (Acts 12:20-23)
- Paul (2 Cor 12:1-10)

Scripture and Pride

- Prov 16:18 • Is 14:12-15 • Ezek 28:12-17 • 1 Tim 3:6 • Acts 12:21-23 • 2 Cor 12:7 • 1 Peter 5:5
 - The Bible places the origin of pride in our hearts...it's an attitude of the heart rather than an action.

(C) Essence of spiritual wisdom (4:7-12)

(a) Submission (4:7)

7 **Submit therefore to God.** But **resist the devil**, and **he will flee from you.**

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

7 Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will run away from you.

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

- In this passage (v7-10), James gives 10 aorist imperatives, all of which show urgency and decisive action

- "Submit therefore to God" - this is not a command to become a Christian (James is writing to believers); it is a command to grow as a believer; it's a verse on sanctification, not justification

— "Submit" - a military term: get into your proper rank; an aorist imperative that contains a sense of urgency and demands immediately obedience by the believer

— To be in subjection means to accept one's proper station under God (Cf. Luke 2:51; Rom 13:1; Eph 5:22-24; Titus 2:9

- We are all called to submit to others in Scripture:

- Church members are to submit to faithful pastors (Heb 13:17)
- Everyone is to submit to government authorities (Rom 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14)
- Everyone is to submit to God (James 4:7)
- Wives are to submit, to their own husbands (Eph 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1)

— "...resist the devil" - how do I do that? Look at the first part of v7...simply by not going back to the sin nature I can do a lot to restrict Satan's influence in my life

— "Resist" Satan means not giving him influence over us by not catering to the flesh. There is not a single command in the NT to "bind Satan" or yell at Satan in anger. We're told to "resist Satan" and to "put on the full armor of God" in order to defend ourselves against him, because we're living on his turf. Satan will not be "bound" until Rev 20:1-3 when Jesus returns (see notes: **Instructions to Christian in the Church Age Concerning Satan & Satan's Progressive Defeat** below).

— If I submit to God, I'm doing more than I could possibly do to resist Satan simply by submitting to God. Why? Because Satan cannot possess me as a Christian because my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Satan and God cannot be roommates.

— Christians cannot be totally possessed by Satan in the sense that he can completely control you, like we see those possessed by demons in the Gospels. However, he can take

an inroad that we give him as we cater to the flesh.

— When I am not in submission to God, I'm giving Satan permission and an opportunity to work in my life; he can't possess me, but he certainly can influence me.

— Satan loves using Christians...he is able to use non-Christians all the time, where's the fun in that? If he can get a Christian to do his will, he will take every opportunity. If I allow my sin nature to prevail, I'm not in submission to Christ, he will do just that (Cf. Eph 4:26-27).

— Submission to God comes first, resisting the devil comes second. If I'm not in submission to God, I have no chance to resist the devil.

— For details on binding and loosing Satan, see [James 23 Binding and Loosing \(James 4:7\)](#).

- "...he will flee from you" - a reciprocal promise

Three Tenses of Salvation			
Phase	Justification	<u>Sanctification</u>	Glorification
Tense	Past	<u>Present</u>	Future
Saved from sin's:	Penalty	Power	Presence
Scripture	Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5	<u>Phil 2:12</u>	Rom 5:10
Nature	Single	Dual	Single

Lordship Sanctification

Submission to Christ as Lord is required to grow as a Christian. The concept of Lordship (submitting to Christ as Lord) is related to the middle tense of our salvation. Lordship is not required for our justification because that mixes faith and works for our salvation.

The more you take biblical commands for the middle tense of our salvation and apply them to the first tense of salvation, the greater chance you teach a garbled message to the unsaved and they get the impression that they have to clean up their act before they can become a Christian.

Many churches preach a false Gospel when they tell you that you must repent, but Paul tells us that we are not justified before God through works of the Law. At the same time they say you are saved by grace, they also say that you have to repent of all your sins in order to be saved. The error they make is to take all of the commands that pertain to the middle tense of our salvation and make them requirements in to be saved. The result is that they teach a mixture of faith and works to be saved, and worse, the put requirements on salvation that God does not.

OT Example: the Exodus generation was in faith when they left Egypt (that whole generation is in the Hall of Faith, Heb 11), when they put the blood on the doorposts at the Passover, when they fled, when they crossed the Red Sea. It was *after* this that God brought a saved nation to Mount Sinai to give them the Law. They were saved *first*, then given the Law later, after they were redeemed.

The Law was never intended to redeem Israel; they were given the Law because they were redeemed...God said, Now that you're redeemed, here's how I want you to act (relate to God, commandments 1-4; relate to each other, commandments 5-10). It taught them how to relate to the unsaved world around them (they were to be a kingdom of priests), and how to worship God (instructions for the tabernacle). He didn't give the Mosaic Law to a bunch of unsaved people; He didn't give it for the purpose of justification because they already had that, He gave it to them for the purpose of their sanctification.

How long was it between their justification in Egypt at Passover and their sanctification at Mount Sinai? Two months... "In the third month" (Ex 19:1). They were justified during those two months, but made no progress in their sanctification. They were doing some very "un-Christian" things during that period of time...complaining constantly, complete lack of trust in God, they even contemplated killing Moses. They were in full rebellion against God.

NT Example: This same idea and pattern is evident in the life of Christ. If you have a good study Bible, it will have (between the testaments) a chronological outline of events in the life of Christ. Look up Christ's dealing with Peter.

In Matt 4:18-19 Jesus told Peter to leave his life as a fisherman and that He would make Peter a fisher of men.

- This is not Jesus' first contact with Peter; it is event #35 in the chronology of Christ's life
- Jesus' initial contact with Peter is in John 1, which is where Peter was saved (event #20); Matt 4 is where Peter was called into discipleship

- So there was a time in Peter's life where he was saved/justified, but he was not a disciple. Lordship Salvation denies this as a possibility.

JUSTIFICATION – SALVATION	DISCIPLESHIP
FREE GIFT	COSTLY
RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH	ENTERED INTO THROUGH COMMITMENT AND OBEDIENCE THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S ENABLEMENT
NOT BY WORKS	INVOLVES OUR COOPERATION
INSTANT	LIFE-LONG PROCESS
JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
JESUS PAID THE PRICE	BELIEVER PAYS THE PRICE
TRUSTING JESUS AS SAVIOR	FOLLOWING JESUS AS LORD
BELIEVE THE GOSPEL	OBEY THE COMMANDS
ONE CONDITION	MULTIPLE CONDITIONS
EXPERIENCED BY ALL CHRISTIANS	EXPERIENCED BY SOME CHRISTIANS
RESULTS IN ETERNAL LIFE	RESULTS IN REWARDS & AUTHORITY

Adapted from <http://www.gracelife.org/resources/gracenotes.asp?id=23>

Instructions to Christians in the Church Age Concerning Satan

1. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).
2. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (1 Peter 5:9).
3. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (Eph 6:13).

The Bible says that Satan will go through seven phases of defeat, four of which are past and three are future:

1. Initial eviction from heaven (Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17)
2. Eden (Gen 3:15)
3. Pre-diluvian world (1 Peter 3:19-20)
4. Cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8)
5. Midpoint of the Tribulation (Rev 12:9)

6. Beginning of the millennium (Rev 20:2-3)

7. End of the millennium (Rev 20:10)

This world will continue to be his home turf until Jesus does something about it, which will be at His Second Coming. Only Jesus can do something about it, we can't do anything about it, but what we can do is apply the resources God has given me as an "ambassador" (someone who represents the values of their home country on foreign soil, 2 Cor 5:20). Ambassadors aren't called to bring "regime change" to other parts of the world; they simply represent (American) values in a foreign country. In the same way, we're called to represent kingdom values in a world ruled by an enemy.

- (b) Drawing near to God (4:8a)
- (c) Repentance (4:8b-9)

8 **Come close to God** and He will come close to you. **Cleanse your hands**, you sinners; and purify **your hearts**, you **double-minded**.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

8 Come close to God, and he will come close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

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

- James is not talking about how to become a Christian in a justification sense...this is totally and completely a middle tense salvation (sanctification) issue

- "Come close to God" - another reciprocal promise (Cf. v7)...if we do something, God will in-turn do something else

- Another aorist imperative, meaning the direction is a decisive, a complete turn to God. Worldliness results in straying from God, but a believer must purposefully seek after God.

- This verse is directed at believers (as it all of James' epistle) who want to enjoy maximum intimacy (fellowship) with God. This is a promise given to a believer who wants to grow in their fellowship with God as their Father. This is an invitation for fellowship, not salvation (Cf. 1 John 1:3).

- If we've fallen out of fellowship with God, we can restore that fellowship/intimacy by following 1 John 1:9.

- "...Cleanse your hands" - a reference to personal cleansing; the ceremonial cleansing for a priest to approach God

- "...hearts" - where sin begins (Cf. Ps 51:10; Prov 4:23)

- "...double minded" - trying to hold on to God, while yet hankering for this world; it denotes the struggle in the mind between the heart and the hands

- The hands are not fulfilling what the heart knows is right. Thus, guilty of trying to serve two masters, the end result is spiritual instability (Cf. Ps 24:3-4).
- Double-mindedness leads to a spiritually powerless life
- Example: Lot went to Sodom & Gomorrah, pitched a tent, moved into town, was a leader in city, but was powerless. He couldn't convince anyone to leave town—no one listened to what he had to say; even his wife didn't listen to him and turned back; his son-in-laws died in the town.

[1 John 1:3]

9 Be miserable, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom.

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

9 Be miserable, mourn, and cry. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom.

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

- "Be miserable" - to be miserable because our sin weighs heavily on us
- "...mourn" - true repentance is typically accompanied by sorrow (2 Cor 7:10)
- Unfortunately, ministries such as John MacArthur take commands related to sorrow, which clearly relate to how a Christian should respond to sin in their lives, and turns those commands into conditions for salvation (justification). He mixes up the first and second tenses of salvation, moving commands related to our sanctification into conditions for one to be justified (saved).
- "...weep" - outward manifestation of affliction and mourning through tears, crying, or sobbing because of sin or shame (Cf. Luke 6:21)
- "...laughter be turned into mourning" - the contrast of laughter (against the affliction, mourning and weeping) refers to happiness in pleasure of loving the world
- It's the foolish laughter of people who give no thought to God or their own sinfulness
- "be turned" - be directed from this pleasure into mourning (grief, sorrow)
- "...joy" - the inner happiness derived from "laughter"
- "...gloom" - a downward, downcast expression from a heavy heart (Cf. Luke 18:13)
- James is talking about the attitude of Christians toward the sin in our lives, which needs to be confessed and repented of (mind changed about sin causing a lack of fellowship).
- James is talking about the seriousness of sin in the believer's life...it must be dealt with
- In the same way as in a marriage between husband and wife, sin/offense between spouses causes a break in fellowship and a lack of intimacy in the marriage. The same is true of sin in our relationship with God.

(d) Humility (4:10)

10 **Humble yourselves** in the **presence of the Lord**, and He will exalt you.

10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

10 Humble yourselves in the Lord's presence, and he will exalt you.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

— In God's economy, the way up with God is down, and the way down is up; Christ is the ultimate example of this (Phil 2:5-11)

— Every example in Scripture of someone lifting themselves up in pride resulted in them being humbled by God

— Passages on pride: Prov 16:18; 1 Peter 5:5-6. Joseph was not exalted until age 30; from age 17-30 it was nothing but setback after setback...he had a terrible go of it for 13 years. But God exalted him "in due time" (1 Peter 5:6) as 2nd in command in Egypt.

— Humbling yourself is understanding that God is the most knowledgeable being in the universe to run my life, so I'm going to let Him

— Understanding that I am not qualified to run my life, and that every ability or talent I have is from Him. I yield these abilities and talents to God so that He can use them for His will

— "...presence of the Lord" - we get into the presence of the Lord by following v8-9; those verses aren't conditions for salvation, but commands to restore broken fellowship

(e) Foregoing judgment (4:11-12)

11 Do not **speak against** one another, brothers *and sisters*. The one who speaks against a brother *or sister*, or **judges** his brother *or sister*, **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*.

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*.

11 Do not criticize each other, brothers. Whoever makes it his habit to criticize his brother or to judge his brother is judging the Law and condemning the Law. But if you condemn the Law, you are not a practitioner of the Law but its judge.

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.

— "...speak against" - literally, "to speak down on"; to lower a person in front of others to elevate oneself

— This is addressed to believers, speaking evil against other believers. 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16 speak of unbelievers persecuting believers, but in this situation James is addressing fellow believers demeaning each other ("brethren").

- This includes: hurting or injuring another; damaging another's reputation or standing; not taking pleasure in making known the faults of others; not divulging secrets, for the purpose of exposing them to damage another; not making more of someone's mistakes than they really warrant; not judging the motives of others
- Truth is obviously important, but truth is not always the barometer to dictate when something should be said
- "...judges" - speaks on the same topic Jesus covered in the Sermon on the Mount: judging someone else's heart or motives
- We're called to be discerners (1 Cor 2:14), but not called to judge someone else's motives or heart condition
- "...speaks against the law and judges the law" - the Mosaic Law; the Church is not under the Mosaic Law, but under the "Law of Liberty" (1:25)
- When we speak against a fellow believer's motives or heart, we are sitting in judgment against the Law; through our judgment, we're saying that the Law of God is irrelevant because I can violate it at will.

[1 Cor 4:5; James 2:4,12-13]

It's easy to make spiritual judgments about other Christians...so-and-so is not growing in Christ, I don't see any fruit in that person's life, etc. Maybe they aren't really saved. We're quick to point the finger at someone else.

But James tells us in v11-12 that believers should not be doing that, especially when it comes to issues of the heart. There are all kinds of things going on in the hearts of people that we can't see from the outside.

12 There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you, judging your neighbor?

12 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?

12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge—the one who can save and destroy. So who are you to judge your neighbor?

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

12 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?

- This verse reminds us that God is Judge, and when we judge other believer's motives or heart, we are pushing God out of His rightful place and putting ourselves in His position. We are taking His rightful role as Judge (Cf. Rom 14:10-12).

- James urges his readers to not get into the business of judging other believers' motives or hearts because when we do that, we disregard the Law of God (Cf. Lev 19:18) and make it irrelevant, while putting ourselves in the place of God.
- James tells believers to not worry ourselves about judging others because God is going to take care of that at the Bema Seat judgment

Abraham did not fulfill the 10 imperatives in James 4 before he was saved (Gen 15:6)...all he did was believe. Not fulfilling the command of belief is the only unpardonable sin. Jesus Himself told Nicodemus (John 3:16) that all he had to do was believe in order to be justified before God. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer that his only condition for salvation was to believe (Acts 16:30-31).

The Gospel is so simple, it's a wonder how anyone can get it confused...the reason people confuse the Gospel is because they don't differentiate the different tenses of salvation. If you don't differentiate the different tenses of salvation, you end of teaching a false Gospel (Gal 1:6-9).

An Abrupt About-Face

In v13, James quickly changes topics. After talking about giving ourselves wholly to God in the first 12 verses, he pivots to begin talking about a real-life example of how we can do this...by not taking anything for granted, but completely relying on God's will and guidance for everything in our lives.

(3) Wisdom in commercial life (4:13-17)

(A) Necessity of planning one's life while depending upon God (4:13-15)

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."

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."

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town, stay there a year, conduct business, and make money."

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:

- James' reader's specific sin is planning without God's involvement

- "...you who say" - indicates a habitual action on the part of believing Jewish merchants as they plan

— Their intentions are fully planned, down to the last detail; their language is one of assurance and self-confidence

— Their assumption is that their future is entirely under their own control

- Their sin is making plans without involving God. It's not wrong to make plans, but they need to be tempered by the realization that only God knows the future.
- The mindset is, "I have my plans and my plans will be executed according to my plans." However, this leaves no room for God to disrupt our plans.
- Example: My house will be paid off in xx years, I'll retire in xx years, I'll spend my retirement years doing xx.
- This "air tight" planning leaves no room for God to exercise His will and plans for you. It's planning as if God doesn't exist.

14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are *just a vapor* that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.

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.

14 You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

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.

- Why is it a problem to plan so extensively without God? You have these iron clad plans, and you have a specific understanding of where your life will be tomorrow, next year, in 5 years, in 25 years, etc., yet we don't even realize the limitations of our own existence.

— In our fallen sinful state, our lives are like a mist that appears for a little while then gone without a trace. This is what our lives are against the backdrop of eternity.

— The problem is that we don't have the data necessary to make airtight plans...we don't know what tomorrow holds, so how can we make plans when we don't know what events will take place in the distant future...we don't even know the events of tomorrow.

— Because our life is a vapor, fleeting, and unpredictable and full of variables, it is foolish for me to plan my life as if God didn't exist and as if I understood all of the variables.

— James was first NT book written, thus his many Scriptural allusions must have come from the OT. Here are some guesses as to which references James is thinking about in this passage: Ps 103:15-16; Eccl 1:2.

- "...vapor" - refers to a breath appearing in cold air for a moment, then disappearing

— The point is that it is foolish to ignore God when our lives are nothing more than a vapor

15 Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

15 Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

15 Instead you should say, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live—and do this or that."

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

- This verse provides the proper response (opposite mindset from v13-14): focusing on God's will, and being sensitive to change their plans if God so wills
- This expression becomes especially true considering the impending 70 AD judgment on Jerusalem, which collapsed the Jewish economy inside the Land, and also economically affected Jews outside the Land.
- The preferred mindset is to defer our plans to God's will. It's a looser grip on our plans, and our plans and mindset include God rather than assume He doesn't exist.

The Brevity of Life

This is a passage of reflection. How often do we make plans in our head, but don't include God in the planning.

- "Practical Atheism": planning your life as if God doesn't exist
- James is not condemning planning, he's condemning planning without God
- James is bringing the reality to these brethren that life is not in our hands; we have tomorrow if and only if the Lord grants it
- We could die today or the Lord could come tonight
- These brethren were rejoicing in their empty talk. We are nothing on the speck of eternity. Life here or in the hereafter will go on with or without us.

God wisely leaves us out of His plan for our lives, and even the duration of it. He teaches us to keep a constant sense of our dependence on His will for our lives. This brings about a mindset of thanksgiving in us that God wants.

When God cannot rule, He overrules.

(B) Problem of planning without consulting God (4:16-17)

(a) Arrogance (4:16)

- 16 But as it is, you **boast** in your **arrogance**; all such boasting is **evil**.
- 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.
- 16 But you boast about your proud intentions. All such boasting is evil.
- 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.
- "...boast" - an allusion to Prov 27:1
- This becomes a problem when you go into debt...when we take on debt, we should be careful to not commit the sin of presumption
- We may say that we're going to use certain income to pay down the debt, but that is presuming that you will have that job or income until the debt is paid off
- "...arrogance" - the arrogance comes in because when we plan presumptively, we're acting like God doesn't exist. In fact, we're acting as if we're omniscient, thus taking the place of omniscient God in our planning.

- "...evil" - it is evil to make ourselves as if we're God

(b) Sin (4:17)

17 So for one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, for him it is **sin**.

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

17 Therefore, anyone who knows what is right but fails to do it is guilty of sin.

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

- James states that his readers already know this truth, and therefore their speech is sinful (Cf. 2 Peter 2:21)

- "Therefore" [NASB95] - emphasizes the reason why the boasting of v16 is wrong: they know what is right, but they do not do it

— Knowing but not doing means these believers were not "doers of the Word"

— "...sin" - *hamartia*, missing the mark, falling short of God's character or Law; violating our own conscience

— This verse expands our definition of sin...someone who knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it. We already know that knowing the wrong thing to do and doing it anyway is sin, but here James expands it to include sins of omission...knowing the right thing to do, but simply not doing it.

Homiletics for James 4

- The source of arguments and disharmony come from our own bitter envy and selfishness...doing everything possible to please ourselves, even at the expense of others
- Throughout the New Testament, the term "the flesh" is used to describe our human mindset that includes worldly affections, thought process and desires
 - Rom 8:8 - If we do something to please our flesh, even if it's something "good," it is impossible to please God
- We are completely unequipped to guide our own lives (Jer 10:23)
- Our appetite to please ourselves harms our prayer life (James 4:3)
- Rather than live our lives our own way, according to our flesh, we should:
 - Submit to God – relinquish control of our lives to Him
 - Resist the Devil – Jesus quoted scripture to endure temptation. We must know scripture in order to resist the devil
 - Draw near to God – pursue an intimate relationship with God through daily prayer and Bible reading/study
 - Humble ourselves – understand that God is the most qualified to run my life, so I should allow Him

