

Lesson Eight — James Chapter Four, Part I: Humility vs. Pride

Day One — Observations of James Chapter Four

Day Two — Continued Observations

Day Three — Practical Things

Day Four — Practical Things

Day Five — Practical Things

So far we have seen James dealing with attitudes concerning trials and testings. He writes concerning the benefit of not just being hearers of the Word, but also doers. He shows that faith — to the saving of the soul — must have deeds (works) to accompany it. He admonishes believers not to play favorites with people who are rich. He reveals the importance of taming the tongue, especially for those who would become teachers. Then he deals with two kinds of wisdom, earthy and heavenly. And now we will see in chapter four, James deals with self-control.

James letter is to the saints who have been scattered due to the persecution in and around Jerusalem. And in facing their problems head on, he calls them to accountability in the light of a future judgment. James minces no words about their actions. This letter may have been received with disdain by some, but with encouragement by others — depending upon where each one was spiritually. And in order for us to get benefit from this letter, we must realize that James wrote this letter to believers, and the things that he addresses to believers 2,000 years ago are the same things that need to be addressed in our lives today! For all *Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness* (II Tim. 3:16).

Many times people feel that the various warnings found in Scripture are written to non-believers because the text of these various warnings are tough and to the point, dealing out retribution and judgment for disobedient actions. Some people feel these actions could not be the actions of saved individuals, for according to the way they believe, saved individuals **could not** act in such ways. Additionally, these people feel that God would never bring about such retribution upon His people as described in particular portions of Scripture.

But is that true?

Here are two questions to ask when coming to a difficult passage containing a warning, in order to see if the warning text is being written to the saved or unsaved. The questions are:

Is the warning passage dealing with *faith in what God has provided through His Son's death and shed blood?*

(If so, then this passage is dealing with salvation issues related to non-Christians, and has to do with the spiritual birth and the free gift of eternal life.)

Or

Is the warning passage dealing with the individual performing *some good work, putting away unrighteousness, being diligent about something, or any such action?*

(If so, then the passage is dealing with salvation issues related to Christians, and has to do with the prize — the salvation of one's soul.)

The first has to do with a free gift; the second has to do with the reward of the inheritance. The first is the message given to non-believers; the second is the message given to believers.

And because God's Word is His Word of Righteousness addressed to His people for right living, it is centered on His dealings with His people. With these things in mind, let's begin chapter four.

Day One — Observations of James Chapter Four

Today we will be reading through James chapter four. As you read, remember to whom James is addressing this letter. Think of kind of stress, persecution, and uprooting these people have experienced within families and between fellow-believers. Think about what attitudes and actions they may be experiencing as a result of this type of stress, then remember the previous warnings that James has already given to them. But don't stop there. Take these warnings into your own heart; don't just read these warnings as if they are empty words flowing from the pen of James. He would not have empty and useless words for them, nor would these be empty and useless words for us. Every word, which flowed from James' pen, was God-breathed.

Read James chapter four two times through now.

What are your impressions of chapter four?

Go back through and begin marking the repeated words (and synonyms) or phrases, as you have already done in previous chapters. If you see any key word, which has been used in previous chapters, you will want to mark these as well, adding them to your previous list(s). Also mark any new key words. Remember, the definition of a *key word (or phrase)* is any word (or phrase) that is repeated and that, if deleted from the text, would change the meaning of the text.

After you have marked the key words, begin making your simple lists in the right hand margin.

That's it for today. Remember to meditate upon what you have read, asking the Holy Spirit to be teaching you.

Day Two — Continued Observations

Yesterday you marked all the key words and phrases, and made lists. Today we will continue observing the text in chapter four, looking for and marking all the different *forms of expression*. Remember, *forms of expression* are **comparisons, contrasts, cause and effect statements, and summary statements**. Using your *Forms of Expressions* sheet from the appendix, mark the forms of expressions as you have previously. Before you end your study time today, why don't you take time to reread chapter four?

Now as you go about your day, ask Him to cause you to meditate upon what you have observed. If you would like you may write any notes, questions or observations you have noticed from your study today:

Day Three — Practical Things

Remember to pray for better understanding and insight through the Holy Spirit.

Today we will look at the first paragraph in James chapter four. James is very practical in his letter. The people to whom this letter is addressed have been under much stress and duress, yet James doesn't lighten up on them. He wants them to remain steadfast toward the goal — the salvation of their soul. He is writing to Christians; and he is writing to you and me! Keep that in mind, and always look for application in your own life. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict you in areas He needs too, but don't let Satan accuse you and defeat you (which is another reason you should begin today in prayer).

We will begin with reading James chapter four again from your observation sheet. Is there anything you notice today that you may need to work on in your own life? Do business with the Lord, even before you continue. If you need to confess sin, confess it now.

Now let's look at the first few verses.

James 4

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. And 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.

There are many causes and effects stated in this passage. Make a list of the causes and effects in the space below. You are doing exercise to allow yourself some time to think through what James is saying. Notice that the causes and effects are not always in that order. Sometimes James states the effect first, then the cause. Do this exercise, but don't allow yourself to get hung up on it. This is a study tool for deeper observation for the purpose of application.

Cause:

Effect:

James has previously dealt with the problem of lust. Remember what he said about it in James 1:14-15? Here it is printed again:

James 1

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

In James 4:2 he accuses them of committing murder. What would he mean by this? Do you think they were literally murderers? Perhaps James is referring to what Jesus had spoken in Matthew chapter five. Jesus said:

Matthew 5

21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Go back to the bottom of page 91 and ask the two questions of this passage. Which group of people is this passage dealing with — non-believers and the free gift, or believers and the reward?

You can check your answer by looking at the beginning of Matthew chapter five and see to whom Jesus addresses this message. Context is always important!

Matthew 5

1 And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying...

To whom was Jesus addressing this message?

But what about the “fiery hell” phrase? You must remember what you learned last week about the various judgments? Go back to the middle of p. 78 and reread the I Corinthians passage. What is the element used in judging our deeds?

Due to the context surrounding these passages (Mt.5:22; Jas. 1:14; I Cor. 3:13), the texts in each of these passages cannot be directed toward non-believers concerning eternal death — separation from God for all of eternity. No, a person’s free gift is not what is being dealt with in these passages! Rather, in the Matthew passage, Jesus is speaking to His disciples concerning issues surrounding *inclusion into or exclusion from the millennial kingdom* (cf. Mt. 5:3, 10, 19, 46; 6:1,2, 5, 6, 10, 16, 19, 20, 33; 7:21); in the Corinthians passage, Paul is speaking to the Church at Corinth concerning the same issues (cf. I Cor. 3:13-15); and in the James passage, James is speaking to believers who have been dispersed due to persecution

and deals with the same issues surrounding inclusion into or exclusion from the millennial kingdom (*cf.* Jas. 1:12,15, 21; 2:5, 13; 3:1; 4:10; 5:3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 20).

The warning Jesus gives in Matthew chapter five is related to what James says as he reprimands his readers about being murderers.

Now go back to James 4:1-3 and reread that passage, then continue the text with passage following:

James 4

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.

adulteresses <3428>

Just so you are sure to hear what James is saying to the Body of Christ, write v. 4 in your own words.

May I be very direct with you? Would you consider this question personally? Is your desire to be a friend of God, or a friend of the world? Really, think about this for a moment. Which is it?

Where are you on the line below? In searching your soul, mark a heavy dot where you think you fall on this line.

Friend with the world Friend with God
■ _____ ■

Now mark a star where you *wish* you were or where you *hope to be*.

Consider what it would take for you to live at the place where you placed your star. Ask the Holy Spirit to protect you from the accusations of the enemy, and then seek the Spirit's guidance as to how you might live where the star is every moment of every day.

As you go about your day today, meditate upon James 4:4. Be asking the Lord to bring your heart more into line with His heart. Ask Him to diminish any desire you have to be friends with the world.

Day Four — Practical Things

As we get back into James chapter four, it is important to keep James' flow of thought in tact. Therefore, go back to your observation sheet on chapter four and read James 4:1-6 several times, watching the flow of thought. Then in your own words, write out how you see the flow of these verses.

After spending the day yesterday meditating upon James 4:4, what do you think it would look like to have friendship with the world? What does it mean that whoever is a friend of the world, would make himself to be an enemy of God? Write out what you think.

Once again, James seems to have remembered Jesus' words on the Sermon on the Mount when He said:

Matthew 6

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Is it possible for someone in the Body of Christ to serve mammon?

Do you think a Christian can serve both mammon and God at the same time?

(The practical side of this issue isn't so much about *what you believe*, but rather *how you live day to day*. With that in mind, go back and see if you answered the last question from a day-to-day standpoint.)

Even though a Christian may be living in such a way so as to show friendship with the world, James gives the contrast of God's heart towards us —

James 4

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"?

What is James saying about God and His love for us?

And then —

James 4

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

Remembering the whole flow of thought James writes out here at the beginning of chapter four, we will read a similar Old Testament passage. We will read what Joshua told the people of the second generation of the Children of Israel. As you work your way through this passage, understand that Joshua is calling the Children to *wholeheartedness*. This second generation had just spent forty years wandering in the wilderness for the sin of unfaithfulness of their parents. Joshua and Caleb had been wholehearted in their

devotion to God, and they were the only two of the first generation who would receive their inheritance in the land.

Having learned that God is very serious about faithfulness on the part of His children, Joshua admonishes the people to make a choice in a similar way that James admonishes his readers to make a choice. Carefully read through this passage and make notes of any similarities to what James tells his readers.

Joshua 24

15 “And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

16 And the people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18 “And the LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”

19 Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”

21 And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.”

22 And Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”

23 “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

24 And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.”

NOTES:

As you go through your day today, meditate on these things.

Day Five — Practical Things

Today, we will continue in the James chapter four. James has begun this section of his letter by dealing with the quarrels and conflicts which exists among the Christians who have been scattered. He writes that the quarrels are largely due to their desire for pleasures — implying worldly pleasures. He reprimands them for fighting among each other, for lusting, for envying, and for not praying with proper motives — their motives being worldly pleasures. He even calls them adulteresses because of their friendship with the world. He emphasizes that friendship with the world puts one at enmity with God. But God does not

desire them to be at enmity with Him. In fact, He jealously desires the Spirit to dwell in them. God desires to give them a greater grace. For this reason, the Scriptures say that God is opposed to the proud — those who think they can have it both ways (friendship with the world *and* with God). But to the humble — those who do not desire earthly pleasure — He gives grace (in abundance).

James goes on to tell Christians how to counteract the worldly desires:

James 4

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.

This passage mentions several things that need to be done by one who would be a friend of God. Fill in the chart below:

What we are to do:

Result:

In order to come to a clearer understanding of what we are admonished to do, look up the definitions of these words and carefully think through what we are to do.

submit <5293>

resist <436>

flee <5343>

draw near <1448>

be miserable <5003>

weep <2799> (with the synonyms <5804>)

gloom <2726>

exalt <5312>

With these definitions, write James 4:7-10 in your own words.

Notice the word *weep* in v. 9. Did you take the time to look up the synonyms of this word? If not, take a minute to look up <5804> and note the differences between the meanings of the various words for weep comparing similar words with the one in the text.

The word used for *weep* <2799> in this verse in James is an interesting word. There are a few passages below that use the same word. By reading them, you may see more clearly what James meant when he tells us to weep. Each one of the passages below use the same Greek word as the one James used. Underline the phrases that contain the word *weep*.

Again, we'll read Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount:

Luke 6

**21 "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh...
... 25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.**

Jesus wept loud, lamenting tears...

Luke 19

41 And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

Luke also used the same Greek word for weep in the passage below. It tells of a woman who wept over her own sins, and her humility as she approached the Lord.

Luke 7

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisee's house, and reclined at the table. 37 And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, 38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume.

Then in Peter's personal denial of the Lord, Peter wept bitterly the night of Jesus' mock trial.

Matthew 26

75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

With these passages in mind, what do you think James meant when he penned the words in James 4:9?

As we close for the week, please be in prayer concerning how this practical book in the New Testament might affect your life. What changes do you need to make in your thoughts? In your actions? In your speech? Commit to the Lord that you are willing to allow Him to change you. Give your heart totally to the Lord.

Week's End Summary: