

1) Let's begin by reading the verses we were discussing last time...

***James 4:1–6 (NASB 2020)***

***Things to Avoid***

<sup>1</sup>What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body's parts? <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend *what you request* on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose, "He jealously desires the Spirit whom He has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup>But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

- 2) James goes on with his explanation in verse 5, however, before we go very far we have to deal with a problem.
- 3) One commentator calls verse 5 a "minefield of unsolved problems".
- 4) We begin with the fact that though James clearly states that "Scripture says", scholars have not been able to identify any passage that says this.
  - a) Many scholars believe this is not a direct quote but a summation of principles displayed in scripture.
  - b) Other possibilities are he quoted some other sacred book, or some unknown Greek translation of the Old Testament, or that he simply referred to the general sense of Scripture.
- 5) Beyond this particular problem, the Greek becomes very difficult to translate.
  - a) As we look deeper we get tangled up in verbs and objects and differences in manuscripts.
  - b) All that leads into the word spirit – is it Holy Spirit or our spirit?
  - c) Additionally, we have an issue of who is jealous, God, our spirit, or jealously itself.
- 6) I'm going to read 3 different versions of verses 5.

***James 4:5–6 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>5</sup>Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose, "He jealously desires the Spirit whom He has made to dwell in us"?

***James 4:5–6 (NIV)***

<sup>5</sup>Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us.

***James 4:5–6 (NET 2nd ed.)***

<sup>5</sup>Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says, "The spirit that God caused to live within us has an envious yearning"?

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- 7) All 3 (and even other) translations are arguably syntactically, semantically, and grammatically correct.
  - a) Again, a difficult verse to translate.
- 8) I spent a goodly amount of time wrestling with this and what I think is the most correct translation is the NET bible. (last read)
- 9) One of the major factors in this is it makes the most sense when considering the context of the previous verses. There, James talks about:
  - a) Lust (implied for things of the world) leading to murder, fights and quarrels.
  - b) Wanting things of the world leading to prayers with wrong motives.
  - c) He calls these folks “adulteresses” saying that friendship with the world is hostility toward God.
  - d) ALL DESCRIBING a spirit within us that has an envious yearning.
- 10) In this state they become enemies of God.
- 11) All these things are from our self – our spirit if you will – obviously not the Holy Spirit.

### **Now – Does that make sense to you?**

#### **Do you have Questions or Comments on any of that?**

#### **If you want, I can give you a more detailed look at how I got here?**

##### **a) BHGNT’s reasoning:**

- i) Their first conclusion was concerning the actual subject and verb.

(1) The two choices are spirit (πνεῦμα) as the subject the verb is then desires or longs ( ) with the modifying adverb jealously (φθόνον). Final wording was then (spirit desire enviously).

(a) The only problem I had with that was that the earliest manuscripts use the nomina sacra notation for spirit (ΙΙΝΑ) which would indicate Holy Spirit.

(b) What little research I did on this said that we are unable to determine if the autographs would have been written in that manner or not. We do know that this definitely was a scribal action from the early second century onward. Considering that, and the fact that using Holy Spirit in this context as the subject or the object was troublesome to me I can definitely go with spirit instead.

(c) They point out that if spirit is not the subject then the construction would have to read “He/God longs or desires jealously for the spirit”.

(i) In this case, it is obvious that spirit would have to be not the Holy Spirit but our spirit.

(ii) Even with that assumption, BHGNT points out that this translation would “require applying an unfavorable characteristic to God.

1. What they are considering here is the word which James used for jealously. James uses (φθόνος) which has more of a negative connotation such as envy, the other (ζήλος) whose semantic range is more favorable is normally used when God is referred to as jealous.

2. For the same reason, we would not think Holy Spirit would be the of the clause as they have translated it “the Holy Spirit that he has made to dwell in us desires enviously.”
3. BHGNT further points out the one commentator Luke Timothy Johnson assumes this question to be one expecting a NO answer.

Johnson (280, 282)<sup>12</sup> resolves the problem here by proposing that the clause here represents a question expecting a negative answer. He soft-pedals the absence of the expected μή at the beginning of the question, a possible but improbable expedient. It is the lack of μή that engenders considerable confusion, which James could have eliminated simply by including that particle (which he has shown elsewhere that he knows to do).<sup>13</sup>

4. I agree totally with their conclusion in this case.

12) The Bible Knowledge Commentary says the following which I thought was on point:

Whatever questions remain unresolved about verse 5, there is no question about the clear truth of verse 6. **God opposes the proud.** The word “opposes,” or “resists,” is *antitassetai*, a military term meaning “to battle against.” **To the humble**, however, **God gives grace.**<sup>14</sup>

13) The only other comment I might make here is that you perhaps at some point make a note about this particular two verse passage.

- a) Then, in the event you get back here at some later date you won’t get bogged down trying to figure out what is truly a difficult and thorny issue.

14) Proceeding on, James really gets serious about calling out where we are if we do not control our tongues.

15) Truth is, this is applicable when we fall short in any manner.

**James 4:7–10 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>7</sup> Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come close to God and He will come close to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners; and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be miserable, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

16) But, in all this I think there is something wonderful to be seen.

17) So, if we find ourselves to be like this to any degree at all what should we do?

- a) Submit to God
- b) Resist the devil

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson, Luke Timothy, “*The Anchor Bible The Letter of James, Vol 7A*”, (Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc.)

<sup>13</sup> A. K. M. Adam, *James: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 80.

<sup>14</sup> J. Ronald Blue, “*James*,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 830.

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- c) Come close to God
- d) Cleanse your hands
- e) Purify your hearts
- f) Be miserable, mourn, weep
- g) Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom – be miserable??
- h) Humble yourselves...

18) Now, what James has described here is pretty dismal.

**Here's the question – is this “a” definition of repentance? OR Could this be “the” only definition of repentance?**

**If yes – do we always do it?**

**If no – what parts could we leave out? OR what parts are left out?**

### **James 4:11–12 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>11</sup> 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*. <sup>12</sup> There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you, judging your neighbor?

19) Well, we return to what appears to be James' favorite theme – control of the tongue.

20) Of course, that is rightly so for as he pointed out back in chapter 1:26:

### **James 1:26 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>26</sup> If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this person's religion is worthless.

21) Going back to verse 11, the literal translation here is “Do not speak *evil* against one another.”

- a) From BDAG, other definitions are, to speak ill of, speak degradingly of, speak evil of, to defame, or to slander.<sup>15</sup>

22) Here we are finding fault or condemning our brother or sister.

23) In verse 12 he is drawing a parallel between speaking evil against someone and judging someone.

24) As we made note in the beginning there are lots connections to the sermon on the mount throughout James and here is one of the more obvious ones.

### **Matthew 7:1–2 (NASB 2020)**

#### **Judging Others**

<sup>1</sup> “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

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<sup>15</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 519.

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25) Bruce Barton makes several valid points regarding the word “speak against” or “speak evil against”.

- a) It can mean to slander which means of course to make false statements about a person in order to damage a person’s reputation.
- b) We may speak the truth about a person and still be unkind, which of course is equally bad.
- c) We can also spread gossip that others have no business knowing.
- d) Questioning someone’s authority or nullifying their good work by backbiting is another way in which we can speak against a person.
- e) He also points out the obvious fact that these kinds of actions hurt the harmony among believers.

26) From the context, this appears to be an ongoing problem that James is addressing here.<sup>16</sup>

27) The takeaway for us here is without doubt – DON’T DO THIS!

28) Other than the reasons James has already talked about, he further gives the reason that we are judging – not only the person but also both the Law (Torah) and the law of freedom.

- a) The ten commandments clearly states: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”
- b) Secondly, Christ made it clear as he quotes Leviticus 19:18 “Love your neighbor as yourself” and further, again from the sermon on the mount:

### ***Matthew 7:12 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>12</sup> “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

29) To sum this up, James makes it clear that we are not in a position to be doing these things.

- a) There is only one law giver and judge – we are NOT Him.
- b) We have no right to criticize our neighbors.
- c) When we do, Barton points out that we usurp God’s authority and we are full of pride.

30) Paul weighs in on this same topic in Romans:

### ***Romans 14:4 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

***Now, here is a hard question for us – is there any wiggle room left for us after reading and understanding this?***

31) When I thought about it I really could not find any and that made this teaching even harder.

32) I would like to at least be able to yell at a piece of bad driving but – can I?

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, [\*James\*](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 107–108.

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- 33) I can think of a lot of other things that I really say (even if only in my mind) that I truly should not say.
- a) It is not that I might be wrong – in many cases – I can be right as right can be BUT it is not forgiving and it is not as caring as I should be.
  - b) These are serious things that James is bringing to bear here and have a great impact on our FAITH DEMONSTRATED!
- 34) I have made the comment before regarding “fruit inspecting” verses “judging” – this trip through this passage makes me wonder if even “fruit inspecting” can be a bad thing.