

OVERVIEW

Last week, James noted the slippery nature of our tongue. This week Holy Spirit tackles the slippery nature of our pride. “Pride comes before the fall,” wrote the writer of Proverbs. It is pride which James tackles next within the Church. Pride is a slick sin. It is easy to recognize in others, but difficult to see in our own mirror. Once we clean the sludge off our mirrors, we are often not sure we like clean mirrors. James and Windex do.

Because pride is so difficult to see, James gives us a clear list of directions—if we do not follow them, two things become clear: (1) we will continue to slip on our pride, and alarmingly (2), we do not want to get rid of our pride. And, perhaps that is the great lesson of chapter 4 of James—pride not only comes before the fall, it is the ultimate in hypocritical idolatry. We are but a mist.



CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

James has just made it quite clear that we have an inherited disease—our tongues are out of control. His solution? Make sure your wisdom “comes from heaven” ... that wisdom is “pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” Those who use heavenly wisdom to seek peace are not only loving, considerate, submissive, etc., they are also the ones who control their tongues. The mind filled with God’s sincere mercy seeking peace has no time for a tongue which hates. Now Holy Spirit takes on another inherited disease—pride. His cure is painful, but effective. It is called humility.



James 4:1-5. *Handling Our Adultery*. James loves rhetorical questions, especially those he answers himself. In this case, he asks, what causes your fights and quarreling? You're competing for desires within yourself, he answers. In fact, you kill, you covet, but even then you don't get what you want. You just continue to quarrel; you continue to fight. You don't have because you do not ask God [you ask the government, your neighbor, your spouse, your pastor, your teacher, but ...]. And then when you do ask, you ask with the wrong motives. You ask to have what you want [not for God's glory] so "that you may spend what you get on *your* pleasures."

Then James calls us adulteresses! [μοιχαλιδες, 3428; that is, we are paramours of the world—we stand on the street looking for someone else to satisfy our pride.] When we have an affair with the world, we not only catch its diseases, we manifest a vile hatred of God. We become God's enemy, even though He has wants to call us "friend" (John 15:15) or even His bride (John 3:29; Revelation 21:9, and especially Revelation 19:6-8). Our pride does us in.

- Q What is the desire of pride? In other words, what causes us to plug in our pride cord?
- Q How does the typical Christian murder (v 2) because of pride?
- Q Why do we think that quarrelling and/or fighting will get us what we want?
- Q What are the wrong motives for asking God what we want to have?
- Q What socially transmitted diseases do we get when become adulteresses?
- Q When we "step out on God," are we showing hate or contempt? Which is worse?
- Q Why does Holy Spirit jealously long for us?

JAMES 4:1-5

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? [or that God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us; or that the Spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously.]





James 4:6-12. *To rock or rocket?* James then gives us an “out.” He begins verse 6 with “But ...” and says one of the most important passages in Scripture; to wit, God gives us more [mega] grace. “God gives grace to the humble.” So often we think of grace as a state of being rather than what “it” truly is—the processual power of God which gives us the ability to be righteous, to be humble, to be Godly. Grace then is the power of God. It is not a rocker on which to sit; it is a rocket in which to ride.

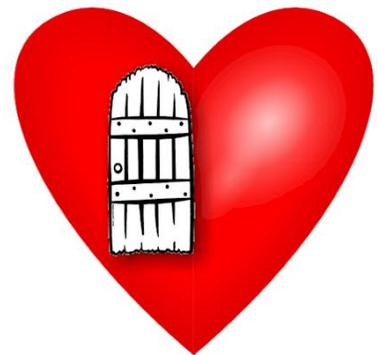


Submission to God, as always, is the “secret” to a closer relationship with God. And so it is with pride. God not only gives grace (the power to be righteous) to the humble, He gives power over the devil—resist, and Satan will flee from you. Wash yourselves, recognized you’re sinners, purify your motives and intent—being double-minded [διψυχοι, *di-psy-choi*] will not cut it.

When you seek the Lord God Jehovah, humble yourself—it’s not a time to laugh; it’s a time to mourn and wail. Do this will He lift you up [exalt]; see also Matthew 23:12.

Furthermore, do not slander each other—when you speak against your sibling within the Lord, you speak against the Law; in other words, you’ve put yourself above the Law. Remember there is only one Lawgiver and Judge—the One who is able to save and destroy. You are not qualified to judge your neighbor. I can think of no greater insult to the King of kings than acting as if we were He. May the Lord God forgive us for our hubris.

- Q What are the implications of understanding, and acting upon, the idea that grace is the power of God to be righteous, humble, Godly? Which idea (state or process) identifies how a believer would think, act, and be as a function of grace?
- Q Why does God oppose the proud? Give grace to the humble?
- Q Why does a person need to wash their hands? And their heart? How and why is submission a prefacing act to washing and purifying oneself?
- Q How and why are people double-minded regarding the dirt on their hands and within their hearts? Cataracts?
- Q Why does God promise He will lift us up when we humble ourselves?
- Q To whom do you humble yourself besides the Lord? How’s that working for you?
- Q When do we have the right to speak against our brother or sister in Christ? Why then?
- Q Why is speaking against our sister or brother idolatry?
- Q What qualification do we lack in order to judge our neighbor?



JAMES 4:6-12

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” [Proverbs 3:34]

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

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

I can think of no greater insult to the King of kings than acting as if we were He. May the Lord God forgive us for our hubris.

James 4:13-17. *Misty aspirations*. Today is fleeting, tomorrow is a fantasy. Your life is a temporary mist which appears for small time and then disappears. So? Do nothing, without recognizing and granting God's will in your doing. When you boast about tomorrow's business, that's evil. Moreover, when you know to do good, and don't? Now that's sin, period.

- Q Why is it useful to remember that tomorrow is fantasy? Why is it Godly to recognize the Lord's will in planning for such fantasies?
- Q If our life is such a vaporous mist, why should we care about how we live it? After all, "we appear for a little while and then [we] vanish."
- Q What turns our misty life into a cloud bank which shelters and provides rain? Then, what turns our cloud bank into a mighty context "for His terrible swift sword?" (Revelation 19:15-21)
- Q Why is knowing to do good and not doing so, "sin?" If we don't know about what is good to do, and don't do it, is that "sin?" For example, if I see my brother in need, and don't help him, James says that is clearly sin. But, if I do not see my brother in need, and don't help him, is that "sin?"
- Q What are your biggest failures to do good? (verse 17)

JAMES 4:13-17

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.