

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 26, James 4:1-12

© 2024 David Bauer and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 26, James 4:1-12.

We are ready to move ahead now to chapter 4. Just to remind us that 4:1 through 10, I take to be as part of the segment that extends from 3:1 through 4:12 that at the center of this segment, which really has to do with the challenges of warring passions, in the middle of this segment, we have the presentation of wisdom from above over against wisdom from below that seems to be the cause or the basis for what James presents both in the preceding material in 3:1 through 12 and in the following material 4:1 through 12 that at the heart really of the, at the center really of his concern has to do with issues of character which he presents really in 3:13 through 18 in terms of wisdom from above, which comes from God, over against the wisdom from below that involves human instincts and human inclinations and as I say is contrasted with the wisdom from above.

He really is interested in fundamental or essential character sorts of issues in verses 13 through, 3:13 through 18, as is suggested by the reference to the heart here in verse 14. If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth so that the wisdom from below is expressed in terms of unruly speech, the unbridled tongue in 3:1 through 12, and also unruly speech, evil speech directed towards or about others in 4:11 through 12, and also in terms of wars and fighting as he calls it in 4:1 through 6, whereas the wisdom from above is spelled out or particularized and as a basis for the actions that he describes in 4:7 through 10.

So, with that reminder, we go ahead and pick up here at 4:1 through 10, and what you have here is, well, let's, we remind ourselves first of all how this reads, and then we'll note what we have in terms of the structure. What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at work in your members? You desire and do not have, so you kill and you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war. 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. Unfaithful creatures, 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 in vain that the scripture says he yearns jealously over the spirit which 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 God will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you men of double mind. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Now once again, in doing a detailed analysis it's well to stand back, get a sense of the broad overarching movement, not get bogged down in details at first, but move from the broad framework to the details.

And as we do this, I think we'll see that 4.1 through 10 is structured according to problem and solution. This is a form of interrogation. And so, he begins with the problem here, wars and fightings that stem from internal warfare, that in turn stems from the ineffectiveness of prayer, which in turn stems from friendship with the world or enmity with God to the solution to the problem, which is found in 5 through 10, having to do first of all with divine initiative and then the human response to God's initiative.

Now, as we say, he begins with a problem here in 4:1 through 4, a passage that is structured according to the recurrence of substantiation. As we mentioned here, he begins with the external result and then moves progressively backward to deeper and deeper causes for these wars and fightings. So, we read in verse 1, what causes, interested of course again in causes here, what causes wars and what causes fightings among you.

And we note the language that he uses here, what causes wars, what causes fightings among you. Certainly, he is talking about wars and fightings as he calls them, among the community or within the community or communities to which he is addressing this epistle. I do think it's quite likely, almost to the point of certainty, that he is using this language, wars and fightings, figuratively. Not that there are literal wars among the members of the community or that there are literal fistfights, as it were, that are taking place among them.

James is quite capable of using figurative language here, including murder or killing, having to do with removing from persons wrongfully that which offers for life to them. You find this, I think, also in 5:6, talking about the landowners who have withheld the wages of the laborers who mow their fields. He says in 5:6, you have condemned, you have killed the righteous man, he does not resist you.

Although I suppose it is possible there that he may be speaking literally, as we'll see when we get to that point, because this may have to do with bringing wrongful lawsuits against persons, even to the point of possibly capital punishment. But as I

say, it seems to be here quite unlikely that he is speaking literally. But this is, I think, quite likely metaphorical language.

Although some commentators, for example, Ralph Martin, and I've been mentioning commentators along the way, Ralph Martin has a fine commentary on James in the Word Biblical Commentary series. But Ralph Martin, for example, argues that James originally had in mind literal wars, and literal fightings, and literal killings here.

But that really is accounted for by the fact that Ralph Martin adopts a two-stage understanding of the composition of the book of James. He sees the book of James as containing a kind of critical mass or center. That is to say, much of the material in James as we know it was produced by James, the brother of Jesus, and was directed not just to Jewish Christians but actually to Jews in general, with whom James had a very good relationship and actually was revered among the Jews, and was speaking about various insurrectionist groups and movements among Jews against the Roman occupiers. And that later, after the death of James, several of James' followers, probably in Galilee or in southern Syria, took what James had produced in terms of his instruction to the Jews and Jewish Christians in his midst there in Judea, and worked that up, added certain things to it, rearranged the material to form this book as we have it, which was directed then and was to be applied to Jewish Christians, especially as I say in northern Galilee, he said, in northern Galilee or in southern Syria.

So even Martin would admit that in the final form of the text, in terms of what this book in his final composition was meant to convey to Jewish Christians at the second and final stage of its editing, was figurative language, even though he would say originally, he was actually talking about literal wars and literal fightings. That, I think, and I said, and I do believe that Ralph Martin's commentary is very helpful in many ways. But once you get to that kind of reconstruction, necessarily you move, a person moves in the direction of speculation, and I myself tend to sit pretty loosely about basing very much upon those kinds of, let's say, two or three stage developments prior to the forming of the final text.

Or, as I say, virtually everyone would grant that the final form of this text, in the final form of this text at least, this language is being used figuratively. But it is, in fact, he does, in fact, choose to talk about disruptions, disagreements, and discord within the community here by the use of this kind of very strong figurative language, wars, and fightings. And, of course, that raises a question: why does James want to, why, what is the meaning of this kind of language, and why does he wish to use this kind of language to describe discord and struggle within the community? He certainly uses the strongest language possible to refer to these kinds of struggles within the community, this kind of discord within the church, and this kind of breakdown of the Christian community.

Well, the language, of course, emphasizes three elements. If you ask yourself, what is the meaning of this kind of language here, and how might it actually point to and describe the situation that James is referencing here? James, this language indicates one thing, carries with it the element or the sense of violence, and also of destructiveness, and also of malice. Those are the three, I think, three major elements in this kind of language, wars and fightings, violence, destructiveness, and malice.

James is suggesting that there is or that there can be a kind of discord within the church, a kind of breakdown of true Christian fellowship within the church that leads to struggles within the church that is, that does have at least aspects of violence attached to it, even if he's not talking about physical violence, there is something violent about it. James has already suggested, in fact, that misuse of the tongue, the unruly use of the tongue can be tremendously hurtful to persons. That is to say, some speech is violent.

It does real damage. And, of course, the same with regard to destructiveness, that is, leads to the destruction of persons. That, by the way, I think might be indicated here in verse 2 by what I consider to be a continuation of the figurative language: you desire and do not have, so you kill.

That points really to the destructiveness of this kind of behavior and also to malice. Wars, fightings, killing suggests that there is actual malice that lies behind these actions. Now, he moves ahead then, and what he does really is to say, as I say, he's interested in causes here.

What causes wars? What causes fightings among you? You'll note that this stands in contrast to the very last verse of chapter 3, the immediately preceding verse, and the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. What causes wars? What causes fightings among you? He says here. So, that's really how this, as I say, involves a drawing out of the contrast between a wisdom that is from above, which is peaceable, and this wisdom that is from below, which is characterized by, as he says, jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, all of these kinds of things.

And, of course, this is a manifestation of the disorder that he has talked about in terms of his more general description of wisdom from below there in 3:13 through 18. I might mention here, too, while I think of it, that, as I say, you actually have a progression here from effect to cause. In other words, progressively going back from the external expression, the result, to source, to cause.

This then involves a reversal of the causal process that you have when he describes the wisdom from below and the wisdom from above. In both the description of the wisdom from below in 3:15 and 3:16 and the wisdom from above in 3:17 through 18, you'll note that he's concerned with engaging in, moving from cause to effect, from

this wisdom to its external effect. Here, he begins with the external effect and goes back to the causes.

Now, he begins this chain of substantiation by saying, is it, not your passions that are at war? Again, you have the recurrence of war language; is it, not your passions that are at war in your members? Now, he seems to be using passions here, the word passions here, which is edonea, synonymously with epithumia. As a matter of fact, edonea, passions here, is used synonymously with epithumia in the New Testament, and epithumia is a word for desire or desires or the like, sometimes also translated passion. I do think that it's likely that this refers, what these, what he calls these passions here, that these passions here refer in some way to the desire of 1:14 and 1:15, where he talks about, of course, temptation.

Remember, he said there, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, and then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. By the way, note also the connection between the result of this desire being death in 1:15 and also killing, the result of these desires here in our passage, in our passage, of these passions here, in our passage being killing. That's to say, he brings in the notion of death.

So, this, I think, is apparently referring to the desire of 1:14 and 1:15. You note here, too, in verse 2, that he actually, he actually, and this suggests that he is using edonea synonymously with epithumia, because in verse 2, he will say epithumeite. This is a verb form of epithumia, you desire and do not have. So, again, although a different word is used there in 1:14 and 1:15 over against what you have in 4:1, he actually picks up and uses a form of the same word that you had in 1:14 and 1:15 in 4:2, which clearly is linked with what, with the desires here that he mentions in 4:1. Now, we do note the inflection here.

James, back in chapter 1, had talked about desire in the plural. So, that he said back there, just remind us, each person is tempted and when he is lured into tithes by his own desire, singular, then desire, singular, etc. But here, desires, is it not your passions that are at war in your members, you desire and do not have.

Now, so here then, James speaks of at least two passions or two desires, two passions. Remember that the passion that he talked about there or the desire that he talked about there in 1:14 and 1:15, as we said, reflects or refers to the Jewish idea of yetzer, which is undifferentiated desire, that is to say, in itself, is neither good nor bad. It has to do with what we would call today the whole issue of drive or impetus in a person's life, but it becomes yetzer hara, evil desire, if, in fact, it is left unchecked and goes out of bounds and takes control over the person, is not controlled by some other countervailing impulse within the person.

That's what he was saying there in chapter one. But here, James speaks of at least two desires, we note the plural here, apparently the good yetzer and the evil yetzer. This single neutral desire or passion in 1:14 and 1:15 has, in James' mind, now split.

There are inclinations or desires to do good, to follow the path of God, as he will say in verse 4, to be a friend of God, and there are inclinations or desires to evil, towards evil. Again, in the language of verse 4, to be a friend of the world. Thus, James refers to this person in verse 8 as double-minded, a person who desires friendship with the world at the same time as friendship with God.

This person is a walking civil war. This internal warfare necessarily expresses itself in external fighting. Let me say that again.

This internal warfare, this double-mindedness, this fighting and conflict within, this internal warfare necessarily expresses itself in external fighting. There is no isolated Christianity or ethics, of course. Now, he goes ahead and particularizes this in 2A, is it not that your passions are at war in your members? That's why I say he's talking about the person having an internal struggle that comes to expression in external fighting and wars.

Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? Then he particularizes this in verse 2, you desire and do not have, so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war. And, of course, he's also beginning the process of moving back in terms of source here.

Now, in verse 2, there is an emphasis, first of all, upon destruction, kill, fight and wage war, including the destruction to other individuals. It's not simply destructive of community as a whole, but it is destructive of other individuals within the community. What you have here, as I say again, is this metaphorical use of kill.

Just to pause with regard to this metaphorical use of kill. Actually, James came very close to doing the same thing back in 2A and following, where he says, if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails at one point has become guilty of all of it.

For he who said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. Now, in context, he's drawing a connection between showing partiality and, insofar as you do that, violating the love command, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, and killing.

He seems to be suggesting here something that Jesus himself suggested in the Sermon on the Mount, and that is acting towards someone, particularly a Christian

brother or sister, in terms of anger and the expression of anger. And all that's involved in the expressing of anger is, in some ways, tantamount to murder, to killing that person. You remember this, of course, from the Sermon on the Mount, the first of these antitheses in Matthew chapter 5, verses 21 and following, where we read there, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, you shall not kill, and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother shall be liable to counsel, and whoever says you fool shall be liable to the hell of fire. He's drawing a connection, really, between this kind of angry behavior toward a brother or sister, on the one hand, and murder on the other by indicating that the sanction, that is to say that the penalty, is the same in each case.

That, in a sense, you have committed murder in some ways, to some extent, at least there, and especially in terms of motivation and attitude, that the attitude of this kind of anger, this kind of behavior, really is of the same kind as the attitude of murder and the like. I think, though, that James wants to draw a connection between this kind of wrongful and, one might say, angry and malicious attitudes and, to some extent, actions towards others in the community and murder by suggesting that to have this kind of attitude and to express this kind of attitude involves withdrawing from that person that which provides that person fullness of life. It really involves taking life from that person in some way and, to some extent, doing real harm, a real violation towards that person.

Now, beyond that, we note that he also emphasizes here in verse 2, not only destruction of other individuals within the community, beyond the destruction of the community itself, but also, he emphasizes, I think, in verse 2, the connection between internal and external strife. Again, you desire and do not have, so you kill. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war.

So, there is, in fact, a struggle between your desire and the inability to fulfill those desires, to realize those desires, between covetousness and the inability to satisfy the cravings of covetousness. The connection, then, between this kind of internal strife and external strife. And there are really two connections, I think, implicit here in that connection between internal and external strife.

The first is expressed by what he says about desire. You desire and cannot obtain. And the second, by what he says about covet.

When he says, with regard to desire, you desire and do not have, so you kill, he is suggesting here, pointing to the frustration of unfulfilled desires, which causes them to, if we may put it this way, take it out on others. When it comes to covetousness, and you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war, he is suggesting here

that the attempt to obtain from others what they desire causes them to assume this destructive mode. They exploit others, in other words, in order to obtain.

And if they're not successful in their attempt to exploit others to obtain, then they become angry and violent towards others. Now, he goes deeper here in verse 3. And so, he says, you do, to be actually, you do not have because you do not ask. So, what causes wars? What causes fighting among you? It stems from your passions, this internal warfare of unfulfilled desires and unsatisfied coveting.

But then, he goes a step further back and talks about that being the fact of not having these things that you desire, stemming from the ineffectiveness of prayer. Now, of course, we mentioned in our examination of chapter 1 that one of the concerns that James has in this epistle is this whole business of unanswered prayer. He has introduced it in 1:5 through 8. And here, he goes ahead and brings it up again in the body of the epistle, in the rest of the remainder of the epistle, and develops it.

He's going to come back to it again, this business of prayer in 5:13 through 18. So, it goes deeper. The reason why they do not have is because, he says, you do not ask.

I think, quite clearly, he's talking about asking God in prayer here. As verse 3 would suggest, you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. Now, when he says, you do not have because you do not ask, if you read this in light of 1:5 through 8, you have to conclude that this James presents this reluctance or this avoidance, this absence of asking as a manifestation of lack of faith on the part of the double-minded person.

And then, he goes ahead to say, well, as a matter of fact, the point here is that this frustration in their lives stems from their attempt to achieve the good life in isolation from God, whom he has already described in 1:16 through 18 as a source of all good. You do not ask, he says. But then, he goes ahead to say that even when you do ask, you ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

Now, what you have here in verse 3 is a purpose statement. In Greek, it's a hina statement. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, hina, in order that.

You're asking in order or for the purpose of spending it on your passions. Again, going back to that word that you have at the beginning. So, even when they do ask, they ask wrongly.

Their motives are not right. Thus, really, it would be an unloving thing for God to grant this prayer; spending it from the point of view of God, as presented by James here, to spend what we have on our passions is actually a self-destructive thing to

do. So, it would really be an unloving thing for God to grant or to answer that kind of prayer.

You ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. This really is very similar to the kind of thing that we have in 1:5 through 8, where he indicates that prayer involves both asking and asking with the right kind of attitude. And here again, you have asked and are now asking with the right kind of motive, or at least asking in a way that does not involve wrong motives.

So, again, as in chapter 1, verses 5 through 8, James emphasizes the dynamic interpersonal character of prayer. Prayer is not a magic talisman. God will not grant that which contradicts His own purpose and will.

Now, he goes deeper still here in verse 4. Well, actually, yeah, verse 4. Unfaithful creatures, 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. So, as I say, he goes deeper still. The reason you do not receive in prayer, he says, has to do with the object of desire, worldly.

In other words, it stems from a desire to have a relationship with, to have intimacy with the world, to connect with the world. To fulfill worldly desire, a desire that pertains to the world. It's worldly.

Reason you do not receive in prayer has to do with the object of desire, worldly, and with relationship to God. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Now, this, of course, also substantiates verse 3 by indicating that God will not answer their prayer if they are His enemies.

God answers the prayer of His friends and not the prayer of His enemies. Again, the key to answered prayer, to effective prayer, is a relationship with God. Now, there are two things that are emphasized here.

One is that prayer must be founded upon a relationship with God. And the relationship here is understood in terms of friendship. God gives to His friends, and He withholds from His enemies.

Now, what does it mean to be a friend of God? What is involved in being a friend of God? Well, we don't have to go far for the answer. That is suggested by what James has already said in 2:23 with regard to Abraham, a man who had a kind of that expressed itself in works. 2:23, and the Scripture was fulfilled, it says, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.

But also, James emphasizes in this passage, our passage 4:4, that friendship with the world and friendship with God are mutually exclusive. There is no middle ground. One is either a friend of God or a friend of the world cannot be both.

If a person attempts to be a friend of the world and a friend of God, that person will find that he or she places himself in opposition to God, and God places Himself in opposition to that person. Now, the assumption that lies behind this mutual exclusion of friendship with the world and friendship with God is that friendship involves total and exclusive commitment. This is a view or a notion, a conception of friendship, according to which friendship involves total and exclusive commitment.

Now, he's going to go ahead and indicate why that's so, but it has, just to anticipate what he will go ahead and say, it has to do with the holiness of God and with the jealousy of God, with God's being both holy and God being jealous. Another way of putting it, I think, is that in terms of this matter of friendship, both the world and God place ultimate and exclusive demands upon us. Now, that is the problem, of course.

And incidentally, let me just mention this, you have this phrase here, notice how evocatively he addresses them, unfaithful creatures, he calls them, unfaithful creatures. Actually, in the Greek, there's no reference to creatures, probably, but the word here is adulterers. Not really so much unfaithful, it's not *apostos* or *apostoi*, but *moixoi*, adulterers.

James is drawing upon that rich image of that rich language of adultery in the Old Testament, which is typically, which is often, not used literally but metaphorically in terms of idolatry. This is idolatry language in the Old Testament. Israel's idolatry is described as Israel's adultery.

Israel commits adultery. Of course, you find this throughout the Old Testament, really, it's very dominant. Perhaps the most vivid expression of it is the first three chapters of Hosea, where God causes Hosea the prophet to engage in a kind of embodied prophecy, an incarnational prophecy, where he really lives out in his own life the relationship with his wife, the relationship that God has with his people, Israel.

And, of course, you remember the story of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, there, and how Gomer commits adultery against her husband, was a harlot to begin with, and then, of course, once after their marriage, she commits adultery against her husband, Gomer, which is an analogy to Israel going after other gods, committing adultery against Yahweh, and the like. So, really, what he's talking about, he's talking about friendship with the world in terms of idolatry and all the rich associations that belong to that. So, this is a serious problem indeed.

And he moves ahead, thankfully, to the solution to the problem in verses 5 through 10, which, as I say, is both the effect of and the particularization of the wisdom from above that he has described in 3:13 through 18. Or do you suppose, he says, that it is in vain that the Scripture says he, talking about God here, he yearns jealously over the spirit which 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.

You notice here that the solution begins with the divine initiative. This is a serious, radical problem. It involves, as a matter of fact, the operation of transcendent evil forces.

This is, as I say, when he talks about 4:1 through 4, is a manifestation of the wisdom from below that he has described as being devilish. Because the problem is transcendent, the solution must be transcendent. The solution must involve divine power, a power beyond ourselves.

Now, with regard to this divine initiative in verses 5 and 6, we actually have a quotation. Or do you suppose that it is in vain that the Scripture says he yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us? This is something of a problem because if you search the Old Testament, or as a matter of fact if you have the opportunity and leisure to search not only the Old Testament but all the Jewish literature, ancient Jewish literature of which we are aware, that precedes the production of the book of James, you will not find this particular statement. Some have suggested that this comes from a non-canonical book that might have been considered Scripture by some Jews or Jewish Christians, a book that has been lost to us, was lost to us long ago.

Well, I think the evidence is really against that. It so happens that in the New Testament, as Brevard Childs, a great Old Testament scholar, has pointed out, in the New Testament, whenever *graphe*, or its verb form, usually in the perfect, *gegrapti*, it is written, *graphe*, Scripture, *gegrapti*, it is written, is used, it always involves a quotation from a canonical Old Testament. So, it seems most likely to me that this is a passage that was found in the Hebrew Bible, but in the process, we talked the other day about the process of scribal transmission.

In the New Testament, of course, the process is even much longer with regard to the Old Testament, but anyway, the process of scribal transmission was somehow lost to us, so we have every reason to think that this was part of the Hebrew Scriptures, but it's a passage that has been lost to us. And, of course, we have to think that in the providence of God, this was allowed by God to happen. We do believe, of course, that God preserves the Scriptures, but in this case, you may have a scriptural verse or a statement that has not come down to us.

That's probably what he has. When he quotes this statement, God opposes a proud, but gives grace to the humble. In other words, but certainly, even though we don't have any context for this in terms of the original quote, the sense in this context is quite clear.

God profoundly desires to have the Spirit, to have back the Spirit which He has placed within us. If we do not yield this Spirit that He has placed within us, our Spirit which He has placed within us, to Him, His jealousy is aroused. This really is the picture of a wronged husband, of course.

Really, according to the biblical tradition, in marriage, the husband belongs to the wife, and the wife belongs to the husband. If, therefore, a husband gives himself to some other woman in adultery, there is jealousy. Or if a woman gives herself to some other man in adultery, jealousy is aroused, and there's the same kind of jealousy with God.

And it is a legitimate jealousy, of course, in the place of God, on the part of God, because insofar as God has placed that Spirit within us, it is His. It really belongs to Him, and we are robbing God; we are betraying God if we do not yield our spirits back to Him, His jealousy. Now, jealousy in the biblical tradition involves very severe danger, particularly jealousy on the part of God, in the biblical tradition involves severe danger.

It is the basis of the expression of His anger, of His wrath, of His judgment. But it actually, as we're going to see in a moment, this jealousy is not simply a matter of danger, but it also involves some hope. The fact that God yearns jealously for the Spirit that He has placed within us provides hope in that He will pursue us in order to draw us to, in order to cause us or to encourage us to grant, to give back to Him the Spirit that He has placed within us.

Now, He is jealous here of the Spirit that He has placed within us when we do not yield our spirit back to Him. When we attempt to be, when we share the commitment of ourselves, the Spirit that He has placed within us, we share that with the world. We attempt to be friends with the world as well as friends with God.

To give God some aspects of the Spirit that He has placed within us, but to hold back and to give to the world in friendship other aspects of the Spirit that He has placed within us, this will not do. God will not share us with the world. He must have us completely.

He is jealous in that way, even as you would not expect a wife to be happy or prepared to share the love and the sexual activity of her husband with another woman. So also, God is not satisfied for us to commit, to try to commit our spirit in some measure to Him and in some measure to the world. And the reason why that is

so is because, and by the way, this explains the use of adultery language here at the beginning, adulterous creatures or adulterers, and that is so because God is totally sovereign, that is to say, He is holy, and He is totally love.

Because He is totally sovereign, because He is totally holy, you have the legitimizing basis for His desire to own us, to have us, to have our spirits completely. That is the legitimizing basis for His jealousy. Because He is total love, that is the existential basis for His jealousy over us.

He has a right to, and He actually in the depths of His being desires all of us and will not share us with anyone or anything else, especially the world. Now, we notice that He goes ahead to say in verse 6, this involves God's jealous passion, but related to that is God's superabounding grace. So He says in verse 6, but He gives more grace.

Now again, you have death, which is a very, very weak connective here that is translated once again as a contrast using the word but here, so that according to the RSV, verse 6 stands in contrast to verse 5, but He gives more grace. Therefore, it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Now, clearly, there is some contrast, some difference between jealousy and grace.

As I say, jealousy carries with it the idea of danger, whereas grace carries with it the idea of help. Nevertheless, as I mentioned just a moment ago, jealousy does not exclusively involve danger, risk, or judgment but also potential hope. It's not a matter of God saying, well, if you wish to be a friend of the world, you cannot be a friend of mine, and that's all right.

I'm prepared to let you go. God is not prepared to let us go, and that is a word of hope and that then ties in with this notion of grace. It is a gracious thing for God not to let us go because our spirits have been put within us by God. They have something of the divine as part of them, and our spirits cannot be totally satisfied until they are reunited with God, and that reuniting with God, God's work of reuniting our spirits to Himself, is an act of grace.

It stems from His jealousy, and it is executed through His grace. So, God does not reject the adulterer, but attempts to win the person back. Thus, God gives, and note the present tense here in English, which reflects the present tense in progressive present, God constantly gives more grace.

Now, actually, RSV translates this the way it normally is translated, more grace, but literally it is God gives a greater gift, a greater gift. This gift is greater, really greater in the sense of being stronger than sin and judgment. That's, in the context, that's what it means by greater gift.

That's the point of this contrast of extent. It is a greater gift than sin and judgment upon sin. It is a possibility of redemption through repentance.

As he goes ahead, we'll go ahead and develop it in the subsequent verses here, the possibility of redemption through repentance. So, when he calls upon the double-minded person in the subsequent verses here, double-minded persons to submit themselves to God, to resist the devil, to draw near to God, to cleanse your hands, to purify your hearts, to be wretched and mourn and weep, to turn your laughter to mourning and your joy to dejection, to humble yourselves before the Lord, all of that which the person is encouraged to do is a divine gift. The possibility of this kind of repentance comes from God.

Insofar as repentance is a good thing, it is a gift from God. Remember 117, every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Now, of course, it clearly does not end with divine initiative.

You do not have a kind of monergism here, that is to say, God is doing all of this himself, although it must begin with his initiative. And any sort of human participation involves really a response to the gift that God is giving. And this does really involve grace because even though this kind of redemption comes about through a process of what human beings do, it really does not, as far as this refers to salvation here, this really does not involve salvation that comes from, it's really not works righteousness or a kind of salvation that comes from what we do, but it's a matter of accepting grace, accepting grace.

And this is the way synergism, that's to say, the working together of God and human beings in the process of salvation is always understood in the New Testament. That is to say, insofar as we do and that we must participate in our salvation, it's really a matter, it's not a matter of participation in any way that would suggest credit to ourselves, that we are responsible for it. It's a kind of working together with Christ that involves really the reception of a gift.

Our participation in salvation is really receiving from God the gift of salvation that he offers to us. Insofar as these kinds of things are necessary for a healthy, one might say, saving relationship with God, it's really these kinds of things that he goes ahead to describe here is what reception looks like in practice. This is how one receives grace.

So, that's what we have here in verses 7 through 10. We have a series of exhortations here. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God.

Notice the causation. Because he gives a greater gift, he makes use of this gift. Submit yourselves to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. So, the first, and really, you have an element of kind of a bracket here in this human response.

You have six things involved here, but the first and the last really relate to each other. Submit to God, and then he will say at the very end, humble yourselves to God. Submit to God, humble yourselves to God.

Now, as I say, this is a direct result of verse 6. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves to God so as to receive this gift that he wishes to give to you. Now, I do think that what you have here is, as I say, a kind of inclusio.

Submit yourself to God, humble yourselves to God, and then the intervening exhortations here. Resist the devil, draw near to God, wash your hands, sinners, double mind, sinners wash your hands, double mind and purify your hearts, experience godly remorse for sorrows. These, I think, are particular expressions that they involve, these intervening elements involve the particular content, the specific content of submitting yourself to God, humble yourself to God.

You might ask when you have, as a matter of fact, it's appropriate to ask when you have statements like submit yourselves to God or humble yourselves before the Lord, what exactly does that mean? What exactly does that look like? Well, it looks like this, like B through E. That is a specific content of submitting yourself to God or humbling yourself to the Lord. Well, it involves, first of all, the specific means here of humbling yourself or submitting yourself to the Lord, resisting the devil, and drawing near to God. As he says here in verse 8, draw near to God, well, excuse me, verse 7, B, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you, which is really linked to what he says in the next statement, draw near to God and God will draw near to you. Now, I think that these two statements are very closely related to each other. Resist the devil, create distance between yourself and the devil and he will flee from you, but on the other hand, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

You have spatial language, of course, being used in each case, the devil fleeing from us, God drawing near to us. Now, so that by resisting the devil, one draws near to God, and by drawing near to God, one resists the devil. The thing to note here is that both the devil and God are responsive.

The devil runs away scared, but as we draw near to God, God draws near to us in intimacy. Both God and the devil are responsive to our initiatives. In verse 8, cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Now, this notion of cleansing the hands, again, is also really an Old Testament and Jewish expression. It has to do with the right actions. In other words, adopt a life that is characterized by active obedience to the will of God.

Purifying hearts has to do with the right commitment, that is to say, the right attitude on the part of double-minded. You know, by the way, that he draws a parallel here between sinners and double-minded. Again, the ultimate expression of evil or sin in the book of James is not doing only evil but actually living in two worlds, being double-minded and the like, having inclinations toward God and inclinations away from God at the same time.

So, purify, and of course, this has to do with this notion of singleness, of simplicity. Purify your hearts, he says, you double-minded. Now, there is really, of course, there is really no dichotomy between internal attitude and commitments and external expressions.

And so, really, these two things must be viewed together. They go, now, no pun intended here on the basis of verse 8, but they go hand in hand. Whereas the first, this business of resist the devil, and he will flee from you, draw near to God, and God will draw near to you, involves a nature of repentance which is personal.

Verse 8 has to do with the scope of repentance which is inclusive, both actions and the condition of the heart, again, the whole person. Then, also, in verse 9, be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection.

This points to the depth of repentance, absolutely serious. Mourn and weep because of the pitiful condition, because of your pitiful condition, because of fear of end-time judgment. Mourn and weep now, so you will not mourn and weep at the coming judgment.

This is Old Testament language, of course. It refers to grief or sorrow over a broken relationship and the effects of a broken relationship. And, of course, broken relationships and grief over broken relationships are very similar to grief over death.

That's why it uses mourning language here and language that is associated with grief over the death of a friend or a loved one, because, of course, the real pain of death is a broken relationship and really the finality of a broken relationship. As we mentioned the other day, even if one has Christian confidence in the resurrection of the dead, when we are raised, we will not experience quite the same relationships that we have experienced here on earth. So, there is a legitimate place for grieving and that kind of thing.

What he has in mind here in verse 9 is adopting a type of behavior that is in absolute discontinuity with normal processes of life, and especially in discontinuity with self-sufficiency and world security in favor of humble submission to the reality of the transcendent God. Now, in 4:11 through 12, he goes back to the notion of unruly speech. Of course, he has talked about the misuse of the tongue of speech.

In 3:1 through 12, he comes back to it here, but he comes at it here from a slightly different perspective. He focuses upon evil speaking. So, he says in, let's look at it, 4:11 through 12, do not speak evil against one another.

The word here is kata lalaita, do not speak against, really do not speak against one another. There he translates it and it's a fine translation. Do not speak evil against one another, brethren.

He that speaks evil 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 one lawgiver and judge he was able to save and destroy, but who are you that you judge your neighbor? So, as we've come to expect in James' argument here in these paragraphs, quite typically, he begins with an exhortation and then goes ahead to substantiate it, and that's what he does here.

Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. That's the exhortation, and then the rest of it, this is in 4:11a, 4:11b through 12 is the substantiation. Basically, to do so is to be a judge, which he says is contrary to proper relationship to the law and is contrary to proper relationship to God, the lawgiver.

Those are the reasons why we ought not to do this. Now, this relates really, as I say, to the evils of the tongue, and in some ways particularizes 3:1 through 12, as well as the wisdom from below, 3:13 through 18. While there in 3:1 through 12, the emphasis was upon the destructive power of the tongue, here the emphasis is upon the relationship between misuse of the tongue and the law, really God as lawgiver.

Also, as I mentioned, this may spring from this business of evil speaking here, may spring from, be a result of jealousy and selfish ambition that he has described in 3:13 through 18, and of course, also the warlike passions of 4.1 through 4. Now, you do have a prohibition here: do not speak evil against one another. I mentioned this a couple of times earlier in this video series, but there are two ways of expressing prohibition in Greek. One is may, that is the negative with the aorist subjunctive, which means don't even start.

The other is may with a present imperative, which usually means stop doing. And that's what you have here. He's assuming that there is an issue here or that there is likely an issue here in terms of this evil speaking.

Now, when he talks about speak evil against one another, as I say the word, or speak against one another, katalēta, he seems to be, this seems to be referring here to, specifically, to condemnation of a fellow Christian, moral or spiritual condemnation of a fellow Christian. I say that because, in the substantiation, he links this speaking of evil with judging, speaking evil against a brother with judging a brother. He speaks evil against a brother or judges a brother, and then he talks about judging and judgmentalism.

So, it has to do with judging the brother, expressing in speech an attitude of judgmentalism, expressing in speech an attitude of judgmentalism. Now, this, of course, can take various forms and can involve various aspects. For one thing, of course, this involves a sin of the tongue insofar as it does not contribute to the righteousness of God.

Remember, James said in 120, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man, the wrath of man, does not work the righteousness of God. That is to say, it's a kind of an exhortation to pause. Again, this particularizes that more general exhortation with regard to the tongue there in chapter 1, to pause and to ask yourself, does what I'm about to say actually contribute to the building up and the establishment of God's righteous standards for His people? Does it really contribute to the kind of life, the kind of society, the kind of community that God wants? Will it do good? Is that the motivation that I have for saying what I'm saying about a brother or sister in Christ? Is that the effect it will have of what I'm about to say regarding a brother or sister in Christ? This also stems, I think, from an attitude that is inclined to assign the worst possible motives to actions over against giving the brother or sister the benefit of the doubt, assigning or assuming the worst possible motives for actions and the like.

And again, this is a contradiction of the royal law, 2H, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And there are a number of other aspects that we could mention here, drawing upon what we have in the broader context of the book of James. Now, he substantiates this, as I say, in verses 11B and 12, he that speaks evil against a brother, and incidentally, although this allows for a broader application in terms of evil speaking against anybody, as a matter of fact, that may be suggested by what he says at the end of verse 12, but who are you that you judge your neighbor, not just those who are fellow members, brothers or sisters in the Christian community, still he has primary relationship with brothers or sisters in the Christian community here, where he says, he that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, that kind of thing.

So, it focuses upon that but has a broader application, as the very last statement there in verse 11 suggests. He says, first of all, that he who speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. Now,

how is it that this involves speaking evil against the law or judging the law? It speaks evil against the law in that you judge, as you do this, you judge that the law is wrong.

The law actually, of course, forbids this kind of speaking against a fellow member of God's community, especially, of course, this is, I say, clearly a violation of the love command, the law of love. As a matter of fact, that may be, especially when he's talking about speaking when he says, speaks evil against the law and judges the law, the royal law that he has described in 2.8, you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. If you speak evil against a brother or sister, you judge the law in the sense that you judge that the law is wrong.

You condemn the law as being wrong. Also, you speak against the law in that, as he's going to go ahead to say here, the law declares clearly that there is one judge. When you judge, you contradict that claim that is in the law.

Now, he goes ahead to give the second substantiation of this, as we mentioned here, and that is, he should have had the specific verses here, contrary to the proper relationship with the law, the lawgiver. And this is found really in 11c and 12, but if you judge the law, you are not adjuring the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and destroy.

And, of course, that particularizes his work of judgment, both positive judgment, salvation, and negative judgment, destruction. There is one lawgiver and judge; he is able to save and destroy, but who are you that you judge your neighbor? So, to speak evil against a brother or sister, of course, involves judging that brother or sister, and that really assumes the prerogatives that belong to God alone. Insofar as you do this, James says, you transgress the bounds of creaturehood, which is, at least from one point of view, the ultimate sin.

What is wrong here, more specifically, with assuming the role of judge, arrogating God's role of judge to ourselves? Well, for one thing, what it assumes, again, we're drawing on implications here, especially implications along the lines of assumptions. When we judge other persons, we assume that we have perfect understanding and knowledge, which James takes to belong only to God. We assume when we judge a brother or sister, we assume perfect performance on our part.

It's only a person who, certainly a person who himself or herself has faults, has failings, has failure, has stumbled, has no right to judge, no basis to judge anyone else. But remember what James has said at the beginning of this segment in 3.2, for we all stumble much. Also, judging another person assumes a perfect prerogative.

The prerogative over the destiny of the fellow Christian. In other words, the very fact that you judge someone but cannot actually execute that judgment implies that you

have no business judging. That's why he says there is only one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and destroy.

The fact that God is able to destroy, that He is able to carry out judgment implies His right to judge. Conversely, the fact that we are unable to consign anyone to the fires of hell implies that we do not have a basis for judgment. To judge then implies that we are able to save and to destroy, a capability that reflects transcendence, and that is the only basis for legitimate judging, and we do not possess it.

All right. Good place to stop. We'll round out James, or at least do what we can to round it out when we come back.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 26, James 4:1-12.