

James 26-09-06a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 6th of September, 2026. We continue our study in the book of James.

We are at chapter four, and we have come to a fresh set of observations about this relatively familiar passage that I think makes it more understandable and because of that, more applicable. We'll pick up there, do a quick review of what we've covered in the first four verses and move forward, but let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, it is such a wonderful promise.

We are constantly reminded that the life you call us to is not lived by our strength, not by might nor by power, but through your spirit. We see that in evidence this morning in our passage, and we pray that as we look at it together, your Holy Spirit will enable us to see clearly the message that you have for us, the application that we should make of it, the change that it should wreak in our hearts, our thinking, reflected in our speech and in our works so that the impact of the divinely inspired message here will have its full effect in our lives, and as a result, your glory will be reflected and others will be drawn to the Lord Jesus as a result. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's quickly review our passage. You remember chapter one, you remember chapter two, you remember chapter three. That's my review of the first three chapters.

We are now in chapter four. Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desire for pleasure that wars in your members you lust and do not have? I would review the Greek here. If you're a glutton for punishment, you can look these things up.

Suffice it to say, these same words occur in the passage that is before us this morning further down, specifically verse five. You see that you've got a yearning word there, you've got a jealousy word there. These are drawn from the vocabulary of these first few verses.

So this is a reference back when we get to verse five. But take note of them. You lust and do not have, you envy.

Scratch out murder and put envy. This same word that I suggested should be here last time, I believe it should be here. The original has phoneuo, P-H-O-N-E-U-O.

I think this was a misunderstanding when this was read out for the copyist and it should have been phoneuo, phoneuo, which is P-H-T-H-O-N-E-O in its vocabulary form. In the second person plural that you have here, their forms are extremely close. It's essentially the difference between it starting with P-H or starting with P-H-T-H.

And it's just as hard to say if you're Greek as it is if you're an American. So, and it makes the

symmetry, it makes the message much more clear. You have the parallel, you have wars and fights.

You envy and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. So you have these pairs that are two sides of the same coin.

You fight in war yet you do not have because you do not ask. This is a directional thing. You have a dissatisfaction of some kind.

There is a lack, there is a desire, there is an unfulfilled wish of some kind. We have a choice at that point. We should analyze if this is a lust of the flesh.

Is it a carnal craving? Is it from the sinful part of our makeup? Or is this something that is motivated by a divine perspective on circumstance and a wish that God be glorified and that the Lord Jesus be lifted up and be central and manifest in our lives? Where does the desire come from? James says, you've got wars and fights going on. You're fighting over something. There's something you want.

Somebody else wants something different. And this comes from these unhealthy, unwholesome, unbiblical cravings and desires. It's envy and jealousy, covetousness.

You want these things and you cannot obtain them. When we find ourselves with dissatisfaction with a circumstance or a situation, things aren't as I want them to be, wish they could be, hoped they would turn out. Before we start trying to angle to find ways to bring that situation or that acquisition about, we should check whether it is a valid, wholesome desire.

What's the best way to do that? I feel like somebody ought to act different. I ought to have this thing I don't have. Work should be different.

Relationships should be different. Economics should be different. The world should be different.

Politics, social issues. This should be different than it is. I want it to be different.

Before we start figuring out how to make it happen, as believers in the Lord Jesus, knowing that our calling is to represent the Lord Jesus, we need to go to the scriptures and pray to our Father in heaven and just lay it out. Lord, this is the situation. I think it ought to be this way.

The Lord Jesus did this in Gethsemane. The situation is they're about to come arrest me and put me to death. I would be glad if this cup would pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. It is one of the most powerful scenes in all of the gospels centered on the Lord Jesus. I can't think of anything more memorable than at the point of facing the cross, Jesus says, this is not my idea of the cross.

Of what should happen, but thy will be done. So when you come here and this disunity, this

conflict, wars and fights in the midst of brethren who are supposed to be united in Christ, they're coming from these desires. Are these desires legitimate? Should somebody in the fellowship leave? Paul tells the Corinthians that there's someone in the midst that shouldn't be there.

There is a time to unite. There is a time to separate. There is a time to feed and meet the needs of someone.

There are times to withhold that. He who does not work in the fellowship does not eat. Look out for the widows and orphans who can't take care of themselves.

But if somebody is able and is simply unwilling, that's not a legitimate case of charity. Somebody says, well, I want to, or I don't want to. What does the scripture say? What is God's will? How will God be glorified? How will scriptural truths, promises and principles and doctrines be best expressed and applied in that situation? Pray, reflect, take some time to meditate on what the word of God has to say.

We're never tested in a way that we can't arrive at the answer. We don't get fifth grade math tests when we're only in the third grade. If we get a test, we should be able to pass it.

It's a matter of concentration, prayer and application. So that's step one. I'm dissatisfied in some way.

Is this dissatisfaction legitimate? Am I dissatisfied? Because the Lord's will is not accomplished here. God is not being glorified. This is not a situation that ought to pertain in the realm of a believer's life.

This needs to change. Well, that's a good thing. You need to figure out a way to make that change.

If it is to satisfy envy, jealousy, covetousness, if we're doing something that benefits me and doesn't reflect the glory of the Lord, that needs confession, it needs realignment. I need my mind renewed, Romans 12, one and two. So you lust, you desire.

This word lust, you can just circle it there and draw a little line out through the margin down to the word yearns in verse five. It's the same word. And in the old King James that said that the spirit dwells in you lusteth to envy.

And so the second word, jealousy, the word jealousy, you can circle that and run a line back up the margin to what we have corrected that says murder and should say envy. It's the same word. It's from thoneo, P-H-T-H-O-N-E-O, thoneo.

Lusteth is your, lust word up in verse two, and envy and jealousy are linked in those same two verses. So you can see how this argument is unfolding. Just as with Paul in Corinth looking at, I hear there are wars and divisions among you, wars, it should not be so.

You're taking each other to court and that before unbelievers. These conflicts are selfishly motivated. Get your heart right.

And these divisions and disunities will disappear. If an otherwise healthy group of believers suddenly experiences division, somebody's out of line. And it is up to the out of line individual to figure it out.

So you fight in war. You do not have because you do not ask. Prayer, instead of fighting with the person or persons you think is responsible for this problem, take the problem before the Lord.

Take it to the highest court. Take it to our father. We do this when we're kids.

Sibling breaks a toy or does some injustice to us. We go to mom, we go to dad, usually mom. She's more merciful, more patient, more willing to negotiate and compromise.

Dads are usually, you know, the court of last resort. That's the Supreme Court. There's no appeal from dad.

So we take it upstairs and say, here's the situation and resolve it at that level. So you do not have beneficial results. You do not have peace.

You do not have happiness and fulfillment because you're fighting with each other to get what you want. And these wants have not been washed in the water of the word. They haven't been cleansed in fasting and prayer.

And it just sits there and festers and causes division. So when you do ask, we say, well, but I did pray about this and it's unresolved. Check.

First thing is we check the desire. Is it legitimate? Secondly, how are we praying? Are we praying that God's will be done or are we praying that our will be done? And again, you think of kids going to their parents, you know, you're nine or 10 years old, you're 11 or 12 years old and something is wrong and you go and you demand that it be seen and done my way. Paul Anka, I was trying to think of him last time.

Paul Anka wrote, I Did It My Way and Frank Sinatra had probably the most famous version of that, Sammy Davis Jr. did it also. But you listen through that song, you know, I bit it off, chewed it up and spit it out. I did it my way.

You know, things didn't always turn out so well, but by golly, I did it my way. We have to be careful about my way because the heart is deceitful. When lust is conceived, it brings forth sin.

Same word we have here. When lust conceives, we saw that in our earlier context. So this is a, again, such a tightly woven message to straighten us out.

God isn't trying to shortchange us. He's not trying to perpetrate injustice or a wrong outcome on us, but there is a way for peace, for the fruit of the spirit, for the presence of Christ and the Father to be manifest in fellowship, in the group. These are second person plurals and where there is disunity, disharmony, division, dissension, fights and wars, this is how to fix it.

Here's the source. It's just like a doctor doing a diagnostic, doing a differential, looking at the symptoms and the tests, what's the matter? What's causing this? James says, I'll tell you what's causing it. It is unhealthy desires in the soul.

You want something and that's not a legitimate want. It is envy, fun, oh, or it is covetousness. I want what I want because I want it.

And we let the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of His word change our hearts. How many times have we heard about the double-edged sword and what it does? Cutting to the center, exposing the thoughts and intents so that we can be healed, we can be cleansed. The word of God is a fire and a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces and some of our rocks need breaking.

When I was a kid, midway through my childhood, they had pet rocks. You would actually go spend money and get a pet rock. I love my rock.

It's got little googly eyes glued on it. It's got a little tuft of, you know, fake pink or yellow hair glued to it. It's a pet rock.

We have pet rocks in our soul sometimes and the hammer of the word of God needs to pulverize that and sweep it out. This of course requires humility, faith and humility, all of these themes that we've seen leading up to this chapter. And you notice that James is now being much more direct.

We took note of the pronouns and how he was gently referring to people in the third person. If a man is this and if a man does that, if others do this and he's laid the foundation and he's provided the vocabulary and the concepts that he is now sharpening to a point and using in the second person. Wars and fights among you, second person plural.

They come from your desires, second person plural. And they war in your members and the members are the members of the group. I don't have a desire in my left elbow that's fighting with a desire in my right knee.

It doesn't war in the members of my individual body. It's the members of the body of Christ. And you remember the whole dialogue where one part can't say to the other part, I have no need of you.

We do not act that way. Is the body of Christ divided? Paul asks. So we ask amiss so that we can spend it on our pleasures.

Again, in verse three, that word pleasures is the same one he used up in verse one. Pleasure, it's just now in the plural. And this isn't so much, I want this stimulating Disneyland experience.

This is what pleases me. Pleasure is really not maybe the best translation here. I would translate this that you may spend it on what pleases you.

You expend a lot of effort. You clock a lot of time in thinking and in behaving and in speaking, and it pleases you in some way. Then we come to verse four.

And be sure and scratch out adulterers and. The first two words are not there. James sort of, this is a combination of a, it's not so much an insult as a reminder of something.

And this is really important. This is an Old Testament allusion. It is the word moikalides, adulteresses, it's feminine, harlots.

The best way to identify the Old Testament roots of what James is doing here, if you had the old King James and really even the new King James, and you do a phrase concordance search on played the harlot, you will often find this exact vocabulary. So for example, turn back with me to Ezekiel chapter 23. What are we investigating here as we go back to the Old Testament? James says, adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? This isn't a fresh thought.

When he says, do you not know, you should know because this is a well-known Old Testament teaching. Friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God. Don't you know this, James says.

Well, he introduces it with adulteresses. Where would you find this in the scripture that you have heard all your life? Oh, Jewish brethren, remember this is early. It's one of the earliest letters, perhaps the earliest in the New Testament church.

Still a body of Jewish believers. They should know their Old Testament. Do you not know, you adulteresses? There's your keyword, there's your confer.

If you ever read scholarly writing and it says CF and it gives you a reference, it means confer. Go back and check, compare this with, compare this to. Well, adulteresses is a keyword, it's a reminder word and it's moichalides, M-O-I-C-H-A-L-I-D-E-S.

You don't have to write it down if you don't want to, you can just say adulteress. Just be sure you have it as feminine, plural. Adulteresses, moichalides.

So in Ezekiel chapter 23, this is one of the most well-known contexts. Everyone in Israel was familiar with this. Ezekiel chapter 23.

The word of the Lord came, son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother.

They committed harlotry in Egypt. They committed harlotry in their youth.

Their breasts were their embrace. Their virgin bosom was their breast. Their names, Aholah and Aholibah.

Aholah the elder, Aholibah her sister. They were mine and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Samaria is Aholah and Jerusalem is Aholibah.

Aholah played the harlot even though she was mine and she lusted for her lovers. The neighboring Assyrians who were clothed in purple, captains in, notice, clothed in purple, fine garments. Captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses.

Thus she committed her harlotry with them, all of them choice men of Assyria and with all for whom she lusted with all their idols. She defiled herself. She has never given up her harlotry from Egypt for in her youth, they had lain with her, pressed her virgin bosom and poured out their immorality upon her.

Therefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers. Doesn't this just resonate with the context in James? You see a rich man come in and find clothes. Don't you know these are the guys that oppress and abuse you? Why are you favoring them and ignoring the poor man with dirty clothes? James is appealing to the common knowledge of passages like this in the Old Testament.

And when you get to this, you find this exact in the Septuagint, which is what they would be most familiar with in Ezekiel 23, five, where it says, Aholah played the harlot, even though she was mine. This is, she pornyed herself, basically. She ekpornuo, it's a form of it.

And she prostituted herself away from me and set herself up among her lovers. She sent messengers to the land of the Chaldeans down in verse 16, talking about Aholibah, just as corrupt as Aholah. Talking about the Southern kingdom of Judah is just as bad as the Northern kingdom under Ahab and Jezebel and the like.

And all of this culminates when you get down to verse 45 of this chapter. Righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses and after the manner of women who shed blood because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands. So verse 44, she who grew old in adulteries, will they commit harlotry with her now? They went into her as men go to a woman who plays the harlot.

Thus they went into Aholah and Aholibah, the lewd women. Righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses. And it's the very same word we have in James.

Moikolides, because they are adulteresses. Turn back a little further to Ezekiel chapter 16. Ezekiel chapter 16, in verse 26, you have the reference to Egypt.

You committed harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbors, and increased your acts of harlotry to provoke me to anger. You played the harlot with the Assyrians in verse 28. You multiplied your acts of harlotry as far as the land of the traitor Chaldea.

Even then you were not satisfied. How degenerate is your heart in verse 30, says the Lord God, seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot. You erected a shrine at the head of every road, built your high place in every street.

You are not like a harlot because you scorned payment. You are like an adulterous wife who takes strangers instead of her husband. And that word in verse 32 is moikomene.

You hear the M-O-I-C-H? It's the same root. It's the same word in the Septuagint Greek, adulteress. And so finally, in this context, in verse 38, God says, I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged.

I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy. And women who break wedlock, it is the punishment of an adulteress, moikalidas. Same word we have here.

So, I could go other places. There are passages in Jeremiah and so on, but this establishes the point. James knows his Old Testament as do the people to whom he is writing.

And he says, adulteresses, moikalidas. They're immediately going to think back to Ezekiel 23 and Ezekiel 16 and other passages that use this terminology for those who make themselves friends to the world. In this Ezekiel context, it's the Egyptians.

It's the Chaldeans. It's these outsiders they are cozying up to and compromising and breaking their covenant with God. For other passages in this, you can look at Jeremiah chapter three, Yahweh's wife, the Lord's wife, commits adultery.

The house of Israel was committing adultery in Jeremiah chapter three. Going to Assyria and Egypt for help. You see this in Jeremiah 2, 18 and 2, 36.

And the final passage I'll give you where this moikalis, moikalidas vocabulary is used is Hosea chapter three, verse one, where it is used as a figure for Israel's divided loyalties. They try to worship God, but they're worshiping other gods. These people in James are coming together to worship God, but they're also worshiping the rich who come in and they're fighting with one another to get ahead.

And they are adulteresses. This is acting like the world. This is friendship with the world, the world's ways, the world's solutions.

Any unbeliever could act this way. Any unbeliever could treat others this way. Any unbeliever could give in to their desires, to their envy, to their jealousy, to their lust, to have things be different than they are.

I want a thing, I want a situation, I want an advancement, I want whatever. So Hosea 3.1, Ezekiel 16.38, and Ezekiel 23.45, this is the vocabulary. James tags those references when he calls the people adulteresses.

As soon as he says that, where have I heard that word? Oh, yeah, in my Bible, in synagogue, in Old Testament Bible study. So, as we saw last time, when you get to this troublesome portion, do you think the scripture says in vain, the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously, or lust is the envy in the Old King James. This is just a poorly divided, poorly understood section.

Verse five needs a period after the word vain. And it really, these two, the first half ought to be verse four, and the second half ought to be verse six. So, whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Makes himself an enemy of God. We saw this in 2 Chronicles 19, verse two. Where Jehu is speaking to Jehoshaphat, because Jehoshaphat, Southern Kingdom King, is going up to Ahab, Ahab of Ahab and Jezebel fame.

Ahab and Jezebel, whose daughter Athaliah is going to come down to Judah and wreak havoc and murder all kinds of pretenders to the throne and so on. And Jehu, speaking to Jehoshaphat, says, do you make friendship with one who is the enemy of the Lord? 2 Chronicles 19, two. Friendship with the world is enemyship with God.

You can also, and we looked at this last time, Psalm 139, 17, and Psalm 139, verses 21 and 22. And it is in the context of these adulterous passages we've already looked at. Jeremiah chapter two and three, Ezekiel chapter 16, Ezekiel 23, Hosea chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, all of that pictures Israel playing the harlot, going after the nations, the world, cultivating friendship with the world, making themselves the enemy of God.

So adulterous is in verse four of chapter four of James. Do you not know? Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world, he's referring back to these well-dressed rich people that come in, influential people, come sit up here, let me be your friend.

Let's be friends. Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Friendship with the world is enemyship with God.

Or do you think the scripture says that to no purpose? Do you think those situations, those stories, those details are in the Old Testament for no reason? Do you not think about the scripture that you know? Do you not know this? Do you not think about this? Does it not make a difference in the way you act? I will show you my faith by my works. Your works show me that you're envious, you're jealous, you have wars and fights, you want stuff that you can't obtain. Do you not know that working in the ways of the world, acting like the world, cultivating the world's friendship, the world's solutions, makes you an enemy of God? You should know this.

Or do you think scripture speaks to no purpose? Period. New sentence, new paragraph. The spirit who dwells in us lusteth to envy.

These are two negative words, negative. They can be used positively, but look at our context. They are used up in the first part as we've already circled and drawn the antecedents up above in verse one and two.

The spirit that dwells in us. We are built this way is what James says. James is reminding them of.

Our spirit wants to envy, wants to be jealous. Our carnal nature wants to pick a fight, wants to get its way, wants to acquire and obtain and achieve and advance for its own gratification. The spirit, lowercase s, this is not the Holy Spirit.

James has, there's no precedent here to suddenly introduce the Holy Spirit. It doesn't just come out of nowhere. And we say, oh yeah, Holy Spirit.

It's not in the context. What is in the context? Our spirit. These lusts, envying, covetousness, create these wars and fights.

You ask amiss so that you can spend it on your pleasures. It is true, the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously. It's not a quote.

Take the quotation marks off. And it's not a question, no question mark. It is a fact.

The spirit, the human spirit, lowercase s spirit that dwells in us by nature, covets. Look at little toddlers playing in a room full of toys. There can be 19 toys, but if one kid's got a toy, the other kid is gonna come over and try to take it away from them.

That's, little dogs do the same thing. You can have 14 chew bones, one of them picks up a bone, the other one's got to have that one. The spirit that dwells in us is carnal, fleshly, untrustworthy.

We've got to analyze it in the light of scripture. We've got to pray to God to cleanse us and renew a right spirit within us. Psalm 51, purge me with hyssop, wash me, renew me, transform me by the renewing of my mind, make me different than what I am.

The spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy. I like the old translation because it reminds you of the preceding context. But now verse six lays down and makes perfect sense.

As much as we have those desires and cravings and we're trapped by our fallen nature, God gives greater grace. He gives greater grace. This is a comparative.

He gives greater grace, grace that is greater than all our sin. It's a line from a hymn. Grace that is greater than all our sin.

Grace that can overcome the fallenness of our covetous nature. Well, we have a lot to say about this. James has a lot to say about it.

And that's what we'll see when we come back from the break.