

The Epistle of James

James 4:1-17

- Questions

1. What infighting existed among these brethren and what was the cause of it (4:1-2)?
2. Why did these brethren not receive what they asked for (4:3)?
3. What was the spiritual state of these brethren and how had they come to be in this state (4:4)?
4. What does James say about the spirit in man (4:5)?
5. What does God do with the proud and with the humble (4:6)?
6. What were these brethren told to do in order to change their worldly ways and receive God's grace (4:7-10)?
 - Verse 7 –
 - Verse 8 –
 - Verse 9 –
 - Verse 10 –
7. What sin were these brethren told to stop and why (4:11-12; see also 2:1-4, 12-13)?
8. What approach did these brethren take regarding their future plans? What had they forgotten or not considered (4:13-14)?
9. Who or what is to be included when making future plans (4:15)?
10. What evil did they exhibit regarding their future plans (4:16)?
11. What does James say is “sin” (4:17)?

- Digging Deeper

1. Where else in the Bible are God's people described as being spiritual adulterers (4:4)?
2. What OT scripture might James have in mind in James 4:5? What OT scripture is quoted in James 4:6?
3. What is the meaning of James' question in James 4:5 regarding the spirit? Is this a reference to the human spirit, the Holy Spirit, or some other spirit? (Compare with Jeremiah 3:14 and Hosea 2:19ff.)
4. How did Jesus resist the devil (4:7)?
5. What type of "judging" is condemned in this context (4:11-12; see James 2:4 and Romans 14:1-4, 10, 13)? How do you reconcile James 4:11-12 which condemns judging, with other scriptures like John 7:24 and 1 Corinthians 5:12; 10:15 which encourage judging?
6. What law is spoken against and judged (4:11; see James 2:8)?
7. What connection does James 4:17 ("therefore") have with verses 13 through 16?

- Applications for Today

1. We must not fight with each other (4:1-2; Gal. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 6:4-5).
2. We must ask (in prayer) with the right attitude and motive (4:3; Mt. 6:11; 26:42; 1 Jn. 3:22; 5:14); otherwise, our prayers will be hindered (4:3; Prov. 28:9; 1 Pet. 3:12).
3. We must choose between love for the world and love for God (4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). God's people become spiritual adulterers when they choose worldly friendships (4:4; Jer. 9:2).
4. God resists the proud and exalts the humble (4:6; Prov. 3:33-34; 16:18; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).
5. We must resist the devil (4:7; Eph. 4:27; 6:10ff; 1 Pet. 5:8) and draw near to God (4:7; 2 Chron. 15:2; Zech. 1:3; Heb. 4:16; 7:19, 25).
6. When we sin, we need to be humble and take seriously the matter of repentance (4:8-10; Isa. 1:16; 2 Cor. 7:9-11).
7. We have only one lawgiver and judge (4:11-12; Isa. 33:22).
8. We must not boast of tomorrow as if we are guaranteed another day (4:13-16; Prov. 27:1; Lk. 12:19-20).
9. Life is fragile, like a vapor; make sure you are right with God (4:14; Psalms 39:5; 144:4).
10. We will be judged for failing to do what we know we ought to do (4:17; Lk. 12:47).