

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the **Epistle of James**

15- How to Pray- *Sinfully*

Church; July 04, 2021

James 4:1-10

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

To The Glory of God

Now I am moved greatly by godly men like RC Sproul; John MacArthur; Sinclair Ferguson; Paul Washer and others- who have lived and spoken and written during my lifetime.¹ I am a *better* Man; a *better* Christian; and a *better* Husband; Father; Brother; and Son for having been fed by these men. And I am also a much better Pastor from having heard these men; and having read what they have written.

But there are several men, who have moved me- who have not

¹ RC Sproul died December 14, 2017, at age 78

ministered during my lifetime: Men like Augustine; John Chrysostom; the early Fathers of the Church; Charles Spurgeon; and most of the Puritans.² I often think that I would have done better if I had lived back then- with those men and ministered during those heady days when they literally carved out many of the breathtaking Doctrines of the Bible that we use and benefit from every day. What they wrote about God and the Bible and life- has stirred my soul and brought Conviction into my life and changed me.

But perhaps the man, who, God has used in my life more than any other- died 263 years ago. I never met him. I've never heard his voice. And I will never see him- until I am with him in Glory as we worship Jesus together- forever. Now from what I have read- Jonathan Edwards was a strange man. He was very prim and proper. He wore long sleeves and high collars. He grew his hair out long; and spoke with a high- pitched mono-tone voice- a kind of a squeaky voice- that I would have probably mocked before I was saved. In fact, I would have probably referred to him as a "sissy"- to my everlasting shame.

But he became the greatest Theologian that America has ever (and might ever) produced. His understanding of Scripture was uncanny. And the way he could put together deep and profound Passages of Scripture and then make sense of them- was literally amazing. But the main thing that originally drew me to Jonathan Edwards; and the main thing that has kept me learning at his feet- is how consumed he was about the Glory of God. Truly Edwards ate, slept, and breathed the God of Glory. And striving to understand God and His Glory was his single minded- purpose- and I believe- his Calling.

When I read Edwards, I usually end up with my face on the ground. Many times, after reading something Edwards wrote (several decades before God used Thomas Jefferson to pen down the Constitution)- I have pushed back from the computer and begin to weep as I clap my hands- not only applauding Edwards- but celebrating what he showed me about the God I love.

And Edwards has a word for our time that could hardly be more pointed if he were living today. It has to do with the Foundation of Gratitude. He said, "True Gratitude or Thankfulness to God for His Kindness to us, arises from a Foundation laid before, of Love to and for God- for all He is in *Himself*. But what I call, a '*natural gratitude*' has no such antecedent Foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful Affection to God, for Kindness received- always flow out from a stock of love- that is already in the heart. And this Love was established in the first place on other Grounds- viz. God's Own Excellency."³

² Augustine (354-430AD); John Chrysostom (347-407AD); the anti-Nicene Fathers ministered prior to the Council of Nicea (325AD); Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892); the Puritans ministered primarily in the 16th and 17th Centuries.

³ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, orig. 1746, p.247.

Now, many times, I am forced to admit that Edwards was simply much smarter than me. And so, I have to “boil down” what he says into what I call, “Alabama English”- or just “plain talk”. What Edwards just told us was that the kind of Gratitude that is pleasing to God- is NOT- in the first place- a Delight in the *Benefits* that God gives us. (though that is certainly part of it). But true Gratitude- the kind of Gratitude that honors God- MUST be rooted in something else. And that “*something else*” MUST come *first*. In fact, that “*something else*” from which God- honoring Gratitude comes- must flow out from a Delight in the Beauty and Excellency of God's Own Character. And that Delight MUST already be there- inside us- BEFORE God gives us His Benefits- or our Gratitude will be three things:

1. Paper thin
2. Fleeting, at best
3. No different than the Gratitude of pagans

In other words, if the Beauty and Excellency of God's Character is NOT the Foundation of our Gratitude- then whatever Gratitude we have- is no different from that which the "*natural man*" apart from the Spirit and the new Nature in Christ, experiences. And their Gratitude is always “*paper-thin*”. And it is always very “*fleeting*”- arising ONLY when “*good things*” come their way; and completely disappearing when “*hard times*” arrive. So, they are “*grateful*” on Monday- “*cursing God*” on Tuesday; “*depressed*” on Wednesday; “*somewhat normal*” on Thursday; “*functionally happy*” on Friday; “*floating on air*” on Saturday; and “*humble and grateful*” again on Sunday. And then they repeat the process. Isn't it wonderful what Prozac and Lithium can do!

But that kind of "Gratitude" is no more pleasing to God than all the other fallen Emotions which unbelievers have- without ever delighting in Him!

You have heard me say this many times- and I pray I will say it many more times- you don't have to be saved to want a better Life. You don't have to be saved to ask God for a better Life and then *genuinely* thank Him when you seem to get one. You don't have to be saved to want to be physically healed; or to be financially and materially blessed. You don't have to be saved to sincerely ask God to heal you and to bless you and then be grateful when He does. You don't even have to be saved to want to go to Heaven and to have a new body or to stop hurting; or to stop suffering.

Every human on earth wants those things. And yet, not every human is saved. And this is why the false Teachers and pied- pipers of our day draw such large crowds who listen to them; and buy their tapes and books. These false Teachers

promise those they deceive a *better* Life; a more *blessed* Life; a less *stressful* Life; a *happier* Life; a *more secure* Life; a *healthier* Life. And that is what EVERYBODY wants- saved or lost. I mean, who wouldn't serve Jesus- if Jesus will give you a new car or a new house or a healthy body or even a new wife? "*Sure, I'll serve your Jesus- as long as He gives me what I want!*"

And our prayer life supports this statement. Because an honest analysis of *how* we pray- reveals a very shallow and surface and materialistic and self-centered focus of what we ask God to do for us; and to us; and through us. Because people pray about the things that matter the most to them. Humans ask God to move on those things that they deem to be important. And so, yes- we pray. And praying is better than not praying- to be sure. And we pray a lot. And praying a lot is better than not praying a lot- true. But the focus of the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem this morning is *how* we pray; and for *what* we pray? And so, James infallibly wrote:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

... and this tells us that all Prayer is not created equal. James says here that there is such a thing as God's people praying- *wrongly*; or praying- *sinfully*. He called it, asking or praying ...

... **with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.**

... yet they are praying- they are asking! And that tells us that it isn't enough that we simply pray. It isn't enough that we ask God to "move" and to "do things" for us. And it isn't enough that we ask, "in faith"- believing, either. Because as we ask God- as we ask God- *sincerely*; as we ask God- *genuinely*- as we ask- *believing*- we may still ask with "wrong motives."

Now even a publicly educated person as myself can tell that asking God to do things- with "wrong motives" is bad. In fact, it is sinful. And so, based on this- we not only need to pray; we not only need to cry out to God; we not only need to ask- and ask *sincerely*- we not only need to ask in faith- *believing*- but we also need to ask with "right motives". So, how can I pray with "right motives"?

Well, let's go back to what Edwards taught. In his book, "*Religious Affections*"- Edwards said that while we can be lost and yet sincerely want; and sincerely pray for all the things I just talked about- we DO have to be saved- to love Jesus. Why? Because lost people DON'T love Jesus. And they DON'T love Him- because they CAN'T. And they CAN'T love Jesus- because they don't WANT to⁴.

⁴ This is called, "*Moral Inability*" and is what makes everyone accountable to God for their Actions and Thoughts in this life.

So, you have to be saved to want to be *near* Jesus; and to desire to *please* Him; and to *delight* in *obeying* Him. You see, Love- *true* Love- has a deep-seated and ever-growing DELIGHT in Who God is- and NOT merely in what God *can* do; and *does* do for you.

Stop and think. We speak much about Heaven. But exactly what are we going to do in Heaven? We are going to worship God. We are NOT going to shop in stores. We are NOT going to play sports. We are NOT going to engage in politics. We are NOT going to do gardening or collect stamps or re-arrange our dining rooms. We are going to worship God. All the time! Forever!

So, all that Heaven really is- is a place that *facilitates* our continual worship of Jesus. You see, in Heaven, there will be no Hindrances; no Distractions; no Barriers; no alternative Activities that take us away from the “Main Event”- Jesus in His Magnificence! And that is why there will be no Marriage in Heaven; and why we have to have glorified bodies. But that also means that all that Salvation really is- is us being given the Gift of being able to behold God’s Glory in the Face of Jesus- and to be so radically changed (by what God alone does for us) that we love what we see! So, the *zenith* of our Delight; and the *fullness* of our Joy- is in Jesus being magnified- perfectly and continually!

Dear friends, we must understand that many, many people (I would imagine MOST people) ask God to give them things that they *genuinely* and *sincerely* want- every day. And those people are even willing to give God praise- if and when they perceive that God has answered their prayers. Now of course, they get angry; and they pout; and they withdraw their worship; and they “take their ball and go home”- when they perceive that God has NOT answered their prayers.

But stop and think- you would not be “honored” if I thanked you often for your gifts to me- but had no deep and spontaneous regard for you as a person. That wouldn’t make you believe that I genuinely loved you and wanted you. In fact, you would genuinely feel insulted and used- no matter how much I thanked you for your gifts. Because if your character and personality don’t attract me; or if I have no pleasure in simply being around you- then you would think- and rightly so- that the ONLY reason I have any contact with you at all- is because you are able to give me the things that I *really* love and want. So, what I *truly* love; what I *honestly* love; what I *delight* in- is NOT you- it is the stuff you can give to me. And I am merely *using* you to get the things that bring Joy to my heart. And I don’t think we can insult God any more than that.

So, as long as you give me *whatever* my carnal heart craves- you are the best friend I have ever had. But if you ever once- have the audacity to stop the flow of the goodies- I will not even speak to you. And that is *unmistakable* Proof that I never really loved you in the first place.

And so, it is with God. If we are not captured by His Personality and His Character- if we are not in awe of His Beauty and His Glory; if we do not attain to the highest degree of Pleasure and Satisfaction and Delight in God being glorified- then all our declarations of Thanksgiving are like the Gratitude of a Wife to her Husband for the money she gets from him to use in her affair with another man. And this is *exactly* the picture that the half-brother of Jesus paints for us in **James 4:4**:

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Now the word, “**adulteresses**” here in verse 4 is NOT a mis-print. This is found in the original Greek. James used the *feminine* form of a Wife, who is unfaithful to her Husband- to shame all the men in the Church- who are ONLY worshipping God when He gives them what they want.

So, James is condemning the sinful *motives* of Prayer that the people of God offer- that treats God like a cuckold⁵:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Now there are four things to be concerned about here:

1. Why does James call these praying people "**adulteresses**"?
2. Why does he link being a “friend with the world” in the way we pray?
3. What does sinful praying do to us and to our Society?
4. How may we overcome the urge to pray- *sinfully*?

1. Why Does James Call These Praying People, “Adulteresses?”

The Bible says that Jesus is the Church’s Husband. And so, the Church should look to Jesus for all her Needs and for Protection; and for Provision. Yes! Yes! Yes! And so, we are repeatedly told to “ask”- we are told to pray for Jesus to give and to help and to heal and to save and to provide and to protect His Church. Yes, we are! So, in no way am I condemning anyone asking God for those things. All I’m saying today is that this is NOT all we are supposed to do.

⁵ A “cuckold” is a Husband, whose Wife uses him (financially and emotionally) while enjoying an affair with another man

Because the Church of Jesus should also look to Jesus for Comfort; and for Love; and for Closeness; and for Satisfaction. And we are to “ask”; we are to pray for that too. Because if we don’t- then Jesus is merely the Tool through which we get what we *really* want- the good health; and more stuff; and the better Life down here.

And when that is going on- we prove that we don’t really love Jesus- we are merely *using* Him. Oh, sure- we *claim* a love for Him- but what we really, really love- are all the things He gives to us. And while we sing about our Love for Jesus- the one we are embracing; and the one with whom we find Satisfaction and Comfort and Closeness and Happiness- are the temporary Objects and the other Things He provides for us. And when that happens- the visible Church- has become a spiritual adulteress.

And we know that is true- because when Jesus freely decides to be glorified by NOT giving us what we want; or by NOT giving it soon enough; or NOT giving it in the right amounts- we quickly turn on Him; and complain that He really doesn’t love us at all. And we forget the sound of His screams- as He died a horribly painful Death so that He might forgive our Sins and “**bring us to God**” (1Peter 3:18). And that is *exactly* the dynamic going on with ten million cuckolds and their Wives all over the world.

So, even though the Church prays- their hearts are *forsaking* their Husband (God) and they are finding true Love and true Delight and true Satisfaction in their Paramour (the world and the things of the world). And to add Insult to Injury- the Church has the audacity to *ask- to pray-* that their Husband would finance the Adultery! That is what James teaches here.

Now shockingly- this very same flawed spiritual dynamic is sometimes true when people thank God for sending Christ to die for them. Perhaps you have heard people say how thankful we should be for the Death of Jesus- because it shows how much Value God puts upon *us*. So, I ask you- “*What is the Foundation for this kind of Gratitude*”? Well, Jonathan Edwards called it the “*Gratitude of Hypocrites*”. Why?

“... because they first rejoice, and are elevated that *they* are made much of by God; that *they* are the center of God’s Attention; that *they* are the focus of God in the Universe; and that the entire Plan of God revolves around *them*! And in James’ language,

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

... and so ... God seems in a sort, lovely to them ... and they are pleased in the highest degree, in hearing how much God and Christ makes of them. So that their Joy is really a Joy in themselves, and not in God at all.”⁶

My dear friends, the modern Church has truly become drunk with the pleasures of this Age. And far too many within the modern church have bought into the lie that satan spoke first- that WE are the focus of God; that WE are the “pearl of great Price”; that WE are so important to God- that He sent His Son to die for us.

And the fruit of buying into this Lie is that most people, who lay claim to be saved today- have become the most Arrogant; the most Proudful; and the most Self-centered group of people the world has ever known. And so, they see no Command of God that is worth them sacrificing anything to obey. They see no Need to deny themselves at all. Ever. About anything. They have decided that the Command to take up their Cross daily- doesn’t apply to them. And the notion that this God- Who exists for no other reason than to “put them first” would ever in a million years ask them to suffer- and to suffer *joyfully*- seems ridiculous- even “unchristian”.

When the Church lines its walls with mirrors- so we can see how wonderful we all are- we will never see any Value; we will see no Worth; no Beauty; and no Importance in the One, Who lived and died and rose again. And so, striving for Holiness and Obedience and to live our lives, with abandon, for the Glory of God- will evaporate. And that is why getting dressed; driving to Church; singing a few songs; and listening to God’s Word for a few hours once a week- seems too high a price for some to pay. And that is why the idea that God’s greatest Delight is in Himself being known, loved, and enjoyed forever- sounds so foreign to the very people, who constantly affirm that they love Jesus.

I was questioned one Lord’s Day after Service. And this very precious soul came to me and told me, *“When you speak the way you do about God- I don’t feel loved. I don’t feel as though God has my best Interests at heart when you tell me that God loves Himself more than He loves me.”*

And my response was, *“The reason you feel that way- is NOT because what I am saying is wrong or unbiblical. You feel that way because you have been wrongly taught that the best way God can show His Love to you- is by putting you first- even ahead of Himself. But if God did that- He would be guilty of Idolatry. The Best thing in all the Universe- is God. And so, God’s Love to you is best shown by Him giving you- Himself. And the way you can reach the fullness of your own Joy- is by you putting God ahead of yourself- not the other way around.”*

When you really start thinking about it- it is shocking to learn

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, pp. 250-251.

that one of today's most common descriptions given by those in the Church of how we should respond to the Cross is, most commonly- a description of “natural, Self-love” that has zero spiritual Value.

And that is why we would do well to listen to men like Jonathan Edwards. Because isn't it simply “Christianity 101” (normal Christianity) for him to teach us that we should do ALL THINGS- *including* our giving Thanks- to the Glory of God and NEVER to ourselves? Because God CANNOT be glorified if the Foundation of our Gratitude is the Worth of the Gift rather than the Excellency of the Giver. If our Gratitude is not rooted in the Beauty of Jesus- then that Gratitude is probably simply Idolatry- that has been disguised and dressed up to look like Gratitude.

So, as we ask- as we pray for the Gifts- may we also pray that God would grant us a heart to delight in Him for Who He is. And we should also pray that God will make us aware and to be sensitive and discerning until all our Gratitude for His Gifts will become merely the echoes of our Joy in the Excellency of the Christ- Who gave! Because what the Church must NEVER be- is an adulteress!

2. Why does James link us being a “friend to the world” with the way we pray?

James 4:3-5

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

The Reality of this Life is that we are either being led by God's Spirit or we are being driven by our lusts. Or a combination of both. And being a “friend to the world” is being “in accord” with the world. It is “agreeing” with the world; it is being “in unison” with the ways and the logic of this fallen, broken world. It is buying into the “view” of how the world sees things rather than the “view” of what the Bible teaches. And being a friend of the world is being comfortable with the Darkness of this fallen world- rather than condemning it. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said this in **Ephesians 5:11-17:**

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them

in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Praying with wrong motives; praying *sinfully*; praying *selfishly*; praying *Self-centered* prayers- puts us in unity with the world. When we ask for the very things that the lost world asks for (and our motives are the same); or when we respond to getting things the way the lost world responds (without regard to the Giver)- we are in "friendship with the world". We are acting like they act- as though we don't know God or that we really aren't that impressed with God- other than as a "Divine Dispenser" of the things we want and that give us Joy. That is the way that our prayers align us with the world.

3. What does "praying sinfully" do to us and to our Society?

James 4:1&2

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Now about six months *after* I experienced the Miracle of the New Birth (December 13, 1971)- nine- black-robed Justices of the United States Supreme Court (none of which had a single day of medical training) illegally, unconstitutionally, and arbitrarily ruled that an unborn baby was NOT a human being; and therefore, was NOT entitled to "*Due Process*" nor the Constitutional Guarantees of "*Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*". The result of this Decision made "*Abortion on Demand*" the Law of the Land. And subsequently, nearly 63 million human beings have been intentionally and brutally hacked to death (with a "surgical hoe") or burned to death (with saline solution).⁷ Now, interestingly, this Decision (Roe v. Wade) was almost identical, in its logic, to the "*Dred Scott Decision*" (March 6, 1857) that ruled that black people were NOT humans and therefore had no legal or Constitutional Protections.

Abortion is a holocaust of unimaginable proportions. Abortion makes the mass murders of Hitler and Stalin and Mao and Pol Pot look like nothing by

⁷ Lifenews.com

comparison. And no Society, that lays claim to be “advanced” or “civilized” can excuse or defend it. And I have been faithful to teach and preach against this great Evil for most of my Christian Walk. I have many Sermons and other Teachings- including radio broadcasts that go into this in great detail.⁸

But what I want to say about this- in light of what James teaches- is that “*Abortion is primarily about God*”. Abortion is about God, the Creator of the Universe; the Giver and Sustainer of all Life; the Judge of both the living and the dead; the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ; and the Redeemer and Forgiver of all who trust Him. Abortion is primarily about God.

To leave God out of the picture of Abortion is to trivialize it. Because *everything* is trivial without God. God is the ultimate Reality over the Universe. All other Reality is derivative and dependent and has no ultimate meaning (or importance) at all- without reference to God- Who is the ultimate Reality. **The Acts 17:28b** says:

... in Him we live and move and exist ...

... so, if we leave God out- we know nothing of any lasting significance about ourselves or the world. Therefore, Abortion is primarily about God. And therefore, it is not trivial. And that means that Motherhood is also about God, therefore (and only therefore) it is also not trivial. And Fatherhood is about God, and therefore it is not trivial. And Marriage is about God- and therefore, it is not trivial. And sexual Relations are about God, and therefore they are not trivial. And Children- inside the womb and outside the womb- are about God, and therefore they are not trivial.

So, the most important thing we can say about Abortion is NOT something political; or legislative; or judicial- which usually *dominates* our discussion. No, the most important things to say about Abortion is how it relates to God; and how God relates to it. So, let me mention a few ways that Abortion is about God. And the first three- I’m going to deal with very briefly- not because they are less important- but because they tend to be more commonly dealt with. But the fourth one is straight from what James says and will receive most of my attention.

1. **Abortion is about God because the child in the womb is created by God in the Image of God.**
2. **Abortion is about God because only God can forgive the Sin of killing unborn children.**

⁸ See, “*The Rise of Molech and the Conscience of a Nation*” Sermon series.

3. The political and cultural events that will make Abortion unthinkable and illegal are in the Hands of God.

... but here is what I want to discuss for a moment:

Abortion is about God because the root Cause of Abortion is a failure to be satisfied in God as our supreme Love.

Let's see where this comes from in the Bible. If you start reading in **James 4** and stop after verse 2a, what you would have is a simple, psychological and trivial analysis of where child-killing comes from. An analysis without God. Let's read this analysis:

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel...

Now the issue of Murder in this text is rooted in unsatisfied Desires (Lusts).

You lust and do not have; so you commit murder.

Now, we could spend a long time here examining all the Desires and Longings and Lusts that an unplanned pregnancy threatens: like a pleased boyfriend or husband; education; financial solvency; career; freedom from morning sickness and diapers and runny noses and the terrible twos and sleepless nights and homework help and sports and band and drama and transportation and teenage moodiness and college expenses. You desire all these things. You lust for all this Freedom, but along comes a baby, and suddenly, all your desires and lusts are threatened- and you are tempted to get rid of the “troublemaker”- the baby. That's where Abortion comes from.

Now I said this would be a *trivial* analysis. Because God is left out. But in **James 4** God is not left out. In fact, He is brought in with a shocking image. Because behind verses 2b&3 James sees a transaction between people and God.

... You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Here, James pictures people wanting something (or someone) that satisfies. And then he says that people come to God- NOT because they see God as

satisfying them- but only to ask God for the means to get that something else- and then leaving God behind to go get satisfied with that other thing!

And then James names that bluntly in verse 4:

"You adulteresses!" (A good literal translation.)

... so, where did that come from? It came from the situation he just described. We are the Bride of a great and loving Husband, God. But we are in love with another "man"; or another thing- because we do NOT find God to be satisfying. But we can't afford this other "Lover". So, (believe it or not) we go to our Husband- we go to God- in Prayer - and we ask God to get us or give us this other Lover- so we can be satisfied! That's why James shouts, "**Adulteresses!**" to both women and men.

And this gives the sense of the next words in verse 4:

do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

If you don't find God and His Ways and Promises satisfying, and you turn to the world as your real Love, then you put that other thing- that true love of yours- between you and God. And what is the result? You bring down the Wrath of God on your head. Why? Well, it should be obvious, but James goes on to tell us in verse 5:

Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

I think this means: God is jealous for your Affection and Admiration. He has created you so that He might be your supreme Love and Satisfaction. But when someone else or something else fills that place in your life- God is insulted and offended- because He alone truly is the supreme Treasure of the Universe. So, your lust has driven you away from what is most satisfying- God- to another Lover- who is doomed to fail.

So, when James says that Murder comes from unsatisfied desires (lusts), he is not giving a trivial psychological analysis of the Problem. He means: Murder comes from rejecting God as our highest Treasure and our ultimate Satisfaction and our supreme Love.

If we found in God what God really is, if we were not *willfully* blind and rebellious against Him as our all-supplying Portion in this Life and the next, we would not abort our children. Because the *root* Cause of Abortion is the failure to

be satisfied in God as our *supreme* Love. And, for all the great legal and legislative and judicial Work that needs to be done to protect Human Life- the *greatest* Work that needs to be done is to spread an all-consuming Satisfaction - for the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things. And that is what God has called the Church to do!

4. How may we overcome the urge to pray- *sinfully*?

Sinful, wicked, evil, fallen Pride is the Cause of all of our ungodly Desires and Lusts. Every sinful impulse is directly associated with Pride. And that is why the Bible warns us so often about Human Pride and what our Arrogance and Self-righteousness does to us; and to God; and to our Society. And that is why James gives us the Remedy and the Cure for the “sickness” of our Pride in verse 6-10:

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Now James begins this part with very comforting words as we wrestle with our own Pride:

But He [God] gives a greater grace.

Now James begins this way because Humility is NOT something we can simply “do”. Humility- godly Humility (because there is an *ungodly* humility- that is sinful) is a Gift of God’s Grace. So, as we learn, by the Grace of God, to “submit to God” in ALL things- this godly Humility is the by- product or the result or the fruit.

But so what if I’m not humble? So, what? Maybe I’m just not ever going to be Humble. What am I losing? Everything! Because the Owner and Creator of the Universe says,

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Now if you're not careful- you will develop a Theology that says, "*I have to be Humble first- and then God responds to my Humility by giving me His Grace.*" And that is *exactly* wrong. It is exactly backwards. We CAN'T become Humble on our own. Pride and Arrogance and Self-righteousness is in our fallen DNA. It is part and parcel to our fallen flesh. And without God's Grace working powerfully in your life- you can no more become Humble than you can save yourself.

Humility- godly Humility- a Humility that trusts in the Promises of God and that submits to God's Commands- is a Gift of God's Grace. So, what the writer meant when he said,

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

... is that this Humility comes from God's Grace- NOT that we strive- in our own Power to become Humble- and then- after we become Humble- God gives us His Grace.

So, James gives us seven "Helps" in our Grace- empowered Struggle to be Humble in a godly way- seven very practical Helps that will *assist* us to fight against our natural inclination to "go our own way" and to yield to God:

1. **Submit therefore to God**
2. **Resist the devil**
3. **Draw near to God**
4. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners**
5. **Purify your hearts, you double-minded.**
6. **Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.**
7. **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord**

... and along with those seven "Helps" James gives us three Promises from God- that CANNOT fail:

1. **The devil will flee from you** (when you resist him)
2. **God will draw near to you** (when you draw near to God)
3. **God will exalt you** (when you humble yourself to Him)

Now keep in mind that the Promises of God are supposed to act as "motivators" to help us struggle to accomplish God's Will. But as you read over this List of "Helps"- I hope you can see the impossibility of it all. Because you can no more

adopt these “Helps” into your Life than you can command your flesh to no longer be prideful. So, even these Helps are a Work of Grace in your Life. “*Okay, Brother Blair, I can’t be Humble in my own strength; and I can’t simply start ‘doing’ these seven Helps either. So, what do I do?*”

You pray. You ask. James said,

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

... but Humility IS the Will of God. Humility IS what God wants for us. And so, asking, praying for Help and Grace to become Humble- is NOT asking with “*wrong Motives*”- it isn’t praying *sinfully*- it is asking with *right Motives*. It is praying in accord with the Will and Spirit of God. And that kind of praying is *guaranteed* to be answered!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.