

Faith's Valor in Spiritual Battle James 4

Introduction

In chapter four, James turns his attention to some specific trials that Christians have to deal with because these trials cannot be avoided: 1) unanswered prayer, 2) the temptations of the world and the flesh, and 3) the devil's **harassment**. Again, James revisits the dangers of the tongue. This time, he cautions against being tempted to speak evil of others or to boast. Knowing what trials you will face as a Christian will help you be prepared. Never mistake trials as a sign of God's lack of concern for you. God cares (Luke 12:24)!

Outline of James 4

- I. Faith Versus Various Trials - James 4:1-10
- II. Two More Areas Needing Protection - James 4:11-17

I. Faith versus Various Trials - James 4:1-10

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that wage war in your members? James says, *wars and fights* (including disagreements, bickering, and arguments) come from inside of us...**INSIDE** of us! Christians are at war with themselves. This is also known as being at war with 'our flesh.' The apostle Paul explains this as if there are two people living inside of us: the old man and the new man (Ephesians 4:24). The old man is who we are at birth. Many people never change. But, Christians become new when God turns their heart toward Him. Suddenly, they have a desire to please God, which they were unable to do before. James reminds Christians that when they fight with each other, they are allowing their 'old man' or 'their flesh' to control them. They are fighting because they want to make themselves happy, not God. We must not fight with each other. Paul practically begs Christians to

(bear) *with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:2b, 3). The apostle Peter says, *And above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins* (1 Peter 4:8). A fellow Christian may wrong you. Your own sibling probably wrongs you daily, and you probably wrong your sibling(s) too. Don't return sin with sin and give in to your flesh. God gave us a perfect example to follow...His Son. Strive for peace, love, and forgiveness. Fight against getting your own way, and know God's way is better...always.

Christians have the powerful tool of prayer to help with their desires. *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss* (4:3). But, if your desire is selfish, you will not get what you want. God is not a genie in a bottle to grant wishes. We cannot hide from God the true purpose of our desires, and that is why many prayers are answered with a "No." We can pray and ask God to fulfill our desires, but we should always ask according to His will which is found in the Scriptures. We must believe that His will and His way are best, even when they are different from our own will.

There is another enemy that tries to strip away our faith. It is called 'the world.' James says Christians cannot be in a relationship with the world and also be in a relationship with God. It is wrong. We live in a world that advertises everyone else's wants and desires. Have you ever wanted to buy an item of clothing because you saw a movie star wearing it? Have you ever begged your parents to buy a newly released video game, even though you have another game that you have not yet beat? You know everyone will be talking about the new video game, and you don't want to be left out. You **NEED** the video game, right? Suddenly, God

is pushed into the background as you race with those who do not have the godly values you know are right. You get what you wanted and find yourself busy flaunting, boasting, and showing off. It is not as though you leave the new game sealed in it's wrapping, hidden in a drawer, is it? The Christian that spends his time trying to please God but chases after worldly desires will study his Bible less, and his prayers will become words without power or meaning, if he remembers to pray at all.

Putting the world's values (what the world believes is important) ahead of God's values (what God says is important) is wrong. Do you wake in the morning with the radio, television, or internet and let the world immediately into your mind? Wouldn't your first waking moments be spent better by meditating on God's word instead? Will you commit to making Bible reading and prayer a normal part of your daily routine, along with breakfast, brushing your hair, and brushing your teeth?

Jesus taught that, *My kingdom is not of this world*. The world rejects Christ. *He was in the world and the world was made through Him and the world did not know him* (John 1:10). The same world which rejected and crucified Christ also rejects followers of Christ. The believer is always at battle with these two enemies: the flesh and the world; one is inside the believer, while the other is outside. How do you win these battles?

Paul speaks of crucifying the flesh and the world (Galatians 2:20, 6:15). How is this possible? It is possible only by faith in Christ's finished work on the cross. Jesus makes it possible for Christians to live in the power of His new nature within us (2 Corinthians 5:17). God doesn't leave us helpless to our flesh and the world. He gives us His word (the Bible) as a weapon. His word is called *the sword of the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:17). The more you read and know your Bible, the sharper your sword will be and the stronger you will be to defend yourself against enemies.

Another enemy of faith, perhaps the most obvious, is the Devil. James gives us wonderful comfort in verse seven. He says, *Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. The devil is real, but his power is limited. **Resisting** this powerful enemy (by submitting to God) guarantees that he will flee. James spends the next several verses describing what **submission** to God is.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (4:8). God invites you to come closer to Him. We approach God with our thoughts, through prayer and meditation on His word. Is anything more comforting than the presence of God? "Under His wings I am safely abiding," says the hymn writer using Psalm 91.

James tells us four things to do to receive God's grace: 1) *Cleanse your hands*. This means confess all your sins. 2) *Purify your hearts*. The heart is used as a symbol for emotions. Pay attention to your heart! Your emotions should not be mixed with selfishness. You do not want to be motivated by pleasing yourself. Be motivated to please God! Third, James says to 3) *Lament and mourn and weep!* When you ask Jesus to forgive your sins, are you just praying words. Do you have true **repentance**? Those sins you are confessing are why He endured the cross. Your sins should make you want to cry and beg Him for forgiveness. Prayer is not a quick little 'sorry' so that you can get on to the part where you ask God for something. Lastly, James says, 4) *Humble yourselves*. When your sins make you want to cry, you are approaching humility. We must never take lightly who God is and who we are. God is **sovereign**. We are poor and needy. He can do everything. Apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5).

II. Valid Faith Works in Two Vulnerable Areas - 4:11-17

Use your faith to guard against 1) speaking evil of others, and 2) boasting about your plans. These are both sins. Speaking evil of another person is slander and breaks God's law. When you judge another (by speaking evil of him),

you put yourself in a higher position. Think of a judge in a courtroom. His position is so high that everyone in the courtroom stands up as he walks in to show respect. How can you set yourself up as a judge and speak evil of another person? As you do so, you break the command within the law to *love one another* (John 15:12). What makes you think it is OK for you to be above the law and have permission to break it?

Like slander, boasting is also rebuked by James. *Come now, he writes, you who say today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.* All plans need to be checked out by God first (Proverbs 16:3). *For our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways not His ways. His thoughts and plans are higher* (Isaiah 55:8). Have you ever known someone who died suddenly? We expect people to die after they've lived a long life. We can even prepare ourselves to lose someone who has a deadly illness. But, when someone dies unexpectedly in a car accident, terrorist attack, or from an undiagnosed illness, we are shocked. This is because we have plans. However, only God knows what will happen tomorrow. That is why James warns Christians to not boast about their plans. Plans can change.

Does that mean it is wrong for you to make plans for a sleep over this weekend? Of course not! Just know that the sleepover will only happen if God wills it to happen. You may think it sounds silly to say, "If the Lord wills, I will spend the night at your house this weekend." Actually, it shows wisdom. You know that you are 100% dependent on God to make it to the next weekend, to the next day, and to your next breath. When others hear you express your complete dependence on God, they may pause and think about their own life and coming death.

James says, *Therefore, to him who knows to do good And does not do it, to him it is sin.* When this writer was a little girl and

heard her mother call for her, sometimes she pretended not to hear the call in order to play with her toys longer. She may have fooled her mother, but God is never tricked. It is sin to pretend that you don't know right from wrong. James has spent a great deal of time giving instruction. How sad it would be if you read James' words and pretended not to know what he had said. James says three simple words about pretending not to know good from bad... *It is sin.* God has a purpose for each life. To fulfill that purpose, He brings knowledge to each person at the perfect time. Do not fool yourself into thinking that God does not know what you have learned in Scripture. If a baby empties the water from the dog dish onto the kitchen floor, he will be reprimanded and taught that it is wrong. If a 10 year old boy does the same thing, he will be disciplined. You are responsible for the knowledge God has given you. Be mindful to live according to His will. †

Prayer

Thank you, Father, for paying the price for my sin on the cross. Please help me to put You first and to want Your will above my own.

Memory Verse

James 4:17 *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

Vocabulary

harassment - aggressive and unwelcome pressure or intimidation

resisting - refusing to give in to something

submission - bending to the authority or control of another

repentance - turning away from sin and turning toward God

sovereign - supreme in power

QUESTIONS FOR JAMES LESSON 5

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. ♥ (Heart Question) Are you a “friend of the world” or a friend of God? How does this show in your life?

2. How can you “resist the devil”?

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3. a. What did you learn about judging others?

b. What did you learn about boasting?

DAY TWO: Read James 5:1-6.

4. a. What group of people does James address in verse 1?

b. ★ (Memory Question) Where did James address these people earlier in this letter?
What did he say about them in that verse?

5. List as many reasons as you can that James says the rich should “weep and howl.”
Give verse for each reason.

6. What do you learn from the following verses about a right attitude toward wealth and the use of money?

Leviticus 19:13

Psalms 62:10

Proverbs 11:24

1 Timothy 6:6-10 and 17

DAY THREE: Read James 5:7-11.

7. Circle T (true) or F (false) next to each of the following statements. If you mark the statement false, correct it according to the Scripture.

a. T or F James calls Christians to be patient until the rain comes.

b. T or F James says to be patient like the farmer.

c. T or F James says the Lord is coming the day after tomorrow.

8. a. Fill in the blanks. "Do not _____
one another, brethren, lest you be _____."
- b. Why does James say Christians should not grumble against one another?
- _____
9. a. What two examples does James give of people who were patient? What does he say about each one?
- _____
- _____
- b. What do people learn about the Lord when they are patient and endure? Give verse.
- vs. _____

DAY FOUR: Read James 5:12-15.

10. a. What reason does James give for not swearing by heaven or by earth?
- _____
- b. Who said this before in Matthew 5:33-37?
- _____
- c. How could you apply this to your life?
- _____
11. a. What does James say you are to do when you are:
- "suffering?" _____
- "cheerful?" _____
- "sick?" _____
- b. ♥ (Heart Question) If you have ever done one of these things, will you share it with your group and tell what happened as a result?
- _____
- _____
12. What is the result of the "prayer of faith"?
- _____

DAY FIVE: Read James 5:16-20.

13. a. In verses 13-18, list the number of times you find the words: pray, prayer, and prayed:
- pray: _____ prayer: _____ prayed: _____
- b. From your answer above, what would you say is the subject of this passage?
- _____

14. a. What results did Elijah have when he prayed?

b. From verses 16 and 17, why did Elijah's prayer accomplish much? Underline your choices below and give verse for correct answers.

His prayers were fervent.

His prayers were very long.

He was a righteous man.

He prayed earnestly.

He used all the right words.

15. From verses 19-20, why might you want to help another who has wandered from the truth?

VOCABULARY FOR JAMES LESSON 5

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

1. . **harassment** annoyance friendliness courage

2. . **resisting** accept fight oppose

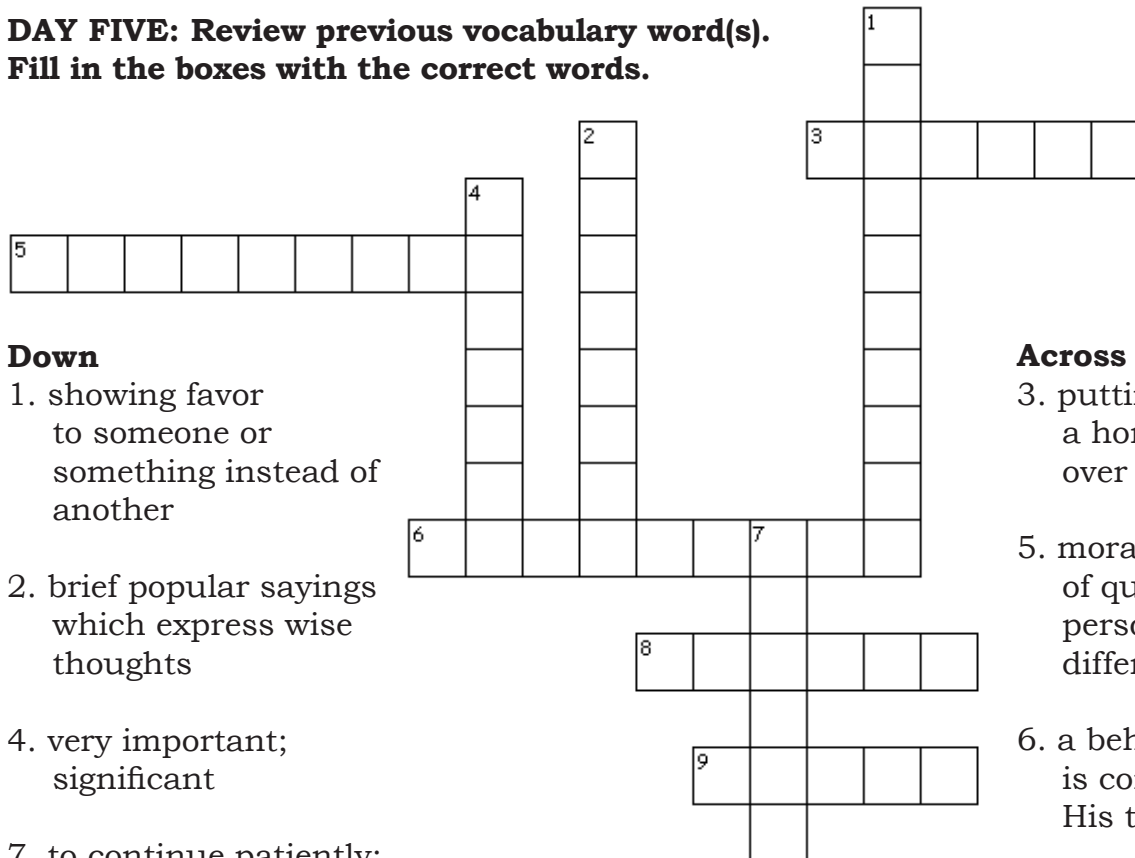
3. . **submission** obedience command assignment

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
harrasment	bending to the authority or control of another
resisting	aggressive and unwelcome pressure or intimidation
sovereign	turning away from sin and turning toward God
repentance	refusing to give in to something
submission	supreme in power

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary word(s).

Fill in the boxes with the correct words.

**Down**

- showing favor to someone or something instead of another
- brief popular sayings which express wise thoughts
- very important; significant
- to continue patiently; tolerate; suffer

Across

- putting a head piece on a horse to gain control over its movements
- moral excellence; group of qualities that make a person, group, or thing different from others
- a behavior or action that is contrary to God and His truth
- decree, destine; God's predetermined, unalterable ways
- violent anger; punishment for sin or a crime

VOCABULARY WORDS TO CHOOSE FROM...

bridle
character
partiality

blasphemy
proverbs
endure

ordain
crucial
wrath