

JAMES

Chapter 4

Submit Yourselves to God

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. ¹¹ Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

4:1 WHAT CAUSES FIGHTS - polemos – To cause battles, unrest or war.

AND QUARRELS - makhay – To cause controversy or strife.

Struggles with others. James shows the sinful source. (TLSB)

desires. The Greek for this term is the source of our word "hedonism." (CSB)

Desires, such as jealousy and ambition (3:14), that give sinful pleasure. (TLSB)

It appears that this community of believers was still under the influence of the world in which it lived. If so, then they were like believers of all generations, including the present. This chapter continues to call the reader to turn away from friendship with the world and to repent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

at war. This sinful nature fights against the new person in Christ. (TLSB)

Military imagery is used. A literal translation could be, “Why are there wars and battles among you? Isn’t it because your hedonistic desires are soldiering in your members?” The desires, lusts, and cravings that were the culprits can choke out faith, as Jesus pointed out: “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature” (Luke 8:14). Peter also urges, “abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (1 Pet 2:11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

When someone has an out-of-control mouth, you can trace the problem back to a heart that has no peace or contentment and to a mind full of bitterness and selfishness. It is the same with people who fight and quarrel and apparently James had been hearing that such things were going on in some of the congregations of the scattered brothers and sisters. (PBC)

4:2-3 Desires are not satisfied; wants are not met. So what do you do? You kill (cf. Matt 5:21–22), covet, quarrel, and fight. What you really need you don’t pray for, and what you pray for you desire for the wrong reason. In 1:5, James encouraged his readers to ask God for wisdom, which God gives generously. James’ readers had instead asked for other things, and only in order to spend or squander, as did the prodigal son (Luke 15:14) on their pleasures—the same word translated in v 1 as “desires.” Christians too often think that a person’s life consists in the abundance of goods and pleasures. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

4:2 *kill.* Figurative (hyperbole) for “hate.” (CSB)

Desires lead to sinful attitudes that Scripture equates with murder (1Jn 3:15); they can also lead to spiritual death (Jas 1:14–15). Murder may not have literally taken place in Christian congregations, but the sin of envy, left unchecked, could lead to such abominable behavior. Jealousy led to violence in Gn 4:1–16; 37; Mk 15:10; Ac 5:17–18. 1 Clement of Rome (1st Epistle): “Envy and jealousy led to the murder of a brother [Abel]” (ANF 1:6). (TLSB)

you do not ask. Asking for the things that God has promised to give is key, as in Jas 1:5–8, where asking God for wisdom is encouraged (cf v 3). (TLSB)

4:3 *you ask wrongly.* Not that the wrong words are used but that the motive is selfish, seeking only worldly treasures. Instead of selfish prayer, intercessory prayer for others is encouraged (5:14–15). James is not developing a complete theology of prayer but demonstrating that people without wisdom from God cannot pray properly. (TLSB)

They pray asking for their own selfish, evil desires. Notice earlier in 4:2 – the people are too busy fighting even to pray. They are like the double-minded person praying in 1:6-8. They trust their own actions and the world rather than God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

WITH WRONG MOTIVES – kakoce – To be diseased, evil or sick.

THAT YOU MAY SPEND WHAT YOU GET ON YOUR PLEASURES – dapanaho – To expend or even waste.

4:4 *adulterous people*. Those who are spiritually unfaithful, who love the world rather than God. For spiritual adultery see, e.g., Jer 31:32. (CSB)

Echoes Yahweh's condemnation of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness (see notes, Is 57:3; Hos 3:1). God made us His Bride through faith in Christ; rejecting Him for the world's ways is adultery. (TLSB)

The adultery of this verse may be literal, or it may refer to the worship of the pleasures of the world, often compared in the Bible to a wife's infidelity (Ezek 16:15ff., 23:45ff., etc.). Friendship with the world makes one an enemy of God. James seems to be recalling Jesus' teaching that his disciples have been called out of the world; consequently the world hates and persecutes them, just as it did him. If they belonged to the world, it would love them as its own (John 15:18ff.). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

moykhalis – To be unfaithful. The Scriptures use this terminology when describing how Israel was unfaithful to God.

The term is a figure of speech particularly in the OT to indicate unfaithfulness to God (Israel as God's unfaithful wife) and the practices of idolatry, here the false god being "world." Only readers who were familiar with the OT would understand what James was saying. Also compare the picture of the "Bride of Christ" in 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-24; Rev 21:9. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

James' readers were probably no longer tempted by Baal worship, but Satan arranged that there would be plenty of new idols to take Baal's place. Martin Luther once said that the human heart is an idol factory. (PBC)

world. See note on 1:27. (CSB)

CHOOSES TO BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD – Boulatha – The word has the connotation of preference or choosing one thing before another. The

apostate has no middle ground; he is either God's friend or his enemy (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). You cannot serve both God and money" (Mt. 6:24). The attempt to cultivate the world is disaster. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Not mere acquaintance but a sharing in all things. A life devoted to wealth and selfish ambition has no room for God. (TLSB)

4:5 *Scripture*.† The passage James had in mind is not definitely known. (CSB)

May be translated "Do you suppose that the Scripture speaks uselessly? Does the spirit that He causes to dwell in us crave jealously?" (TLSB)

The word *graphē*, "Scripture," is singular, commonly used for a New Testament reference to a particular Old Testament passage. The exact wording James cites is nowhere to be found in either testament, but the thought is similar to descriptions of God's jealousy as in Deut 20:5. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The verse itself is variously translated. The point made, however, is this: God has made the Holy Spirit dwell within us. The Spirit gives us zeal for God and for doing good. But the Spirit is also jealous, striving to keep us faithful to God and undefiled by the idolatry of worshiping false "gods," including our "desires." Paul says something similar when he writes about the Spirit interceding for us with groans that words cannot express (Rom 8:26–27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

WITHOUT REASON - kenoce – Without purpose or in vain.

the spirit ... envies intensely. The words "the spirit he caused to live in us" refer to God's creation of man (Ge 2:7). Because of the fall, man's spirit "envies intensely," but God's grace (v. 6) is able to overcome man's envy. Regarding the two alternative translations (see NIV text note), the meaning of the first is that God jealously longs for our faithfulness and our love (see 4:4). In this case the Scripture referred to may be Ex 20:5. The second capitalizes "Spirit" and makes him the subject. It is the Holy Spirit who longs jealously for our full devotion. If this is the correct translation, it is the only clear reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter. (CSB)

Not the Holy Spirit (who is not mentioned in Jas), but the person's spirit that God has enlivened. (TLSB)

God is a jealous Creator. He created man for fellowship with Himself, so when man chooses to be a friend with the world, God has reason to be jealous! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Envy is *phthonos* – To have ill will and spitefulness. Intensely is *epithymos* – To have desire that craves or lusts to do something.

With challenging fervor the apostle asks: Or do you suppose that the Scripture says in vain, Even unto jealous envy that Spirit which He made to dwell in us does yearn (for us)? Such behavior as the apostle has just described is absolutely incompatible with the ideals which the Lord holds out before the Christians in His Word. Cp. Gal. 5, 17. 21; Rom. 8, 6. 8; 1 Cor. 3, 16. These and similar passages, which are found in many parts of Scriptures, indicate definitely that the Lord watches over the behavior of the Christians with jealous envy. The Holy Spirit who has come to dwell in our hearts strives unceasingly to have us acquire the same love for God and His holy will which He bears for us and for our highest development along spiritual lines. Any behavior on our part, therefore, that tends to dislodge the Holy Spirit from our hearts, will retard our spiritual growth. (Kretzmann)

4:6 See 1Pe 5:5, which also quotes Pr 3:34. (CSB)

He gives more grace. Or, “He gives a greater gift,” referring to God as the giver of gifts, specifically wisdom (1:5, 17). Luth: “Those who say: Ah, but I have done as much as I possibly can; I have done enough, and I hope that God will give me grace—they set up an iron wall between themselves and the grace of God. But if you feel within yourself the urge to call upon God and pray and plead and knock, then grace is already there; then call upon it and thank God” (AE 51:43). (TLSB)

James quotes Prov 3:34—God gives grace to the humble, but opposes the proud. Peter quotes the same passage as he calls for his readers to clothe themselves with humility toward one another in order that God might lift them up (1 Pet 5:5–6). This is the theme of the great reversal, a frequent Gospel theme in the Old Testament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

OPPOSES THE PROUD – Opposes is *antitassomahee* and means to set oneself against another and resist him. Proud is *hoopotithaymee* and means to have the attitude that places others below oneself.

GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE - *tapinos* – To be cast down, depressed or of low degree.

James quotes Prov 3:34 – God gives grace to the humble, but opposes the proud. Peter quotes the same passage as he calls for his readers to clothe themselves with humility toward one another in order that God might lift them up (1 Peter 5:5-6). This is the theme of the great reversal, a frequent Gospel theme in the OT. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

All sins may be said to have their root and origin in the pride of the human heart, which refuses to bow to the will of the Lord. Christians, therefore, will deny themselves and depend upon the help promised from above: But He gives greater grace; wherefore He says: God sets Himself against the proud; to the humble, however, He gives grace. If the Spirit, who has made His abode with us, can but perform His work unhindered by willful transgressions and outbursts of evil lust, then the Lord, through His work in our hearts, will give us grace for a life of proper sanctification. For this truth we have the authority of the Word, in which the Holy Spirit Himself gives us the assurance that, while God always resists the proud, it is His good pleasure to give grace to the humble. Cf. Prov. 3: 34; 1 Pet. 5:5. A Christian's constant effort, then, will be to conquer and vanquish the natural pride of his heart, through the power of the Spirit that lives in him, and always to offer to the Lord a heart that is willing to hear and to keep His will. Note that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is plainly taught in this passage. (Kretzmann)

4:7–10 These verses contain ten commands, each of which is so stated in Greek that it calls for immediate action in rooting out the sinful attitude of pride. (CSB)

4:7 SUBMIT YOURSELVES, THEN TO GOD – hpotagate means to align oneself under the authority of another. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

To place oneself under God's authority, which is shown most powerfully when He forgives. Parallels "Humble yourselves" in v 10. How submission and humbling takes place is described in vv 7–10. The language of these verses strongly echoes OT calls to repentance. Cf Is 57:14–16. (TLSB)

Since God gives grace to those who humble themselves before him (4:6; Prov 3:34), the believer is encouraged to submit to God. It should be repeated that James is not instructing unbelievers about the way to faith, but exhorting Christians who are remiss in acting on the basis of their faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The double directive of this verse recalls Jesus' response to his temptation (Matt 4:1–11). As Jesus did, so we rebuke Satan by the authority and power of God (cf. the 72 who were sent out, Luke 10:1–17). By Jesus' power, Satan is defeated—he falls "like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). With Jesus we may say, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matt 4:10). Take your stand for the Lord and Satan must flee. He has no other choice (cf. also 1 Peter 5:6ff.). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

In verses 8–10 James lays out what is involved in submitting to God. His description is similar to the Beatitudes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

When people are living in defiance of the First Commandment, when they do not fear, love and trust in God above all things, their obedience to all the rest of the commandments will unravel. To submit to God means to believe His claim that you are accountable to Him, to acknowledge Him as first in your life, to subordinate your will to His, to open your ears and heart to His Word, to let Him steer your choices and decisions, to let Him set your limits of right and wrong. This is not slavery but the perfect law that gives sweet freedom. Rather, it is obsession with self that is slavery. (PBC)

The need of this attitude is spoken of by the apostle: Submit yourselves, then, to God; but set yourselves against the devil, and he will flee from you. That is the characteristic of the believers of all times, that they overcome the haughtiness and pride of their evil nature more and more, and place themselves, with all their gifts and abilities, in the hands of God, whether for good days or for bad, Ps. 37, 5. As the Lord teaches them in His Word, so do they unhesitatingly follow, even though it means entire denial of self. (Kretzmann)

Resist the devil. See Eph 6:11–18; 1Pe 5:8–9. (CSB)

Parallels “Draw near to God” in v 8 and refers back to the evil wisdom of 3:15. Resisting the devil is, therefore, the same as turning to God in repentant prayer (cf 1Pt 5:8–9). (TLSB)

Antistate is an aorist imp. Which calls for urgent action. Remember Jesus’ example of resisting the devil in Mt. 1:11 by using the Word of God and that after his temptations were resisted, the devil left. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Every military strategist knows that warfare is waged not only with weapons but also with psychology. Breaking the enemy’s confidence and will to resist can be just as effective in defeating him as a frontal assault. Satan knows this. He floods us with propaganda that his evil ways are inevitable, good, harmless, irresistible, and fulfilling. Resist him! Fight! Armed with God’s Word, you are stronger than he, and he will flee from you! (PBC)

And in performing this part of their Christian calling, they will set themselves against, they will resist with all the power at their command, the wiles and temptations of the devil. It is a matter of ceaseless vigilance, of tireless battling; but there is only one outcome possible, namely, the flight of the devil. With God and the Word on our side, the victory is bound to be ours. (Kretzmann)

4:8 COME NEAR TO GOD ... – “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” This reflects God’s promise in Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7. When Moses was on Sinai, God warned him that the people were not permitted to approach the mountain (Exod 19:20–24). Only Moses and Aaron were to go up. But we who have a high priest in Christ (Heb 10:22) may “draw near to God with a sincere

heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Through the blood of Jesus, it is never too late. Through the miracle of God’s grace, a repentant sinner is never turned away. And when God draws near to you, good things happen, and your life gets better in every way. (PBC)

In a prayer of repentance (cf Ps 119:169–70; Hos 12:6) (TLSB)

Wash your hands. Before the OT priests approached God at the tabernacle, they had to wash their hands and feet at the bronze basin as a symbol of spiritual cleansing (Ex 30:17–21). See Ps 24:4 for the imagery of “clean hands and a pure heart.” (CSB)

“Wash your hands . . . purify your hearts.” As a Jewish Christian, James uses the well-known phraseology of Ps 24:4, the extension of Ex 30:17–21. Priests were required to wash their hands and feet before approaching God. James does not address ritualistic hypocrisy as did Jesus (Mark 7:1–23), but makes the same point in the verse’s closing injunction: “purify your hearts, you double-minded.” What is important is not ritual or ceremonial purity, but hearts purified by faith in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

James isn’t really interested in a physical washing but rather the repentance of double-minded sinners. The Christian is constantly torn between two lovers, God and Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

This is picture language for repenting for all the evil things your hands have done. Soap and water cannot do what God demands, but faith in Christ gives Christians clean hands. (PBC)

PURIFY YOUR HEARTS – James refers to his listeners as “double-minded.” A great trick of Satan’s is to persuade people to keep their religious beliefs compartmentalized, “Sundayized,” cut off from influencing their day-to-day words and actions in the real world. James urges us to break down the walls that keep our scriptural faith isolated and to be single-mindedly devoted to God. (PBC)

Based on Ps 24:3–4. “Heart” refers to intention; “hands” refers to action. Both attitudes and actions are purified by repentance and forgiveness. (TLSB)

9:9-10 “Grieve, mourn, wail . . . humble yourself.” The second of Jesus’ beatitudes is reflected here: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt 5:4). Mourning and grieving occur in the presence of death, a process that occurs daily in the believer’s life, as Luther’s Small Catechism reminds us concerning Baptism (see especially Rom 6:1–14). As recovering drug or alcohol addicts know, to give up the way of sin is painful and brings anger,

guilt, depression, and fear. The old ways do not die easily. This is why, as James teaches later, we are to confess our sins “to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (5:16). The Lord, in turn, promises to be in the midst of his people to lift them up. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

4:9 *Grieve, mourn and wail.* Repent. (CSB)

Actions described by the prophets as signifying or calling for repentance (cf Mi 2:4; Jl 1:5). (TLSB)

Talaipoasate (grieve) means to feel miserable and undergo hardship, referring to the inner attitude of repentance. It is necessary to mourn and wail now so that when the judgment comes you will not have to mourn and wail then. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Penthasate (mourn) is often connected with the term weep describing grief that brings tears to the eyes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

This may seem peculiar coming from a man whose letter began with a “Rejoice!” greeting. James is not saying that a Christian’s life must be characterized by constant grief. He is saying what his brother Jesus said in Luke 6:21: “Blessed are you who weep now.” Grieving, mourning, and wailing are appropriate and necessary for people who have been finding joy in sinning. James’ point is this: real repentance is not only theoretical but emotional too, affecting the whole person (see Psalm 32 and 38). (PBC)

LAUGHTER – gelos indicates the leisurely laughter of gods and men in their pleasures. It is the laughter of a fool who rejects God as the One who determines reality and believes man to be an autonomous being. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Here James’ call to repentance is like that found in Luke 6:25: “Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.” Often people laugh when nervous, especially when one does not want to face the serious facts of life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

More signs of repentance (cf Mi 1:8–9; Jl 1:12). (TLSB)

GLOOM – katapheia is the downcast gloom of the publican in Luke 18:13. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

4:10 See Mt 23:12. (CSB)

HUMBLE – tapeinothate like in Matthew 20:26 and 23:11-12. Jesus is referring to Himself as He humbled Himself in His suffering and death on the cross, and His being raised from death by His Father. Humility is of value onl

when the believer shares in that of Christ Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Result of being laid low before God because of sin (cf v 7; Ps 51:17). Cf Jas 1:9. (TLSB)

exalt you. After repentance comes God’s forgiveness, new life, and ultimately the crown of life (1:12). Jesus teaches that those who humble themselves before God will be exalted (Lk 18:14). (TLSB)

4:11-12 James now returns to the quarrels he denounced earlier (4:1). Arguments about how to live according to the law were common among the Jews. Keep in mind that the law—the Torah—meant the full complement of God’s self-revelation, both Law and Gospel, with the emphasis on the Gospel. The debate was especially critical for Jewish Christians, since they needed to know whether following the civil and ceremonial laws was a necessary expression of faith in Christ. James implies that these laws are not binding on Christians because he refuses to side with those who required them, and instead stresses fulfilling the *spirit* of the law (as in the end of v 8 above), not the letter. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

James denounces the practice of judging others because those who condemn others for not following the traditions added to Scripture are, in fact, condemning the Torah itself (as in Mark 7:9). Such critics are making themselves experts above God’s Word rather than students subject to it (cf 1:5, 19). James’ teaching about judging others is identical to that of Jesus (Matt 7:1–5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

There is only one Law-giver (*nomothetēs*). The noun is used only here, although the verb refers to passing laws or legislation and is used in Hebrews 7 and 8. The royal law—the Gospel of Christ’s love—was discussed earlier (2:8–13). He who fails to keep this law by not loving his neighbor must answer to the Lawgiver and Judge. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

4:11 *speaks against his brother ... speaks against the law.* See note on 2:8; see also Ex 20:16; Ps 15:3; 50:19–20; Pr 6:16, 19. To speak against a brother is to scorn the law of love. (CSB)

Slander. *against the law.* The Law forbids slander (Lv 19:16; cf Ps 50:19–20; 101:5). A slanderer rejects the “royal law” (Jas 2:8) and tries to judge God’s Law. *if you judge the law.* All of God’s laws are to be obeyed. The person who rejects them judges the Law and God Himself. *doer of the law.* Cf 2:14–26. (TLSB)

4:12 *judge your neighbor?* Not simply deciding something, but condemning unjustly (cf v 11). Also does not refer to the need to restore the sinning brother, as described in 5:19–20; Gal 6:1–2. (TLSB)

4:1–12 Using the language of the Prophets, James teaches that rejecting God’s ways is spiritual adultery. It is seeking something other than the faithful God who loves us. God’s people of every generation have been unfaithful to Him. James does not call us to turn to ourselves and do more works to be forgiven but instead calls us to return to the Lord in repentance. Even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. He has already purchased us by the blood of Christ. His love does not depend on our faithfulness or works but on His faithfulness and His work in Christ. • “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit” (Ps 51:10–12). Amen. (TLSB)

Boasting About Tomorrow

13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” **16** As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. **17** Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

4:13-17 This section, together with the next one in chapter 5, seems disconnected with the preceding, except that it again emphasizes the fact that all will be judged, regardless of social or financial position. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The rich appear to be oblivious to the transitory nature of life and their riches. They assume that the future is theirs to manipulate, and that they can bend it to their will. In view of the fleeting nature of life we ought rather be saying, “If it is the Lord’s will,” as also Paul taught (1 Cor 4:19). Life and business all depend upon God’s will. Failure to recognize this leads to boasting and bragging. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Anyone, who has been instructed about these matters and doesn’t do what he knows is good thereby sins. Sins of omission are equal to willful sins. Jesus denounced the teachers of the law for just such sins when they emphasized tithing in the minutest detail, but neglected the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt 23:23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

4:13 James addresses those who think their lives are in their own hands, to be used as they desire. They think they know all about their future, such as when (“today or tomorrow”) where (“such and such a town”), how long (“a year”), and what will happen (“make a profit”). Planning is not being condemned, but rather the assumption that we are completely in control. Condemnation for making money for its own—or our own—sake is made more explicit in 5:1–6. (TLSB)

trade and make a profit. Addresses merchants. Cf 5:4. (TLSB)

4:14 We do not control time or history; God does. We should not act as if our lives are most important. (TLSB)

4:15 *If the Lord wills.* Not a formula but an attitude of humility that recognizes God gives us time and resources to use for His purposes (cf Mt 6:10). Expressed in the Christian notation “DV” (*Deo volente*, “by the will of God”). (TLSB)

4:16 *you boast in your arrogance.* As if they were God. (TLSB)

evil. Because such boasting is not from God (cf 3:14). (TLSB)

4:17 *knows the right thing to do.* Refers to submitting to God’s will (v 15). To not do this (sin of omission) makes one guilty of breaking all the Law (2:10). (TLSB)

4:13–17 Like James’s first readers, we strive to be self-sufficient and to develop detailed plans for our lives. Planning can be good stewardship, but not if our plans crowd out the things God would have us do. James reminds us to seek what “the Lord wills.” This simple statement is a confession of faith and shows confidence in the Lord’s care for us. Time and again, He has shown His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy toward us. He has given us life by His Son, Jesus Christ. Now, freed from seeking our own needs, we serve others. • Thank You, Lord, for the gift of each day. Help me to see each one as guided by Your care and lived for Your glory. Through me, bless my family, my co-workers and neighbors, and all the world. Amen. (TLSB)