

fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (Ex 20:5)

for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Ex 34:14)

Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.' (Zech 8:2)

The application of this biblical concept, of God's jealousy for His own, is clear: the love of God for all those who are His, a love which is eternal and infinite, is expressed in our text as a divine longing for the faithfulness, fidelity, and expressed love for those He has redeemed. Knowing this truth should cause each of us to become more and more aligned with that which pleases Him and to put away from our lives anything that we know displeases Him. As His redeemed people, we must constantly commit ourselves to "walk by the Spirit" so that "we will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Gal 5:16)

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

Having understood the previous verse as teaching us that the Spirit of God Who indwells every believer is jealous for each of His own, we now see that it is the work of Spirit in the life of the believer to enable them to turn from selfish ambitions and the draw of the world and to humbly submit to the leading of the Ruach, by which they are more and more conformed to the very image of the One Who redeemed them.

Here, then, we see James giving us the positive perspective and necessary steps the child of God must take in order to overcome those things by which James characterizes a wayward believer in verses 1–5 of our chapter. In the previous context (vs. 1–5), he has emphasized:

- "quarrels and conflicts" which divide the believing community
- such quarrels and conflicts proceed from "pleasures that wage war in your members."
- "lust," i.e., the desire to have something others have, such as position, authority, applause, status, etc.
- *lashon hara*, gossip, slander, failing to believe and live with the truth that all good things come from God ("you do not ask")
- when you do ask God, you ask with wrong motives, i.e., to "spend it on yourself," i.e., to build yourself up in the eyes of others
- friendship with the world, i.e., seeking to be accepted by the worldly society

But He gives a greater grace. – The antidote to such carnal passions is the power that God gives as the gift of His grace. Those who are truly God’s children through His sovereign work of redemption are likewise those who become more and more sanctified or set apart unto Him as the fruit of His grace. As Paul teaches:

The Torah came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Yeshua Messiah our Lord. (Rom 5:20–21)

It is by the righteous standard of the Torah that sin is identified, for sin is that which is contrary to God’s own righteousness. Thus John writes:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (1Jn 3:4)¹

Thus, the Lord gives “greater grace” to those who are His, so that by His grace the believer is encouraged and strengthened to overcome the flesh and to grow in a life given over to God’s righteous ways. Thus, the phrase “greater grace” should be understood to mean “He continues to give even more grace” (μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάρις), for all those He has brought to Himself are guarded and maintained for eternity, for none of those for whom Yeshua died will ever be lost. For Yeshua stated:

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (Jn 6:37–39)

Surely there may be times when a person who has professed Yeshua as their Savior may stumble, as James has taught us previously:

For we all stumble in many ways... (Jms 3:2)

1 “lawlessness” translates ἀνομία (*anomia*) which is simply the alpha-privative (like our English prefix “un-”) attached to νόμος (*nomos*), the Greek word regularly used to translate תּוֹרָה (*torah*).

And such “stumbling” may even include deep descent into worldliness. But God remains ever faithful to His word, for He cannot deny Himself (2Tim 2:13), and He therefore maintains His loving disposition toward all who are His, for they have been bought with the price of Yeshua’s own life.

James now quotes from the Tanach to prove his point:

“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” (Prov 3:34)

ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.
κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν
(Lxx)

James quotes this text verbatim from the Lxx, changing the Lxx’s κύριος (*kurios*), “Lord” to ὁ θεὸς (*ho theos*), “God.” The Lxx, along with James’ quote, interprets the Hebrew לָטֵץ (*lātz*), “scoffer” as “a proud person” and the Hebrew עָנִי (*oni*), “poor, afflicted person” as one who is “humble.” All in all, the Lxx has given the clear sense of the Hebrew, and thus so does the quote by James.

The outcome and meaning of James’ teaching is clear: God, by His sovereign grace, will do all that is necessary to bring His own to a place where they continue to grow in living righteously and shun the ungodly ways of the world. In our immediate context here in James, that which characterizes those who are straying from the truth is their desire to tear others down by gossip and “character-assassination” and in doing so, they cause division and unrest in the body of Messiah.

There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. (Prov 6:16–19)

7–8 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Submit therefore to God – James now gives us the foundational means by which we, as believers in Yeshua, may guard ourselves from being attracted by the ungodly world and to grow in our true desire and ability to please the One Who has redeemed us. When he uses the word

“therefore,” he is teaching us what must characterize our walk with the Lord in order not to be entangled by those things which God hates, as described in the opening verses of chapter five.

And the first requirement is to “submit to God” (ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ). In one sense, “submission” primarily carries the sense of “obey.” For instance, we see Luke using the same Greek word, ὑποτάσσω (*hypotassō*) to describe the twelve-year-old Yeshua Who submitted to Mary and Joseph as seen by His obeying them.

And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. (Lk 2:51)

Submission to God must characterize the overall life of the believer, for submission to God is the opposite of obeying or giving into the sinful flesh. As one commentator puts it:

Submission to God is the beginning, middle, and end of the prodigal’s return from disastrous familiarity with the world to the security of the Father’s home.¹

How true this is, for submission to God is the very opposite of what our remaining sinful nature desires. To have a life that is characterized as submitting to God is to more and more win the battle over sin. And the ultimate model of submission to God is that of Yeshua Himself. For in His prayer before going to the cross, Yeshua, as the incarnate One, expresses the awfulness of death, yet in the face of His impending crucifixion He fully submits to His Father’s will.

And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” (Lk 22:41–42)

How do we submit to God in our lives? We do so first by knowing His will—for He has revealed His will for us in the Scriptures and given us His description of that which is righteous and what is unrighteous. Moreover, when we know His word and hide it in our hearts so that we are able to think His thoughts after Him, then we know what

1 Alfred Plummer, *The General Epistles of St. James and St. Jude* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1891), p. 238.

pleases Him and what is contrary to His very righteousness. Surely the Ruach, the Spirit of God leads us in applying the Scriptures, and grieves when we act contrary to them, but even in this the Scriptures must be known and kept.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.... (Prov 6:23)

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. – The next requirement for the child of God to grow in spiritual strength in order to bless the Lord Who redeemed them is to “resist the devil” (ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ). The Greek word translated here as “resist” is ἀνθίστημι (*anthistēmi*) which incorporates the sense “to take a stand against” someone or something, i.e., to be in opposition to another person’s actions or invitation to join in ungodly behavior. Paul uses the same term when he describes the spiritual armor needed to defeat the enemy.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist (ἀντιστῆναι) in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Eph 6:13)

Likewise, Peter also admonishes us to “resist the devil.”

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1Pet 5:8–9)

In our times, numbers of teachers and ministries have made “spiritual warfare” a major topic of their teachings. Unfortunately, some of the better known ministries have popularized methods of “spiritual warfare” that have very little or no basis in the Scriptures. As a result, there are two responses to such errant teachings, both of which are wrong. One is to accept the methods taught by such ministries even though they give no biblical foundation for their methodologies in

“spiritual warfare” and actually teach things contrary to the Scriptures. A second response, equally egregious, is to downplay the whole idea of “spiritual warfare” altogether, abandoning it to the waste bin of religious nonsense.

But the Scriptures make it clear that we who are born from above, who have been “born again to a living hope” (1Pet 1:3), must enter the battle because we have been given the ability to defeat the enemy. In the text quoted above (1Pet 5:8–9) we see important aspects of how we are to defeat the devil.

First, “be of sober spirit.” The word “sober” (*νήφω*, *nēphō*) is used here in a metaphoric sense, thus the NASB adds the word “spirit” which is surely implied. The word carries the primary sense of to be free from every form of mental and spiritual “drunkenness,” that is, to be “well balanced,” having “self-control.”¹ This means that we must be alert in all aspects of life, both things physical and spiritual, for the two are bound together. Anything that distracts us from spiritual alertness must be avoided if we intend to be “sober in spirit.”

Second, Peter admonishes us to “be on the alert.” This means to be ready and watching at all times. We cannot segregate our lives into that which is “spiritual” and that which is “secular.” As Paul teaches us,

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1Cor 10:31)

This means that all facets of our lives, whether working, relaxing, engaging in hobbies, past-times, entertainment, etc., all must be done in a way that honors God, i.e., by engaging in all aspects of our lives with a desire to honor our Creator and Savior.

Third, Peter teaches us to “resist” the enemy, “firm in your faith.” Even in times of suffering, we must be strong in our faith, knowing that nothing comes into our lives but that God intends it to strengthen us, for He promises to give us strength to persevere as we rely upon and cling to Him and His eternal promises given to us in His word.

Thus James states: “...and he will flee from you.” The enemy has no power against the glory and sovereignty of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua. The devil trembles at His name and has no option but to obey Him when He commands him to flee. Let us remember the power we have in Him as those who are bought with the very price of His blood.

So how are we able to defeat such a formidable foe? By remaining

¹ BDAG, “*νήφω*,” p. 672.

firm, i.e., steadfast in our faith. And to do this we must constantly be utilizing the “means of grace” which God has so graciously given to us. These are the Scriptures, prayer (both private and corporate), and regular fellowship with other believers.

...*he will flee from you*. Our faith is based upon the truth that God has revealed to us in His word. And through Yeshua’s death, resurrection, ascension and intercession we know for certain that there is not need to fear the enemy: the battle has already been won! As we walk in the footsteps of the Messiah, honoring Him for His love, grace, mercy, and the eternal salvation He has purchased for us, we are victorious over the enemy for he cannot remain in the presence of those whose lives honor and glorify the battle’s Victor, Yeshua HaMashiach.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. – Now James exhorts us to be diligent in our walk of faith so that we will be strengthened both to engage the battle and to be victorious in it.

The verb “draw near” (ἐγγιζω, *engizō*) is often used in the Lxx to translate verbs of “approaching” or “coming near” in relationship to the Tabernacle and Temple, and thus seems very often to be used in the context of “worship,” particularly the worship offered at the Tabernacle and Temples.¹

Thus, the phrase used in our text by James means to have a life that is characterized by drawing near to God in worship, in adoration of His greatness, and with thanksgiving for the unspeakable gift of Yeshua and the redemption He procured for all who are His. What is more, to recognize the ever-present Spirit of God (Ruach HaKodesh – Holy Spirit) Who indwells every believer, is to understand that we are enabled to draw near to our Savior at all times.

...*and He will draw near to you*. – Here we see that the admonition to “draw near” also includes coming to Him in repentance, which is itself a gift of God,² for if we have allowed sin into our lives, He draws us back by His Spirit so that we humble ourselves and seek God’s forgiveness. That James states “He will draw near to you” teaches us that God will never reject the repentant sinner, but will gladly receive that one and give them complete assurance that the sin has been forgiven. For He is always faithful to His promises, as we know from John’s inspired words.

1 Cf. Lev. 21:21, 23; Is. 29:13; 58:2; 65:5; Ezek. 40:46. Note the phrase “come near to the Lord” to describe the priestly service in the Lord to minister to Him in Ezek 40:46.

2 Cf. Acts 5:31; 2 Tim. 2:25.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jn 1:9)

Like the father of the prodigal son, God always is ready to welcome back his children who turn from their sinful ways and seek His promised forgiveness.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. – The language used here reminds one of the purity laws of the Torah. To be “ritually” or “ceremonially” clean was a requirement for anyone who would enter the Tabernacle or Temple court to offer a sacrifice. In adding the need to “purify your hearts,” James takes the external washing for ceremonial cleansing and applies it to the very desire a believer has to draw near to God. This reminds us of Ps 24:3–4.

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
 And who may stand in His holy place?
 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
 Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
 And has not sworn deceitfully. (Ps 24:3–4)

Therefore, James is not teaching us here that the believer must first undergo some kind of “self-cleansing” before they can come to God seeking forgiveness and returning to unbroken fellowship. James is writing to a community of believers as he describes them in 1:18.

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. (James 1:18)

The method in which the believer in Yeshua is made clean before the Lord is to be washed clean by Yeshua Himself, through His saving work on the cross, in the resurrection, and in His “ever living to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25).

This truth is taught when Yeshua washed the feet of the disciples, as Richardson notes.

Jesus’ statements upon washing of his disciples’ feet, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (John 13:8) and then later, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (15:3; cf. Isa 1:16), combine the themes of washing

and cleansing by the Word in a similar way.¹

What is meant by “double-minded?” The Greek is διψυχος (*dipsukos*), literally “double-souled,” which portrays an inner conflict in the believer’s life. We who are truly born from above, and are the redeemed people of God through faith in Yeshua, have been given a new life, a life of becoming more and more like Yeshua so that He would be “the first born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Yet though we are “new creatures in Yeshua” (2Cor 5:17), we nonetheless retain the sinful nature (often referred to in the Apostolic Scriptures as “the flesh”) and there continues to be a struggle for we are in the process of sanctification, a process which will be complete when “mortal puts on immortality” (1Cor 15:53).

Thus, the “double-minded” identifies that struggle between the flesh and the renewed person in Yeshua, a struggle in which the Spirit enables success as we yield to His leading and disciplines. Once again, the means to daily having victory in this arena is the consistent application of the means of grace: hiding God’s word in our hearts, being always active in prayer, and committing ourselves to being an active and regular part of the believing community.

1 Richardson, *New American Commentary*, vol. 36 (B&H Pub., 1997), p. 183.