

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 04: 07-10

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week we'll be reading James chapter 4, and today we'll read from verse 7 to verse 10.

In James 4:1-10, James first addresses the fleshly lusts, referring to them as warring desires. As Paul states in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another." The purpose of the fleshly lusts fighting against the Holy Spirit within us is to gain control over our soul, to win over our emotional affections, to establish reasoning and logic in our minds, and to gain decision-making power in our will.

The fleshly lusts and the Holy Spirit within our spirit are directly at war, and the battlefield is our soul. Joining this battle are two other key players. James then mentions the world, which presents various temptations to stir up the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, aiming to win this war by collaboration of the internal and external forces.

Although Satan is the ruler of this present world, everything in the world was originally created by God. Though it is temporarily in the hands of the enemy, the ultimate control remains with the Father. As Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." These people, if they are willing to submit to His will, will be able to endure various trials and receive the crown of life.

Starting from verse 7, James mentions the third player in this battle: the devil. The devil stirs up our inner desires and uses the world outside to tempt us in order to capture us. His way of capturing is to make us succumb to the inner lusts and external temptations, leading us to sin, and then to control us with death after sinning.

God, of course, knows the devil's schemes, so He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to deal with the devil. As Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christ has come to earth and has destroyed the devil who holds the power of death. If we abide in Christ, we can be freed from the devil's control.

Our God is a triune God. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit inside us and the Father's arrangement of all things outside us to keep us on the path of Christ. Satan, in imitation of God, uses his evil trinity to capture the children of God. As mentioned in James 4:1-10, the lusts of the flesh oppose the Holy Spirit, the temptations of the world oppose the Father's arrangement, and the devil causes us to sin, opposing Christ. The divine Trinity is here to save us, while the devil uses his evil trinity—flesh, world, and sin—to corrupt us and control us. Let us hope that we can all see the evil trinity of the devil hidden behind James 4:1-10.

Dear brothers and sisters, on the surface, the book of James may seem loosely structured and without coherence. However, if we delve deeper, especially using the framework of truth established by Paul, we will discover that the book of James is actually an extension and application of Paul's epistles. The insights in terms of truth are completely consistent.

Verse 7: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Therefore, it follows from what was previously mentioned, that God is a jealous God. When we become friends with the world and provoke God to jealousy, He will bestow even more abundant grace upon us. If we are humble in heart, we can receive this abundant grace. Therefore, for these reasons, we must submit to God. From verses one to seven, we see that the devil has launched a full-scale war. Inside us, there is the lust of the flesh, and outside, there is the temptation of the world. Relying on ourselves, we cannot possibly defeat the devil. On our own, we would quickly fall into the snare of sin.

James tells us here that our only way out is to submit to God. Through Christ, God has already defeated the devil who holds the power of death. God has secured a victorious position for us. We only need to submit to God and stand firmly in the ground that Christ has won. We do not need to battle the devil; we need only to stand firm in this victorious position to resist the devil. To resist the devil here means to reject his suggestions, refuse his temptations, and refuse his provocations and threats.

As long as we do not leave, standing in the position of submission to God to resist the devil, the devil will flee from us. James confidently tells us that as long as we do not leave this victorious position and do not yield to the devil's proposals, the devil can do nothing to us. Ultimately, the devil will have to flee. The first step in submitting to God is passive and defensive—resisting the devil.

Do not lose the rest we already have in Christ. Do not fall for the devil's tricks, do not heed the devil's temptations, and do not follow the devil's suggestions. If the devil continues to incessantly whisper in our ears, we can also use the authority of Jesus Christ to rebuke the devil and command him to get behind us. Because Jesus Christ has already fought the battle for us, we only need to stand in the victorious position of Jesus Christ, and we are already overcoming.

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

On the passive side, we are to resist the devil; on the positive side, we are to draw near to God. When we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Resisting the devil is about our standing; this standing is bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and we simply need to stand firm. Drawing near to God, however, is about our experience, and we must take the initiative. It is sequential; we must first draw near to God, and then He will draw near to us.

How should we draw near to God? In our daily routines, we need to set aside a specific time, preferably a fixed time that fits into our schedule. We come before

God through reading the Bible, singing hymns, praying, and having intimate fellowship with Him. We bring our concerns, not just with requests but by waiting on Him and listening, until our hearts are filled with peace and joy, our minds are clear, and our wills are strengthened and firm. At this point, we will feel very close to God because we have drawn near to Him, and He has drawn near to us.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you have not experienced the joy of drawing near to God, I urge you to take this matter seriously. Set apart a place in your home and a time in your daily life, ensuring that this special time and place are free from interruptions. This is your opportunity for private communion with God through reading the Bible, singing hymns, and praying, until you sense God's presence. This personal devotional life is foundational to our following and servicing God.

Whenever we seek to draw near to God, the devil will try to distract us in various ways. James identifies two primary factors of distraction. The first is in the second part of verse 8: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners." Sin is the most significant barrier to drawing near to God; God is holy and righteous, and sin cannot exist in His presence. Therefore, each time we draw near to God, we must start with confession and repentance, using the blood of Jesus Christ to remove the barriers between us and God. James goes a step further here: not only should the sins we have committed be forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, but our sinful hands must also be cleansed to prevent us from continuing in sin.

James says that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. This closeness should increase daily—today closer than yesterday, and tomorrow closer than today. If our closeness to God stagnates and no longer progresses, it indicates that there are things in our lives, things we are doing, that are displeasing to God. Therefore, when drawing near to God, we must earnestly seek out these matters. It could be a hobby, the way we do things, or something we previously did not consider as sin. When you want to develop a deeper relationship with God, He will require you to cleanse your hands and remove these things.

Dear brothers and sisters, we often think of sin as doing something that offends God, but do not forget the biblical definition of sin in Romans 3:23: "For all have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Anything that falls short of God's glory is sin. There are many things in our lives that do not measure up to God's glory.

When we are immature in our spiritual life, we may not be aware of these things. But as we grow and mature, when we draw near to God, He gradually reveals the things that are inconsistent with our level of maturity. God wants us to put these things away, to cleanse our hands from them so that we can draw closer to Him.

The second step, mentioned at the end of verse 8, is: "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." The hands deal with our actions, which must be clean first. Then God deals with our hearts, our inner motivations.

We are often double-minded, wanting God's best on one hand and holding onto human preferences on the other. When these two conflict, we become double-minded. James is telling us to purify our hearts, to clear away human preferences, including carnal desires, as well as natural preferences. If these natural preferences conflict with God's best, we need to purify ourselves of them. This way, we can choose God's best, and our hearts will be fully aligned with God.

When Jesus Christ was fulfilling His ministry on earth, He did everything according to the will of the Father. Jesus set the best and highest example for us. When we place Jesus' example before us, we often feel that it is a great and difficult task. However, we must recognize that this is a journey of life, where every decision is both vital and organic. To humans, it may seem almost impossible, but with God, nothing is too difficult. James then describes the process of human submission. I believe that in James' pursuit of a godly life, this was also his personal experience.

Verse 9-10: "Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

James tells us from his own experience that when we encounter things we cannot accomplish or let go of, our hearts become troubled, sorrowful, and sometimes we

even weep. However, if we are willing to obey God, willing to let go of ourselves, willing to turn our laughter into mourning and our joy into gloom, willing to humble ourselves. James 4:6 says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." If we are willing to humble ourselves, we will experience God's abundant grace, and thus the Lord will lift us up.

Philippians 2:5-9 says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." The Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself, even to the lowest position of dying on the cross, and God exalted Him to the highest position. Likewise, if we humble ourselves for the sake of obeying God, the Lord will lift us up.

Dear brothers and sisters, James clearly points out to us the path of obedience to God. On the one hand, we must passively resist the devil, standing in the victorious position God has already given us; actively, we must draw near to God, and God will draw near to us. In this process, we need to cleanse our hands, cleanse our hearts, be willing to repent, be willing to humble ourselves, and the Lord will lift us up. This is indeed the process of spiritual growth.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, although Satan repeatedly tries to tempt us with sin, the world, and the flesh, You have given us the Holy Spirit to lead us in our daily lives. In every situation, Father God has prepared for us, let all things work together for our good, helping us to learn the lessons of obedience to You, enabling us to follow Your guidance with clean hands and a pure heart, and learning to serve in Your house. We are willing to humble ourselves; then You will bestow abundant grace upon us, helping us to grow and helping us to rise. Bless my life today to be a pleasing life to You. I pray in Jesus Christ's holy name. Amen!