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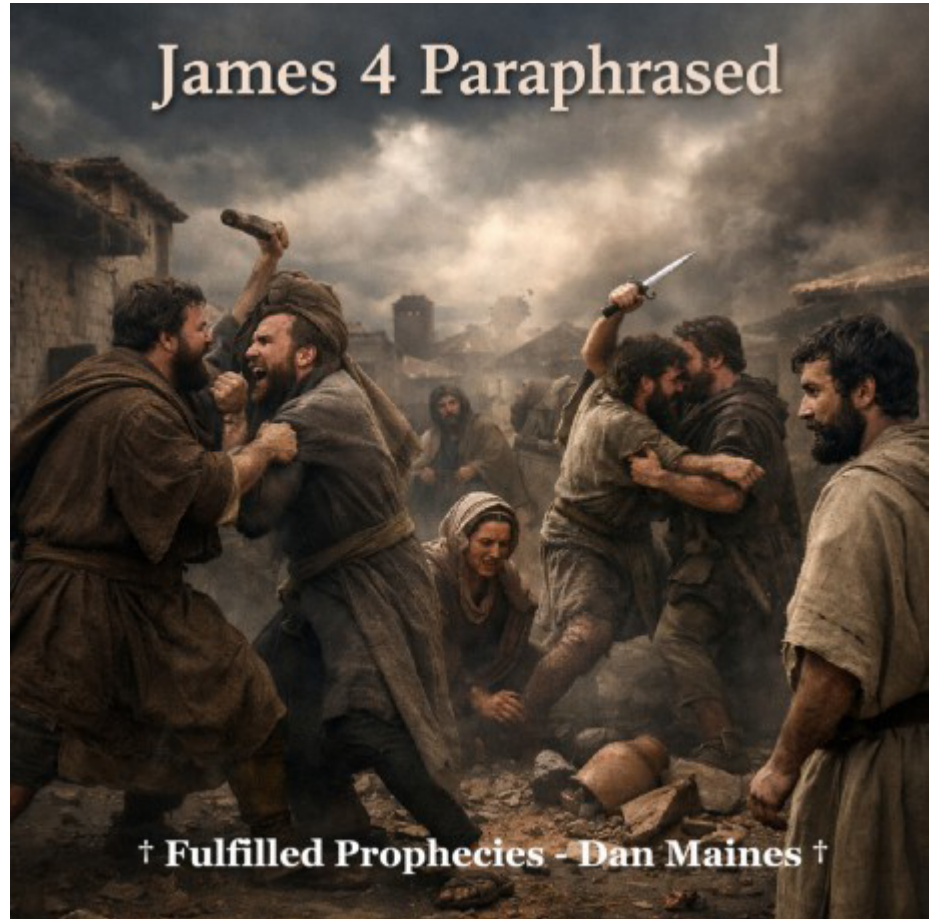
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## James 4 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

## James 4 Paraphrased

### Introduction

† James now turns to the root problem behind many conflicts among believers, the desires of the human heart. Instead of blaming outside circumstances, he shows that wars, arguments, and divisions grow from selfish ambition within people.

† This chapter exposes pride, worldliness, and self-reliance, and then calls believers to humility before God. The solution

isn't human strength but submitting ourselves fully to God.

† Early Christians often warned about this same struggle. Clement of Alexandria explained that believers must fight the passions of the flesh that lead to envy and strife, showing that James' teaching was understood this way from the earliest centuries.

### **James 4:1**

Where do the fights and arguments among you come from? Don't they come from the desires inside you that are constantly battling within your own hearts?

† James exposes the true cause of conflict, sinful desires fighting for control (Galatians 5:16-17).

† The problem isn't circumstances or other people, it's the war inside the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9).

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that uncontrolled passions produce quarrels among believers, Stromata.

### **James 4:2**

You want things you don't have, so you become angry and even hate others. You crave what belongs to someone else, and because you cannot obtain it, you fight and argue. Yet you still don't have what you want because you never ask God for it.

† Covetousness leads to hatred and conflict (Exodus 20:17).

† James shows that people try to satisfy their desires through human effort instead of turning to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6).

† Irenaeus warned that envy and jealousy were the seeds of many divisions in the early church, Against Heresies.

### **James 4:3**

And even when you do ask, you still don't receive anything because your motives are wrong. You're asking only so you can

spend it on your own pleasures.

† Prayer isn't a tool for selfish gain but for aligning ourselves with God's will (1 John 5:14).

† God refuses requests that come from selfish motives and worldly desires (Proverbs 21:13).

† Eusebius noted that early believers were taught to pray with pure motives and humility before God, Ecclesiastical History.

### **James 4:4**

You people who are being unfaithful to God, don't you know that friendship with the world means becoming an enemy of God? Anyone who chooses to align with the world places himself against God.

† James uses the language of spiritual adultery, showing that loyalty to worldly systems is betrayal against God (Hosea 2:2).

† Loving the world means embracing its sinful values instead of God's righteousness (1 John 2:15-16).

† Clement of Alexandria taught that believers must separate themselves from worldly corruption to remain faithful to God, Stromata.

### **James 4:5**

Or do you think the Scripture speaks for no reason when it says the Spirit God placed within us longs for our devotion?

† God desires complete loyalty from His people (Exodus 34:14).

† The Spirit's longing reveals God's jealousy for a faithful relationship with His people (Zechariah 8:2).

† Irenaeus explained that the Spirit calls believers away from corruption and toward holiness, Against Heresies.

### **James 4:6**

But God gives even greater grace. That is why the Scripture says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

† Pride blocks God's favor, while humility opens the door to His grace (Proverbs 3:34).

† God's grace empowers believers to overcome sinful desires and live in obedience (Ephesians 2:8-9).

† Early Christians consistently taught humility as the foundation of spiritual life, Eusebius records this teaching among the early bishops, Ecclesiastical History.

### **James 4:7**

So submit yourselves to God. Stand against the devil and he will run away from you.

† Submission to God is the starting point for spiritual victory (Romans 6:13).

† Resisting the devil means rejecting temptation and standing firmly in truth (1 Peter 5:8-9).

† Irenaeus emphasized that believers defeat the devil through obedience to God, Against Heresies.

### **James 4:8**

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you people who are divided in loyalty.

† Repentance and purity restore fellowship with God (Isaiah 1:16-18).

† The call to cleanse hands and hearts reflects both outward actions and inward motives (Psalm 24:3-4).

† Clement of Alexandria taught that true repentance includes both inward cleansing and outward obedience, Stromata.

### **James 4:9**

Be miserable, mourn, and cry over your sin. Let your laughter turn into sorrow and your joy into grief.

† James calls for genuine repentance rather than shallow regret (Joel 2:12-13).

† True sorrow over sin leads to restoration with God (2 Corinthians 7:10).

† Eusebius wrote that early believers practiced deep repentance when confronted with sin, Ecclesiastical History.

### **James 4:10**

Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.

† God's pattern is always the same, humility comes before exaltation (Luke 14:11).

† Those who lower themselves before God receive honor from Him (1 Peter 5:6).

† Irenaeus taught that humility was the mark of true discipleship, Against Heresies.

### **James 4:11**

Do not speak against one another, brothers. Anyone who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks against the law and judges the law. If you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge over it.

† Slander destroys unity within the body of believers (Proverbs 16:28).

† When people judge others arrogantly, they place themselves above God's law (Matthew 7:1-2).

† Clement warned that speaking evil against fellow believers damages the unity of the church, Stromata.

### **James 4:12**

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

† God alone holds the authority to judge humanity (Isaiah 33:22).

† Humans must exercise humility instead of assuming God's role (Romans 14:4).

† Irenaeus emphasized that ultimate judgment belongs to God

alone, Against Heresies.

### **James 4:13**

Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we'll go to such and such a city, spend a year there, do business, and make a profit.

† James rebukes arrogant confidence in human planning (Proverbs 27:1).

† Life cannot be controlled by human plans alone, it remains under God's authority (Psalm 127:1).

† Eusebius recorded that early Christians regularly acknowledged God's will in their plans, Ecclesiastical History.

### **James 4:14**

You don't even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You're like a mist that appears for a short time and then disappears.

† Human life is fragile and temporary (Psalm 39:4-5).

† Recognizing life's brevity should lead people to humility and dependence on God (Job 7:7).

† Clement wrote that believers should live with eternal perspective because earthly life is brief, Stromata.

### **James 4:15**

Instead, you should say, If the Lord wills, we'll live and also do this or that.

† Acknowledging God's will reflects humility and trust in His sovereignty (Acts 18:21).

† True faith recognizes that every plan depends on God's permission (Proverbs 16:9).

† Early Christians commonly spoke this way, recognizing God's control over their lives, Eusebius records this practice, Ecclesiastical History.

## **James 4:16**

But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

† Prideful boasting ignores God's authority (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

† True confidence belongs in God, not in human accomplishments (1 Corinthians 1:31).

† Irenaeus warned that pride leads people away from God, Against Heresies.

## **James 4:17**

So whoever knows the right thing to do but refuses to do it, for him it becomes sin.

† Sin isn't only doing wrong but also refusing to do what is right (Luke 12:47).

† Knowledge increases responsibility before God (John 9:41).

† Clement of Alexandria taught that believers are accountable for the truth they understand, Stromata.

## **Historical References**

† Irenaeus warned that envy, pride, and arrogance were the root of many church divisions, Against Heresies.

† Clement of Alexandria taught that believers must purify their hearts from worldly desires, Stromata.

† Eusebius recorded that early Christians practiced humility, repentance, and dependence on God's will, Ecclesiastical History.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Conflicts among believers still come from pride and selfish desires when people place their will above God's (Galatians 5:19-21).

† God still calls believers to humility, repentance, and submission to Him (1 Peter 5:6).

† Life remains fragile and temporary, so we must live every day acknowledging God's will (Psalm 90:12).

† True faith resists the world, submits to God, and pursues holiness in everyday life (Romans 12:2).

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** What causes conflicts among believers?

**A** James explains that fights come from selfish desires battling within people's hearts (James 4:1).

**Q** Why do some prayers go unanswered?

**A** Because they are asked with selfish motives aimed at personal pleasure (James 4:3).

**Q** Why is friendship with the world dangerous?

**A** Because aligning with worldly values places a person in opposition to God (James 4:4).

**Q** What is the path to receiving God's grace?

**A** Humility before God, because He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

**Q** What is the believer's responsibility when they know what is right?

**A** Failing to do what is right becomes sin (James 4:17).

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† James 4

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

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