

## Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

# James, Coming Against Dead Faith

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The Epistle of James was written to come against the dead faith which had already begun to prevail in his time. James draws a line between nature and grace through all life. He contrasts spiritual relationship with God with a forgetful hearing which neither keeps itself unspotted from the world nor demonstrates the honor, love, and good-will prompted by the law written on the heart.

True relationship with the Living God will demonstrate a true loving relationship. True relationship with the Living God does not lead to mechanically going through the motions of religion. This can happen with Christians just as it happens with people of other various religions. We all like and tend to habitual living. We like to do A. B. C. and D. and know that, there, we've been a good Christian today. But life with the Holy Spirit is more like a river flowing and alive, moving and teaming with life. A disciplined life can be good, but if it becomes ritualistic, it soon becomes dead religion, with dead works resulting from a dead faith.

James pokes at a hollow profession of faith by the license given to the tongue, which both blesses and curses and runs all over the place without boundaries or wisdom. There is a vain boast of wisdom, but James says: James 3:13-18.

**James 3:13-18: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good conduct, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast in it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come from above, but is earthly, unspiritual [or sensual], demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice.**

**But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap the fruit of righteousness. James 3:13-18 ESV**

This counterfeit wisdom comes from a spirit counterfeiting the Holy Spirit. It is another wisdom, earthy, sensual, and demonic. It is the wisdom of the Queen of Heaven and goddess spirits. It allures with its sensuality and intoxicates with its wine. The Queen of Heaven spirit is a counterfeit Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the strange woman. It was the wisdom of the serpent that beguiled Eve to desire forbidden fruit, thinking that God was not good by giving that one boundary, and that she could be as God, knowing good and evil. The wisdom of the serpent deceives and perverts the goodness of God such that Eve and countless others after her believe a lie, and in the process reject Christ the Wisdom of God, the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. By the way, Adam knowingly and willingly ate the fruit, plunging humanity into the estate of sin and misery by his rejection of the Wisdom of God.

There is a brilliance that comes to those seeking a wisdom apart from the Wisdom of God. It is the brilliance of high-mindedness. It is an over-estimation of one's "self." It is putting man as the center of all things and not God. This other wisdom has many forms and cries out in the streets. It is earthy, of the earth. It causes people to look to themselves, to self-help, to self-medicate, and to rely upon themselves. What it doesn't do is encourage humility.

James bids those who lack wisdom to ask for wisdom from God. Amazingly, God, who has all knowledge and wisdom, does not upbraid people for this. But it takes humility to ask for wisdom. It's like people who refuse to stop and ask for directions when they can't find where they're going. It's like people who refuse to research something to get the information they need, as if it's in their brains by osmosis. It's like people who have a Bible by their bedside but that's more for show than for meeting their needs.

The Holy Spirit is only mentioned once in James, but the entire letter takes for granted the necessity of His renewing grace. For example, let's read James 1:17, 18 and see how James implies the Spirit's involvement.

**James 1: 17, 18: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, with whom there is no change or shifting shadow. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creation. James 1:17, 18 BSB**

James assumes the Spirit's work of regeneration by the word of truth as foundational. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is the author of faith. (Jesus is also referred to as the Author and Finisher of our faith in Hebrews 12.) The Holy Spirit regenerates the heart of the elect one, makes that heart His habitation or dwelling-place, and then makes a temple worthy of Himself.

The only express mention of the Holy Spirit is in James 4:5, 6.

**James 4:1-6:**

**What causes conflicts and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the passions at war within you? You crave what you do not have; you kill and covet, but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask. And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.**

**You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God. Or do you think the Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to dwell in us yearns with envy? But He gives us more grace. This is why it says:**

**"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:1-6 ESV**

This follows the wisdom teaching and warning against the counterfeit wisdom. In James 4, James warns against loving the world, your world.

Out of the fallen nature comes lust: The Greek word means: to set the heart upon, to long for something rightfully or not, to covet, to desire, to lust after. Strong's 1937.

These longings lead to a war within us. It can be a war between mind and emotions. We want something so badly and don't have it. We want it so much and see others who have what we want and we can't stand it. We move from coveting to jealousy to envy. We fight with God and we war, in air and ground attacks. We have not, James says, because we refuse to ask in a proper way. We move from respectful request recognizing the sovereignty of God to demands, declarations, and outright Christian witchcraft. In this we are filled with that demonic wisdom, the counterfeit Holy Spirit, the Queen of Heaven spirit who sits in defiance of the Living God and seeks to usurp what rightfully belongs to God as Creator/Redeemer. We cross the line; we want something so much. We want that thing in order to feed our lusts.

James 4:3 uses a different word for "lusts." Strong's 2237. It is *hedone*, hay-don-ay, from which we get hedonism. It means sensual delight, pleasure.

We don't want this thing because it is God's will; we want this thing for our own ease, for our own pleasure, for some sensual delight. We want it; we need it; we deserve it; doesn't God want me to be happy? So why doesn't He give it to me? What's wrong with Him?

James calls it outright adultery. It is spiritual adultery. We've fallen prey to the counterfeit Holy Spirit, to the cries of our fallen nature, to the voices of our self, Satan, and the spirit of the world. We've become friends of the world and thus enmity with God. God has turned and become our enemy, just as when we walk in pride or engage in works of darkness, when we walk in the flesh and thus war with the Spirit, when we worship and serve the creation, and when we oppose the will of God.

And then comes our verses: James 4:5, 6. These are better translated, "Do you think the Spirit speaks in vain? Does the spirit that dwells in us lust to envy?" The Holy Spirit is the one who inhabits the heart of the true believer. (Romans 8:9; 2 Timothy 1:14; 1 John 3:34) He dwells in believers and instructs, comforts, and sanctifies them. The believer is one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. James is asking: Can the Holy Spirit dwell in a heart that is full of envy? No, not without an inevitable war.

But He gives more grace. The Holy Spirit will move in our lives to make us harbor no envy at another's welfare but rather wish to see another's blessings enlarged. He gives more grace.

Proverbs 3:34; Numbers 11:29.

How does He do this? He tells us what to do: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. If we want God to stop resisting us and warring against us, then we are to submit ourselves to God. Bow before His sovereignty. Stop being our own Savior and Lord. Stop thinking we are the master of our own destiny or someone else's destiny. Resist the devil. Get him out of the picture. We have enough to deal with having God resisting us. The devil will flee; Jesus said that the prince of this world comes, and he has NOTHING in Me. (John 14:30)

Draw nigh to God and know that if we do that, God will come close to us. Approach God; be at hand. Make a proper appeal to God, one that He will hear. If we are still asking amiss, ask Him to make our hearts right before Him so that we won't ask amiss. Believers have been bought with a price; their lives are not their own.

James instructs: **Cleanse your hands, sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** What are we doing? What's going on inside? Do we want the will of God or our own way? Are we double-souled, of two minds, two wills warring within, longing for our own pleasures to make our lives more comfortable or longing with the desires and heart of the Holy Spirit?

**Be afflicted, mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness.** We may think all this is funny. Stop. It's no laughing matter. It's something so serious that we should be mourning over the deadness and coldness of our hearts. What's making us happy? Does it make God happy? If not, then feel the Holy Spirit's grief.

**Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.** All we have is words. Get flat on your face before Him and bring Him the words He says He wants to hear. For example, Let's not think we are above the Law. God is Lawgiver and Judge and able to save and to destroy. Who are we compared with the Living God? God owns all things; He has rights over all creation, everything. To rob Him is to take from Him what is rightfully His property; the word for "rob" means: to steal, to overcharge, to keep someone from getting something. To usurp is to take a position illegally or by force or in a violent way without the right to do so; to commandeer, assume, expropriate, to take the place of someone; to dethrone, oust; to encroach or infringe upon someone's rights. This is especially as regards power and position; and it is exactly what the devil tried to get Jesus to do out in the wilderness temptations of Luke 4.

Let's not think our case is worthy of some exemption, or that we are exempt from the will of God. We can't think we are exceptional, living in our own little neighborhood and being the neighborhood judge, king of our castle. What are we trying to do? Usurp part of creation away from the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ and take away what rightfully belongs to Him? It's like we stake out a claim for ourselves; and since we don't see the presence of God because of being in our sin, we take our claim and say, "Mine!" Like a child.

Our lives are like vapors, here today and gone tomorrow. Rejoicing in our boastings is evil. Watch those great swelling words. (Ephesians 4:31) So let's watch our words; how we make our appeals and approach a holy God. And know this, that to him that knows to do good, and doesn't do it, to him it is sin.

So James is pretty tough on us and the Lord God seriously wants us to have evidence of a living faith. James' letter is considered the Proverbs of the NT.

The good news is, God gives more grace. He is the God of All Grace, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Grace. In James, God gives us a strategy for returning to Him. Let's take it seriously. Let's take Jesus seriously. Let's persevere and never lose hope, for God's love never fails.

Whenever we stray, we can turn back. He's told us what to do. Humility before Him is the key. And by the Spirit of Grace we will grow to learn to count it all joy when we might fall into various trials and testing of our faith; we will persevere; God is faithful, and He also will do it.

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