

Doublethink (James 3:13-4:12)

By David Feddes

We continue our study of the book of James by looking at the last part of chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4. Our theme is doublethink. Let's read that passage together:

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

^{4:1} 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?

This passage comes right after a passage about how we use our tongue. In a previous message, we already thought about double-talk. James says, “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be” (James 3:9–10). Praise and cursing—double-talk—two different ways of speaking. James asks, “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water” (James 3:11–12). You have to think about the source. He said you can't have two different kinds of water, good water and bad water, drinkable and non-drinkable, coming out of the same spring. It all goes back to the source.

James then speaks of trees bearing different kinds of fruit, and there he's echoing Jesus. Jesus said, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33). So the mouth that's bringing out bad fruit is coming from a bad tree, "for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

So James, in thinking about double-talk, now turns to doublethink, because double-talk flows out of the heart—the soul, the thoughts that we have—our doublethink. And he shows how doublethink, a double-minded person, is seriously off.

In the beginning of James, he says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt" (James 1:5–6). Make sure that you're not wavering as you pray about that, because otherwise you're double-minded. You might have two different kinds of wisdom, and that's what I mean by doublethink.

Doublethink

- A good life is wisdom from heaven.
- Selfish strife is "wisdom" from hell.
- Worldly wants drive worldly ways.
- Loving the world is hating God.
- God gives grace if you mourn sin.
- Satan flees far if you're near God.
- Slander slams law and plays God

Those are the seven main principles we're going to consider.

A good life is wisdom from heaven.

First of all, a good life is wisdom from heaven. "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." (James 3:13) James says, now who's wise? And he might be expecting some people to say, "Well, I am. I'm wise." But the tradition of wisdom in the Bible says if you think you're wise in your own eyes, you're a fool. In fact, the book of Proverbs says, "Do you see a man who's wise in his own eyes? There's more hope for a fool than for him." (Proverbs 26:12) So James is saying, if you really think you're wise or understanding, let me just ask what your life is like.

Sometimes you think, "Well, I can out-argue other people, I must be wise. I know a lot of stuff, I must be wise. I know a lot of Bible doctrines, I can really make my case well, I must be wise." But if you have lots of data and lots of expertise and you add those two things together, that does not equal wisdom. That is true in a lot of different areas of life—not just Bible and teaching of Scriptures, but also in what we think about science, in decisions we make about the world we're in. Just having a lot of data and being an expert doesn't mean that you always make the wisest decisions, and it certainly doesn't mean that you're living a good life.

James says the real test of whether you've got true wisdom is what your life is like. If you have a good life, if you're doing deeds humbly with the kind of humility that comes from being wise—the kind of wisdom that comes from God—then you truly have wisdom from heaven.

Selfish strife is “wisdom” from hell.

But there's not just one kind of wisdom. There is wisdom from heaven, but also wisdom from hell. And selfish strife is wisdom from hell. “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but it is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” (James 3:14–16)

Remember a little earlier, James said if you say there's one God, that's no great achievement—even the demons believe that. (James 2:19) Demons have a sort of belief that is true, but it's a long way from being real faith. And demons also have a sort of wisdom—a sort of wisdom that may even work to a degree or have an impact—but it's not real wisdom from God, it's wisdom from the devil. That kind of wisdom is seen by what it produces.

If you have bitter envy in your heart and you have selfish ambition in your heart, that's nothing to brag about, because that's the kind of thing that God doesn't send down. It's earthly, it's worldly, it's unspiritual—that is, it's of the flesh, not of the Holy Spirit—and it's of the devil. The world, the flesh, and the devil are the three big enemies of your soul.

If you have that kind of wisdom that's making you envious of others, wanting what they've got, if it's all about me, me, me, and if you have selfish ambition to get ahead even if it means trampling others or making yourself better at their expense—there's the kind of wisdom that helps you do that. There's the kind of wisdom where you're constantly looking at what others have and being mad about it, and constantly looking at ways that you can move up the food chain. The Bible says that comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and that produces every kind of evil practice.

So realize that a good life shows wisdom from God, but this kind of life of envy and always being out for yourself comes from the evil one. The demons will give you a bit of wisdom; they'll give you some shrewdness on how you might be able to get ahead and succeed at the expense of others, but keep in mind that this is not from God.

Earlier, when you read about the tongue, James says the tongue is a fire and is itself set on fire by hell. (James 3:6) So when you're speaking these harsh words—these words that are combative, these words that injure, these words that cut others down—you're actually speaking fire from hell. Now he says if you have this kind of wisdom that's always looking for how you can get ahead and move up with selfish ambition, you've got to realize that it's from hell. It's from the devil. You could have your tongue set on fire by hell; you can have your mind and your thinking set on fire by hell.

That's why later on in this passage James says, “Resist the devil.” (James 4:7) Because behind all of this idea about double-talk and doublethink is the fact that there are always two great

powers at work in the world—the power of God and the power of the devil. You’re going to be speaking the words of one or the other and doing the actions of one or the other. So resist the devil and realize what’s really going on when you slam or insult or attack somebody. When you start fights and quarrels, when you trample on them, it’s not just a little glitch—it’s the devil’s work.

And with that comes trouble. Double-talk, we’ve seen, comes from doublethink, and that results in double trouble. Now again, you may say it’s all Greek to me when you see these Greek words *akatastasia* and *akatastos*, but those words are basically the same word—one’s an adjective, the other’s a noun—but it’s not always translated the same. I just wanted to bring that out. What’s really going on here in James?

Earlier in James it speaks of “a double-minded man who is unstable in all he does.” (James 1:8) Later on it speaks of “the tongue being a restless evil,” (James 3:8) the very same word that’s translated “unstable.” And here in this passage, “there you find disorder” (James 3:16)—the very same word, only a noun form instead of an adjective: unstable, restless, disorder. When you’ve got two different things going on, and you’ve got two minds and two tongues, it’s because you’re double-minded, and it’s producing unstable, restless disorder—trouble.

James returns to the theme that a good life is the product of real wisdom from heaven. “The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure.” (James 3:17) It’s not spotted and stained by the world; it’s pure. It’s not two kinds of wisdom; it’s God’s kind of wisdom. It’s peace-loving—it looks for ways to make peace, not to start fights.

It’s considerate and submissive. Sometimes that word *considerate* can also be translated *gentle*. You’re paying attention to other people and not just bullying your way around. *Submissive* can also be translated *reasonable* or *persuadable*. You’re somebody who is ready to listen to someone else’s point of view and even go along with their point of view where you see merit in it. You’re somebody who is persuadable. What a difficult, almost impossible quality that is!

Do you watch some of the discussions that go on in social media and participate in them? How many times have you ever changed your mind? How many times have other people changed their minds? It’s because we’re not very persuadable. We’ve already got our minds made up. But wisdom that comes from heaven realizes there’s a lot I don’t know, and what I don’t know is known by other people. If I learn from them and go along with their perspective, sometimes that can really be a great benefit.

Also, this wisdom is not only peace-loving, considerate, and submissive, but it’s full of mercy and good fruit. James speaks of the importance of showing mercy to the needy and to the poor, and showing mercy instead of judgment to those who have wronged us. And *good fruit*—again, just think of the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Jesus. This is really a description of the mind of Christ, the mind of the Spirit, what it is to have the Holy Spirit living in you.

Then he speaks of being impartial and sincere. That word *impartial* could be referring back to what James talked about earlier when he said, “Don’t show favoritism.” (James 2:1) Don’t act like rich people matter more than poor people, and don’t be prejudiced against others. So it could

be referring to that. But the original word for that can mean not showing favoritism; it can also mean *undivided*. And of course, that's the kind of theme we're focusing on right now—not having double-talk, doublethink, being divided, not being a double-minded person who's unstable.

Then *sincere*—the word there literally is *anhypokritos*. You're not putting up a false front; you're not posing; you're not pretending. Wisdom from heaven is transparent.

Then it all comes down to this again: “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” (James 3:18) “Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires,” James said earlier. (James 1:20) Don't be quick to anger, because anger doesn't bring about righteousness, but peacemakers do bring about a harvest of righteousness. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9) When you're a child of God, you have God's nature in you, and you're called a child of God when you're somebody who brings God's kind of peace.

Now James doesn't speak about Jesus by name all that much in his letter. James doesn't speak very much about Jesus, but James speaks very much like Jesus. Again and again and again, he says things that echo the words of his half-brother and his Lord.

Worldly wants drive worldly ways.

Worldly wants drive worldly ways. You have these different kinds of wisdom—the wisdom from heaven, the wisdom from hell—and now James asks, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.” (James 4:1–2)

Worldly ways are when you talk in that harsh way and when you take actions where you neglect the poor and are just looking out for yourself. Those worldly ways—where do they come from? They come from worldly wants, from desires. You bicker because you have desires within you that aren't getting satisfied, and so you're going to do what you can to get what you want, and you're going to battle. You're going to fight fire with fire. Just remember where that fire comes from—it comes from hell.

“You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.” (James 4:2) Now were they really killing each other? It's actually possible, because in Judea at the time James was writing, there were rich people who were sometimes sending out hit squads to deal with poor workers who weren't behaving the way they wanted. There were people in the poorer classes who were assassinating and knifing some of the rich and powerful, especially those who collaborated with the Romans. So there was some literal killing going on.

But among the believers there may not have been actual killing going on, and yet James says you kill and you covet. Again, James is just echoing Jesus. Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder,’ but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his

brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin, but anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Matthew 5:21–22)

Jesus equated murder with harsh language and angry attitudes, and really that’s what’s going on when people are quarreling and fighting and bickering. It’s worldly desires that drive fights between a husband and wife; it’s worldly desires that drive fights between five-year-olds. It’s those same kinds of things that drive the terrible wars that rip the world apart. At all of those levels, it’s really your worldly wants that are driving all of those worldly ways of fighting and nasty words.

You saw that in the Old Testament sometimes, where people wanted something and didn’t get it, and they coveted what somebody else had. Moses was a great leader of the people of God, and he married a Cushite wife, a wife from Africa. His brother Aaron and his sister Miriam didn’t like that very well, and their resentment of his wife also made them resent that he had a little higher position than they did in the leadership of God’s people. They came and challenged Moses, saying, “What makes you better than us?” (Numbers 12:2) When they did that, God judged them. Miriam instantly became white with leprosy, and Aaron sensed the great judgment of God coming upon them. He cried out and asked Moses to pray, and Miriam had to leave the camp for a week, for seven days, and then she was healed and able to return again. But it was their resentment, their coveting, their attitudes that drove them to clash with their own brother and to challenge his leadership among the people of God. That’s what can happen among even people who are so tightly knit together when resentment and coveting creep in.

James says, “You do not have because you do not ask God.” (James 4:2) You need to pray. “When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (James 4:3)

Some people are so worldly that they don’t bother praying at all. A prayerless life is a worldly way of living. But maybe you pray, and you’ve even learned certain techniques for prayer. You pray because you think prayer works and it gets you what you want. James here identifies two big mistakes. One is not praying. The other is praying “me, me, me, me, me, me, me,” and wanting what God gives for my own pleasures.

James is a book that talks a lot about rejoicing in suffering, dealing with tough times, and not praying to get things just for your own pleasures—not being worldly. What do you think James would say about the prosperity gospel, which teaches, “Name it and claim it”? “In the name of Jesus, I can get this and that and the other thing that I want.” It’s a very strange thing, though, if you actually put it into words. “In the name of Jesus, I claim wealth and luxury.” In the name of penniless and homeless Jesus, I claim wealth and luxury. “In the name of Jesus, I claim prosperity, popularity, success.” In the name of Jesus—humiliated and hated—I claim popularity and success. “In the name of Jesus, I claim health and long life.” In the name of Jesus—tortured and crucified—I claim health and long life.

James says sometimes when you pray, you don’t get what you pray for because you want to spend what you get on your pleasures. You’re asking with wrong motives. The wild popularity

of the prosperity gospel in the United States and in other parts of the world is a testament to how little we pay attention to Jesus, how little we listen to the apostles of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, and how much we try to use Jesus as our magic charm to get what we want.

Loving the world is hating God.

Loving the world is hating God. James has just one word for all of that: adulteresses. It's translated "You adulterous people," but the original just says "adulteresses." He's not saying nice things anymore. He's not saying, "My brothers, brothers, this and that." He comes with a blast: "Adulteresses!" because that's how God sees it when we love other things and idolize them more than we love him.

That word "adulteress" brings to mind a story from the Old Testament prophets. Hosea was a prophet of God, and God spoke to Hosea and told him to get married. Sometimes prophets had to dramatize with their life the message they were bringing. God told Hosea that because Israel was adulterous, Hosea should marry an unfaithful, whoring woman. And so Hosea married a woman named Gomer, and the two of them had a baby together—it was actually their baby. But then she would go off with other men again, and her second child was dubious whether it was Hosea's or not. Her next child after that was with a different man. Who knew where these kids came from? She went from one man to another, to another, being unfaithful to her husband.

Then she got in with a man who enslaved her, who did not treat her well. God sent a message to Hosea: "Now, Hosea, go and buy her back. Buy her away from that man and take her back again." So Hosea did. He took Gomer back—this adulteress who had been unfaithful to him again and again and again. That was God's picture of what his people were like toward him—unfaithful over and over, loving almost everything but God. And then God still would pour out more grace.

"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. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" (James 4:4–5)

No one speaks to the Spirit within us. It might be referring to just the human spirit that's always envying and wanting stuff, but it's more likely that this is referring to the Holy Spirit who comes into God's people. He's the Holy Spirit of a jealous God, who doesn't want them being adulteresses, who doesn't want them loving the world as much as they love God. Friendship with the world is hatred toward God. You can't have it both ways. Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other." (Matthew 6:24) Again, James is echoing Jesus.

You are an adulterer if you love the world. You can't have doublethink; you can't have it both ways. So far we've seen that a good life is the evidence of wisdom from heaven. Selfish strife shows that your wisdom is coming from hell. Worldly wants—worldly desires—drive worldly ways. And by the way, worldly ways are not just watching this or that entertainment that's produced by the world, but talking like the world, as harshly as the world does, and attacking and

fighting and quarreling just like the world does. You might be very religious. Some of the most worldly things you could ever find are religious people bickering and fighting and being nasty to each other. Worldly wants drive worldly ways, and loving the world is hating God.

But now we move on to something better.

God gives grace if you mourn sin.

“He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (James 4:6; Proverbs 3:34) If you think you’re wise, if you think you’re already good enough, if you’re satisfied having lots of doublethink and double-talk and trying to have the world, the flesh, and the devil along with God, there’s not much hope for you, because God opposes the proud.

But if you’re sad to hear that you’ve been acting like an adulteress, if you’re heartbroken that you’ve been offending God by your wicked ways, God gives grace to the humble—more grace. I love that phrase: “God gives us more grace.” More grace, and more grace, and more grace when we come to him and need that grace.

“Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” (James 4:8–10)

What if you worried about sin as much as you worried about a virus? What if you tried to keep yourself clean, and instead of just washing your hands religiously, washed your heart and your life spiritually? What if you were more concerned about social distancing from the world than social distancing from somebody who might be a carrier of an illness? If you realize just how deadly the world is to you, you need to wash your hands, purify your hearts, stop being double-minded, double-souled, filled with doublethink.

The way to do that isn’t just to say, “Whoopsie-daisy.” It’s to be heartbroken—grieve, mourn, wail. During times of great revival, one of the first evidences of revival is that people are cast into deep sorrow, that there are tremendous tears. That’s true of individual renewal and revival. It’s true of full-scale revivals of churches. Wherever there’s revival, there’s weeping, there are tears, and then there is the lifting up that God brings when you humble yourself. God gives grace if you mourn sin.

Jesus told the story of a man who went to the temple, and he didn’t feel worthy to even be there. He stayed way at the back of the crowd. He wouldn’t even look up. He pounded on himself and said, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” (Luke 18:13) Jesus says that man went home right before God. There was somebody else there who felt pretty good about himself. He was pretty pleased with the way he’d been serving God and what a fine person he was. Jesus said that man did not go home right before God.

So when the Bible says, “Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom,” it’s saying let your repentance be real. And where there’s real repentance, there might even be a few tears.

Here’s another story. A woman with a very bad reputation as a sinful woman came to where Jesus was dining, and she poured some precious ointment on his feet. She wept, and her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. Then she wiped the ointment and the tears from Jesus’ feet with her hair. Some of the people there were outraged that Jesus let such a sinful woman touch him, even though she was weeping for her sins. But Jesus welcomed her and blessed her, and he said, “Her sins—and they are many—are forgiven.” (Luke 7:47)

That’s the wonderful promise that we hear in James. If you grieve, if you weep, if you wail over your sins, Jesus will lift you up. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace—and more grace and more grace—to the humble.

Satan flees far if you’re near God.

The next thing that happens is that when you come close to God, Satan flees far away. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you.” (James 4:7–8) That sums it all up: get close to God. Get close to God, and when you do, Satan has to get out of there.

Spiritual fitness is being close to God. As you’re close to God, you become more and more resistant to Satan. When you’re close to God in prayer, when you’re alone with God in solitude, when you’re silent before the Lord, when you’re studying his Scriptures, when you’re memorizing the Word of God, you’re drawing near to God. As you do that, you’re becoming more and more resistant to the pull of evil.

The Bible speaks of Jesus himself. Jesus was in the desert forty days and forty nights. He was out there in solitude with God, driven there by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus had on his mind the Scriptures, and he was fellowshiping with God. Then the devil came to him and tempted him, saying, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread,” and use your power to help yourself out. Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:3–4)

So Jesus resisted the devil using the Scriptures. Then the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and said, “Throw yourself down and let the angels catch you. Show everybody what you can do.” Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4:6–7)

Then the devil took Jesus to a high place and showed him the great cities and kingdoms of the world, saying, “Bow down, and I’ll give it all to you.” Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Matthew 4:9–10) Again and again and again, he said, “It is written.” Because Jesus was living in fellowship with his Father, he was able to resist the devil. What happened when he resisted the devil? The Bible says the devil went away and looked for a more opportune time, because it wasn’t working, and angels came and ministered to Jesus. (Luke 4:13; Matthew 4:11)

We follow in Jesus' steps. We have the very Spirit of Jesus living within us, and we can draw near to God. If you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you put your faith in him, then you do have the Holy Spirit in you. If you listen to the Word of God, if you pray to God, if you spend time with God, if you draw near to God, he draws near to you. The closer you get to God, the harder it is for Satan to have an impact and to mislead you. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you." (James 4:7–8)

Slander slams law and plays God.

Then James returns to his earlier theme of how you use the tongue. He says that slander is something we ought not to do. "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." (James 4:11)

Slander slams God's law and plays God. Again, this is a misuse of the tongue, and it's a very serious one because it's an attack on God's law and it's pretending you're God. How is it an attack on God's law? Well, God's law says not to do it. If you slander and speak against other people, you're speaking against God's law because the law forbids slander.

Leviticus 19 is a passage that James comes back to again and again. He doesn't say, "I'm quoting Leviticus 19," but what he says comes from there. It says in Leviticus 19:16, "Do not go about spreading slander among your people." The great love commandment is in that same chapter: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) James draws on that chapter when he says, "Don't show favoritism," and when he says, "Don't spread slander." There are several other ways that we see in James that he draws on that chapter about loving your neighbor as yourself.

The law says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "Don't spread slander." So if you slander others, if you cut them down, if you attack them with your words, you're really attacking God's law. When you're attacking God's law and judging it, you're not keeping it; you're pretending you know better than the law of God that tells you not to slander.

Not only that, says James, slander plays God. "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?" (James 4:12) It's God, not you.

Again, James is echoing Jesus: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." (Matthew 7:1) There's one Lawgiver and Judge—God has the right to decide who gets saved, who gets destroyed. You don't. Now, does that mean that you never think about right and wrong, and never conclude that some action is right or wrong? No. But you don't judge your neighbor and say, "Now I know that there's no hope for you. I write you off because I saw what you did or I heard what you said, and I know that God has cast you off utterly and forever."

You don't have the right to do that because only God has the right to judge in that way. When you do see a neighbor do something wrong, it's not your job to slander them and go tell everybody else and knock them for it. Instead, if you're going to talk to anybody at all about a

wrong that somebody else is committing, talk to them yourself. When you do that, of course, make sure you don't have a big log sticking out of your own eye while you're trying to pick the little speck out of your neighbor's eye. (Matthew 7:3–5) That's how James is applying the words of our master Jesus. Don't play the judge.

Doublethink

- A good life is wisdom from heaven.
- Selfish strife is “wisdom” from hell.
- Worldly wants drive worldly ways.
- Loving the world is hating God.
- God gives grace if you mourn sin.
- Satan flees far if you're near God.
- Slander slams law and plays God.

So again, there is a terrible danger of doublethink, of a double mind, of a double heart in us. James—and God himself—is seeking to rescue us from that. If you think you have wisdom, just know this: a good life is wisdom from heaven, a peacemaking life. Selfish strife, selfish words, nasty actions—that's wisdom from hell. Worldly wants are what drive our worldly ways. Loving the world is hating God—it's being an adulterer, it's saying you love everybody but your divine husband.

God gives grace if you mourn sin. So if you say, “Well, boy, that James is hard-hitting—it's not comfortable listening to what he says,” well, he means it that way because he knows what's good for us. God inspired him to write these things. He knows that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. So he's speaking in a way that will humble us, so that we'll realize how far off the track we've gotten, so that we can weep before God and wash our hands and seek to distance ourselves from the world, and find that God pours his grace on us afresh.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:8) Satan flees far if you're near God. So resist the devil; he'll flee from you. Don't slander others, don't deny or slam God's law, and don't pretend you're God.

The tongue is something nobody can control, and if you slander others, you're falling right back into that trap of double-talk—of a spring producing different kinds of water or trees producing different kinds of fruit. It's weird, it's strange, it's no good. So instead, ask God to unite your heart.

The Old Testament has a prayer of David: “Give me an undivided heart.” (Psalm 86:11) And God, speaking of his new covenant through Ezekiel, says, “I will give them an undivided heart, and I will put my Spirit in them.” (Ezekiel 11:19) Pray that God will indeed fill your life to overflowing with his Holy Spirit and give you an undivided heart.

Doublethink (James 3:13-4:12)

By David Feddes

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¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

^{4:1} 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?

Doubletalk

^{3:9} With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ... Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Mouth expresses heart

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit... For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:33-34)

Doubletalk flows from doublethink.

Doublethink

- A good life is wisdom from heaven.
- Selfish strife is “wisdom” from hell.
- Worldly wants drive worldly ways.
- Loving the world is hating God.
- God gives grace if you mourn sin.
- Satan flees far if you’re near God.
- Slander slams law and plays God

A good life is wisdom from heaven.

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

- “Wise in your own eyes” = folly
- Data + expertise ≠ wisdom

Selfish strife is “wisdom” from hell.

¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

- ^{3:6} The tongue is a fire... and is **itself set on fire by hell**.
- ^{3:15} Such “wisdom” is earthly, unspiritual, **of the devil**. (3:15)
- ^{4:7} Resist **the devil**.

Double trouble

Doubletalk comes from doublethink, resulting in double trouble.

ἀκαταστασία, ἀκατάστατος

- He is a double-minded man, **unstable** in all he does. (1:8)
- It is a **restless** evil. (3:8)
- There you find **disorder**. (3:16)

A good life is wisdom from heaven.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Worldly wants drive worldly ways.

^{4:1} 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.

Worldly wants drive worldly ways.

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.

Prosperity gospel: name it and claim it!

- In the name of Jesus (penniless and homeless), I claim wealth and luxury!
- In the name of Jesus (humiliated and hated), I claim popularity and success.
- In the name of Jesus (tortured and crucified), I claim health and long life.

Loving the world is hating God.

Adulteresses!

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?

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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.

Spiritual fitness is being close to God and resistant to Satan

Slander slams law and plays God.

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.

Slander slams law

If you slander and speak against others, you are speaking against God's law, because the law forbids slander.

Do not go about spreading slander among your people... love your neighbor as yourself. (Lev 19:16, 18)

Slander slams law and plays God.

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?

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