

## **GOD YEARNS JEALOUSLY OVER US**

James 4: 5-10 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Chuck Swindoll, in seminary days, formed a habit that helped him immensely and still is helping him today. He had an artistic sister, Luci, print for him a simple, three-word question on a small rectangular card. He placed the card on the wall above his desk where he spent so much of his time studying. It was just black letters on a white card, with a bold question mark at the end saying: **WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVE?** He adds that he no longer has the card, but the question is now indelibly etched on his mind since seminary days. He says, "I ask it almost every day of my life. It has proven to be an essential checkpoint I now apply on a regular basis: *Why are you planning this? What's the reason behind you're doing that? Why did you say yes (or no)? What is the motive for writing this letter? Why are you excited over this opportunity? What causes you to bring up this subject? Why did you mention his name or her name? What's your motive, Chuck Swindoll?*" Those are good questions for each of us to answer. These are searching, probing, and penetrating questions. The path of servanthood for Jesus is so perilous, we need to cultivate a sensitive walk with God marked by obedience. And as we walk that line for Him, which seems at times to be a very narrow road, as Jesus said, the Spirit of God inside each of us as believers is yearning jealously over us.

Sometimes I watch what Jesus does and I am amazed. Friday as I was reading some chapters in Matthew's Gospel, I wondered at Jesus' motives in Matthew 15: 21-28. Listen to Jesus reply to a Canaanite woman who was a Syrophenician. Listen! "And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly." As I read those words, I wept. What a hard test! Jesus seemed to be inattentive and uninterested in this woman, but she had persistent faith, and deep insight. Jesus knew what He was doing as He dealt this way with this troubled lady. I just raised my hand to Jesus, and I told Him, "You know what you are doing with me in my life, when I sense I am not on Your radar." All of God's motives for you and for me are motives, ultimately of love and grace. James rightly said in James 4: 5, "Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us"?"

At the heart of all James has to say in this passage of 6 verses, seems to be humility. But really, the subject is deeper. At the bottom of the well calling for humility is the Holy Spirit's jealous yearning to give us the grace to be humble sons and daughters of the Father, to be humble as the Bride of Christ. What is this jealous yearning all about? I see these eight powerful answers in our text:

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO PROTECT US FROM WORLDLY THREATS TO OUR LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.** (I.)

Notice v. 5. "Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us"? Let's begin this study today by examining these two words. First, God yearns. The Greek word for yearns is **epipotheo**. This is a powerful word that means to yearn and to crave full possession of a lover, to intensely and earnestly desire, to long for or to long after, or to pursue with love. The picture is like that of a mother who is feeling deeply for a sick or dying child. Now how deeply is this pursuit of us by God as He yearns to possess us fully, and as He pursues us in love? The word jealously comes from the Greek words **pros phthonon**. This word normally means envy and *pros phthonon* could mean as John Wesley says that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us longs against envy, or has a longing that is directly opposite to all the lusts and loves involved with friendship with the world. Most of us shrink back from ascribing jealousy to God, since jealousy with us is most often, an ugly thing. God has no such qualms with the word. God redeems the word jealousy, and He calls Himself by the name of Jealous. Exodus 34: 14-16, declares, "For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods."

It is all over the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament. We read in Ex. 20: 5,""For I the Lord your God am a jealous God. Deut. 4:24 states, "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Deut. 5: 9 and 6: 15—"For I the Lord your God am a jealous God." Joshua in 24: 9 states "For God is a jealous God." – so v. 15—Choose this day whom you will serve. Ezekiel 39: 25 states that God says, "And I will be jealous for My holy Name." Joel 2: 18 states that God is jealous for His holy land of Israel. Nahum 1: 2, states, "God is jealous." Zechariah 1: 14, 8: 2 state God is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with great fury. Paul states in II Corinthians 11: 2, "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. Using jealousy this way is so different from suspicion. Jealousy in this pure form is protection for God's divine love. It is God's response to a threat against His Bride, His most valued relationship for which Jesus gave His life on the cross. Think of it. Something is

wrong when a husband or a wife watches their mate be captured by another person without jealousy. In the same way, something would be wrong with God's love if He didn't have protective jealousy as He watches us be seduced by the world. Be sure of one thing. Our jealous God does not intend to share living quarters with our competing affections. He feels divine jealousy every time we as believers give any of our competing affections to the world. James says, "Don't think it for no purpose that the Old Testament speaks about God's jealous love. God longs for the entire, undivided devotion of every human heart. He made us for Himself. He has redeemed us in Christ, and He will not be content so long as any part of our lives is handed over to do evil. He is not satisfied with a fragment of us. He must have all of us. So, His yearning jealousy is His yearning for the full devotion of our hearts. Song—"All He wants is you, no one else will do, not just a part, He wants all of your heart. All He wants is all of you, all He wants is you."

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO GIVE US HIS GRACE TO OVERCOME THE PULL OF THE WORLD.** (II.)

Notice v. 6a. "But He gives more grace." In our battle against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, we might despair on our own. The pull of the world is relentless, day and night, ceaselessly and in increasingly subtle ways. Our ability to overcome the world is rooted exclusively in God giving us greater grace. As we sing, it is grace greater than all our sin. He gives more grace. Open your hymnals and let me read these words to you. Look at Hymn # 360. Sing one verse. We read in II Cor. 12: 9, "My grace is sufficient for you." We read in Romans 5: 20, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more." God is saying to each of us, "More than the violent strength of the desires of the world, is His grace, and sufficient to hold those desires in restraint is His grace." Another angle on this verse that helps me is the thought of C. Leslie Mitton in his commentary where he states, "The Lord gives greater favor than the world's friendship does." Praise God for His amazing grace!

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO SELECTIVELY GIVE HIS GRACE TO THE HUMBLE, FOR HE OPPOSES THE PROUD.** (III.)

Notice v. 6b. "Therefore, it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James is telling us plainly that God places Himself in full divine battle array against any form of human pride. God intends to confront and defeat human pride in every form it takes in our life. For God to oppose something is a death sentence to that thing. The word for opposes or resists is a strong word, **antitassomai**. It means to make war as from an encamped army, to attack and destroy, to war against, to take the field in a military expedition. This verse of God helping the humble but making war on the proud, reminds me of Proverbs 3: 33- 35 which states, "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous. Toward the scorners, He is scornful, but to the humble He gives favor. The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace."

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARN'S JEALOUSLY TO DELIVER US AS WE  
SUBMIT TO GOD, RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE FLEES FROM US.** (IV.)

Notice v. 7. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." This call to submission before God and others, is not popular, but biblical. **Hupotasso** means to obey, to place yourself under, to submit to another, to accept your military ranking under the general's command. We cringe at submission. It is doubtful any resistance to God is so affecting of our closeness to Him as our unwillingness to take our rightful place in His family. **Hupotasso** means subordinate yourselves, respect God and His place for you, respect and reverence those He places over you. subordinate your wishes to God and to others, think of others as better than yourselves—Phil 2: 1-5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Submit as spouses to each other, Eph. 5: 21. Wives hupotasso—submit yourselves to your husbands, servants to your masters, employees to your employers, younger people to older, children to your parents. God is yearning for this from me and you. No fudging. Be blatantly honest. How are you doing today? Do you respect God and His placement of you in His family and your family? The Day is soon coming when every knee will bow before God, some because they love Jesus, and His appearing, and some, because they must, even though they oppose His authority. Read about it in II Corinthians 15: 27-29. Did you know that even in the Trinity, the Son, Jesus Christ is submissive to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is submissive and glorifies the Son, Jesus Christ? Who are we to withhold our respect, reverence, and submission to God and to those in His family and in our family whom God has placed over us? All God the Holy Spirit yearns jealously for is all of us, in submission to Him and to His place for us.

James adds that we as submissive believers to God and others are then, and in that order, first submitting, then resisting the devil, he will flee from us. Listen carefully. When we deny our place God has given us, we have no authority to resist the devil. So often believers command Satan to do this and that, and they do it continually. Sadly, the effects of such un-submissive prayers are simply, as Psalm 66: 18 declares, "If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us." We must come under God's authority to pray with authority and resisting the devil is a major authority we have as submissive saints. The Greek word for resist is **anthistemi**. It means to stand against him, to oppose him, to withstand him. But I warn us all. Don't seek to withstand Satan when you know you aren't respecting God and others He has placed over you. The sad story of the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19: 11-20 is that these men were itinerant Jewish exorcists, who did not submit to God or to His Gospel. They undertook to invoke the Name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits. Foolishly, they were saying to the demons, "I adjure you or I command you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims. Guess what!

Satan didn't flee. Instead, the evil spirit answered these un-submissive Jewish exorcists saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit, leaped on them all, mastered them and overpowered them, so that they all fled out the house naked and wounded. Word got around. All of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, had-fear fall on them all. The name of the Lord Jesus was extolled." I warn us, never as an un-submissive husband, wife, parent, child, employee, employer, church member or church leader, ever attempt to oppose or resist the devil as-long as you oppose His order in the church or home. It will be disastrous. The tense of submit, is decisive, urgent, clearly focused. It means place, arrange, or place yourself under another person with voluntary willingness and obedience, align yourselves under the authority of another. Submit.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO HAVE US DRAW NEAR TO GOD, AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO US.** (V.) Notice v. 8a. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Why does God the Holy Spirit want us to draw near to God? It is because Satan takes dead aim at every believer. Four confrontations in the OT are unforgettable. Satan attacked Eve's mind—Genesis 3: 1-7, Job's body—Job 2, David's will, I Chronicles 21—when Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel, leading 70,000 Israelites to die, and the high priest, Joshua's conscience in the days of Zechariah, chapter 3 as Satan stood at Joshua's right side to accuse him. We must all actively resist Satan, but the greatest way to defeat him is to draw near to God. Joshua the high priest had drawn near to God, because as Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord, and Satan showed up, the Lord immediately spoke to Satan, saying, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan. The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" And Joshua the high priest had the angel of the Lord remove his filthy garments and clothe him with pure vestments, a clean turban, and the angel kept standing by. This drawing near to God only happens after we have submitted to God, resisted the devil and now we boldly approach our Lord, and before we can take a step toward God, He has already come toward us. Like the Father ran to the repentant prodigal son, God runs to us. Don Moen-- "If we call to Him, He will answer us, If we run to Him, He will run to us. If we lift our hands, He will lift us up Come now praise his name, all you saints of God. Sing for joy to God our strength Sing for joy to God our strength, our strength." When we draw near to God, the accuser of the brothers who accuses us night and day is defeated.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO LEAD US TO CLEANSE OUR SINFUL HANDS AND PURIFY OUR DOUBLE-MINDED HEARTS.** (VI.) Notice v. 8b. "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you doubleminded." We not only need God's inner cleansing, but to humble ourselves, repentance involves spiritual cleansing of our instruments of sin, our hands— meaning our entire outward life. Such sinning must include a catharsis, a thorough

cleansing by the blood of Jesus. The priests in the OT had to wash their hands in a bronze laver with water, lest they die, Exodus 30: 20. The Jews were to lift up their hands in the sanctuary as we are to do as Christians and we must have clean hands, Psalm 28: 2, and 134: 2. The jealously yearning Spirit of God also wants us to purify our inward impurity, and quit being divided Christians, double-minded. Purity of heart before God is to will one will. Clean hands and a pure heart do not occur alone, for our clean hands have their issue from our pure hearts.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO FIND US MISERABLE, MOURNING AND WEeping, NOT LAUGHING, OVER OUR SIN.** (VII.)

Notice v. 9. “Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.” This seventh Holy Spirit yearning sounds strange to modern Americans. God calls us to deep repentance over our spiritual condition when we sin. James is calling us to an experience of grief that acknowledges how far away from God we have gone. This miserable wretchedness is not a room we are called to live in, but a door of repentance through which we must pass to have restored fellowship. We are to mourn and weep, with an inner sense of wretchedness that cannot be concealed. This isn’t phony or superficial emotions, but a reversal from laughter to weeping, and from joy to dejection and gloom. The tax collector in Luke 18: 13, who beat his breast and cried out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” he was fulfilling the jealous yearning of God’s heart. The repentant psalmist in Psalm 126: 1-2 said, “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream, Then, our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Laughter and joy come by repenting.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT YEARNS JEALOUSLY TO MAKE US HUMBLE BEFORE THE LORD, SO HE WILL EXALT US IN HIS TIME.** (VIII.)

Notice v. 10. “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” James’ words are a reflection of Micah 6: 8 where the prophet declares, “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness/mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” James’ words echo Jesus words in Matthew 18: 3-4. “Truly I say to you, unless you turn/repent and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The motivation for this humble repentance is not His exaltation, but rather, God is telling us we will never be lifted up until we become submissive, obedient, resistant to the devil, draw near to God, cleanse our hands, purify our hearts, become miserable with tears, mourning, and weeping. In His time, the real laughter of Jesus’ joy will break out, and he will exalt us in our humbleness. It’s really the story of humbly receiving discipline we need when we disobey, but after the discipline which is not pleasant, as we weep and cry, later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those trained by discipline. Then joy erupts. Amen.