Fighting on Two Fronts

James 4

1. Introduction
   1. Submission isn’t something we enjoy. The reason for that is that submission doesn’t just mean giving in when you agree with the choice of those in authority over you. It also means submitting to his or her will if you don’t agree as long as it doesn’t contradict your responsibilities to God first.
   2. Fighting against submission spiritually boils down to two fronts we wage war from: the spirit and the flesh.
   3. Paul addresses this in Romans 7 through many points, but the root of the matter here in James 4 is simple:
      1. If you want to be like the world and fight on the front of the flesh, you will be at war with God.
      2. If you wish to wage war against the flesh, then let the Spirit guide you on how to fight in the light.
   4. Let’s look at each section and see how it can apply to us here in James 4.
2. Two Fronts
   1. As I said earlier, we fight on two fronts.
   2. **Matthew 6:24, ““No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”**
   3. Some translations say mammon. Case in point, you cannot serve both fronts.
   4. We either submit to one or the other; waging war for the side we choose.
   5. Read 1-6 again. **What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30322a)**]are at war within you?[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30322b)**] 2You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4You adulterous people![**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30325c)**] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5Or 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”? 6But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 7Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.8Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”**
   6. The question for ourselves today is what side are we fighting from? The reason we must ask that question is it changes the way we see the world, the way we interact with it, and the way that we may serve it instead of God.
3. Your Thoughts, Your Words, Your Actions.
   1. Your words and actions are simply a byproduct of whom you are inside: your thoughts, your heart, and your mindset.
   2. That is why here in James the writer shifts to this idea of our interaction not just with the world in general terms, but specifically with our fellow man: 11 **Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.[**[**d**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30332d)**] The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?**
      1. A humble Christian is one who is humble not just before God, but before man as well.
      2. James presents a perfect picture of the potential for a Christian to think he or she is right before God, yet evil towards our brother.
      3. John clearly depicts this: **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 1 John 4:20.**
   3. When we judge our brother, we put ourselves in the same place as the law, in effect judging the law. This is something that we have no authority to do, because there is one lawgiver – so who are you to judge another? (Guzik)
   4. However high and orthodox our view of God’s law might be, a failure actually to do it says to the world that we do not in fact put much stock in it. (Moo)
4. Lack of Humility Leads to Arrogance
   1. **Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— 14yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.15Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”**
   2. This passage is quoted often in conjunction with the fragile nature of our guarantees in this life.
   3. We go on in our lives as if the sun will rise tomorrow and everything will work out to our liking. The problem with that thought is it is far from accurate. For **you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? …a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes.**
5. Conclusion
   1. You have to appreciate the way James concludes his thought: **So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**
   2. Put simply: If you know how to wage war against the flesh and don’t do it, what exactly do you think is going to happen? Your passions are warring against you. If you serve the flesh, you are fighting on the wrong front. Cleanse your hands and purify your heart. Humble yourself. Make things right. Your life is just a vapor. Don’t let your service be in vain, knowing what you could have or should have done, but never did.