

1. It is also important to note that the King James Version's translation of James 4:5 contains a blasphemous statement:

**James 4:5** Do you think that the scripture saith in vain,  
“The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.” [ φθόνος  
(*phthónos*): best translated “jealousy” ]?” (KJV)

2. How that got past the proofreaders at Westminster is a mystery, but there it sits in the clear light of day: “The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.” I don't think the word “blasphemy” even starts the process of critiquing this sentence. Words to describe its use in this verse challenge the vocabulary of the English language, but what follows offers a paltry effort:

**Profanation** (prōf'-a-nā'-shun). Act of profaning; specifically, act of violating sacred things; desecration. **Syn.** Profanation implies irreverence or contempt as shown in vulgar intrusion or vandalism; **desecration**, a loss of sacred character, as through pollution, defilement, or reduction to secular usage; **sacrilege**, a maltreatment of something sacred. **Profane** (prō-fāne). **1.** To violate or treat with irreverence, obloquy (ōb'-lō-quy), or contempt (something regarded as sacred). **2.** To debase by a wrong, unworthy, or vulgar use. **4.** Serving to profane or defile that which is holy; blasphemous; irreverent.<sup>3</sup>

3. In James 4:5, the phrase, “The spirit that dwelleth in us” can only refer to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all Church-Age believers. In the KJV, the Holy Spirit is said to “lusteth to envy.” Yes, this is found in a Bible, but only in the King James Version's English translation published in 1611.
4. In Scripture, the nouns, φθόνος (*phthónos*) and ζήλος (*zēlos*) are translated into English by both “jealousy” and “envy.” However, context determines which to use. This statement is a profanation as noted above so it is at first impossible to choose one. Nevertheless, as we go through the exegesis it will be revealed.
5. Now let us start serious exegesis of James 4:5. It begins with the disjunctive interrogative, ἢ (*hē*): “Or,” followed by the phrase, “do you think.” “Think” is the present active indicative of the direct question, δοκέω (*dokéō*): “presume.”<sup>4</sup> This is the best translation because of the subjectivity of the statement.

<sup>3</sup> Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed. (1953), s.vv. “profanation,” “profane.”

<sup>4</sup> “presume: to undertake without clear justification; to suppose to be true without proof; to act or proceed presumptuously.” Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014).



6. James is pointing out that these miscreant believers expose the subjectivity of their thinking by asking the question, “Or do you presume,” followed by the conjunction **ὅτι (hóti)**: “that,” which follows the verb of perception, *dokéō*, “presume.”
7. What they are presuming is revealed by where they are in their spiritual lives, “the Scripture”: **ἡ γραφή (hē graphē)**. This refers to a principle communicated in the New Testament, but not specifically cited here.
8. Yet it clearly indicates that the Scripture does not communicate it’s doctrines in vain, the adverb, **κενῶς (kenōs)**, which is best translated, “to no purpose.”
9. At this point, James inserts a parenthesis that possibly paraphrases a verse from Scripture. It could be his summary of an Old Testament verse or his own personal contribution. Later he summarizes a verse from the Tanakh in verse 6 which is clearly from Proverbs 3:34.
10. I think the following analysis addresses the dilemma faced by those who attempt to source the quotation in verse 5, yet we are left with no confirmed citation:

**We find 4:5 difficult for two reasons: first, its meaning is ambiguous; second, it appears to offer a quotation from Scripture, even though nothing quite like “the spirit that he caused to dwell in us yearns jealously” (or any other meaning that can be construed from the Greek) corresponds to any known text, canonical or otherwise. If we knew what text James had in mind, the ambiguity of the statement no doubt would be more easily resolved, but without a known context for reference, the meaning of the verse stands very much a mystery.<sup>5</sup>**

11. Some who have made the effort to discover this citation have concluded, including McCartney, that it is simply James’s summary of what he will cite **from Solomon in verse 6, yet none of them put much stock in the idea.**
12. Before James quotes Solomon, he offers a synopsis of what Solomon wrote:  
**James 4:5a**      **Do you presume that Scripture speaks to us for no purpose with regard to jealousy?**
13. Next James inserts his parenthesis. It initially contains his assumed summary of Solomon’s quote in Psalms 3:34 which he cites in verse 6b.

---

<sup>5</sup> Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 210.

14. All the English translations get tangled up with the King James's use of the terms "envy" or "lust":
  - a. *The NET Bible* offers, "The spirit of God caused to lie within us has an envious yearning?"<sup>6</sup>
  - b. *The NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* reads, "He jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?"<sup>7</sup>
  - c. *The NIV Archaeological Study Bible* rephrases the verse to read, "Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?"<sup>8</sup>
  - d. *The Ryrie Study Bible: NASB* proposes, "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us."<sup>9</sup>
  - e. *The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV* updates the original with this translation: "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?"<sup>10</sup>
15. In James 4:5b, James writes His paraphrase which in the Greek text begins a parenthesis that continues through verse 6a. Verse 5b is James's summary of Proverbs 3:34 which he then quotes in verse 6b.
16. The parenthesis begins with the proper pronoun, He: "He, the Holy Spirit, jealousy desires." The word "jealously" is the noun, **φθόνος (phthónos)**, but as just noted above, this word "jealousy" belongs in the first half of the sentence which speaks of the Scripture addressing the issue of jealousy.
17. To repeat: the Holy Spirit is the subject of the second sentence regarding His indwelling ministry. Verse 5a addresses the Scripture's opposition to jealousy which is being practiced by the reversionists who are cited in the verse. **11**
18. What turns out to be the second sentence in verse 5 reads, "The Spirit which He [ God ] has made to dwell in us?" [NASB] This is actually where the parenthesis begins. It continues through the first sentence of verse 6.
19. All of the English translations of the Bible are a mess. The word that smooths all this out is the instantaneous present active indicative of the verb **ἐπιποθέω (epipothéō)** which refers to the Holy Spirit's love for the believer whose body He indwells.

<sup>6</sup> For more commentary see: James 4:5b, in *The NET Bible* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 2355n24tc.

<sup>7</sup> *Biblical Theology Study Bible: NIV*, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 2232n4:5.

<sup>8</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 2006.

<sup>9</sup> See alternate reading in Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: NASB*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 1972n4:5.

<sup>10</sup> *The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV*, gen. ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2018), 2109n4:5.

**11** All five English translations cited above miss this. To understand their conundrum, read the *NET Bible's Text-critical Note: tc 24* and *Translator's Note: tn 25* at James 4:5.



20. This love begins at the moment of salvation. It is His desire that the believer take seriously the issue of spiritual growth under the teaching ministry of a pastor-teacher so that He, the Holy Spirit, can begin to facilitate his *kardía*.
21. The third Person of the Trinity is mentioned by the noun, **πνεῦμα (pneúma)**: “Spirit.” This is followed by the aorist active indicative of the verb **κατοικέω (katoikéō)**: “indwell.”
22. The instantaneous aorist indicates that the action of this verb occurs at a moment in time and continues in that status. This means the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is permanent.
23. It should be noted that the filling of the Holy Spirit is contingent upon the believer’s ability to refrain from committing mental-attitude, verbal, or overt sins. On the other hand, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is permanent and cannot be lost.
24. This gets us to the expanded translation of:

**James 4:5** “Do you presume that Scripture speaks to us for no purpose with regard to jealousy? **(The Holy Spirit Who dwells permanently within us deeply loves [ ἐπιποθέω (epipothéō) ] us.)** (EXT)

**James 4:6** But He gives greater grace. Therefore it [ Scripture ] says, **“God is opposed to the proud [ ὑπερήφανος (huperéphanos): arrogant ], but gives grace to the humble [ ταπεινός (tapeinós): devout {see Proverbs 3:34 below} ].”** (NASB)

25. This quotation in James 4:5b is James’ assumed summary of Proverbs 3:34 which he cites in James 4:6b:

**Proverbs 3:34** Surely He scorns [ לֹצַח (lus) ] the scornful [ to deride or intimidate ], but gives grace [ חֵן (chen) ] to the humble [ עֲנָו (‘anaw): devout ]. (NJKV)

26. Those who scorn the humble and devout will be scorned by divine discipline. The following analysis of this behavior pattern emphasizes how God deals with those who “deride and intimidate” believers:

**עֲנָו (‘anaw). This adjective stresses the moral and spiritual condition of the godly as the goal of affliction implying that this state is joined with a suffering life rather than with one of worldly happiness and abundance.**

**‘anaw expresses the intended outcome of affliction: humility. Moses’ description of himself (Numbers 12:3) as such a man is no proud boast, but merely a report of his position: absolute dependence on God. Of all men he was most properly related to God. Throughout the rest of Scripture such an attitude and position is lauded as blessed and to be desired.**

**This is the goal which God intended when he afflicted his people and toward which they are to endure affliction. The humble consider and experience God as their deliverer receiving grace (undeserved favor) from him (Proverbs 3:34). They rejoice when God is praised, seek God (Psalm 69:32), and keep his ordinances (Zephaniah 2:3). They wait on God (Psalm 37:11) and are guided by him (Psalm 25:9). As such they are commended as being better than the proud (Proverbs 16:19). They are contrasted with the wicked (Proverbs 37:11) and the scoffers (Proverbs 3:34).<sup>12</sup>**

27. Following James’ paraphrase of Proverbs 3:34 in James 4:5b, he returns to the context with a summary statement of the divine policy of grace in verse 6: “But He gives greater grace.”

**James 4:6a** But He gives greater grace. Therefore it [ Scripture ] says, “God is opposed to the proud [ ὑπερήφανος (*hyperēphanos*): arrogant ], but gives grace to the humble.”  
(NASB)

1. The plural verb “gives,” is the progressive present active indicative of **δίδωμι (*dídōmai*)**: “To confer as a benefit that involves continuous action. God continues to give “greater grace”: the adjective, **μέγας (*mégas*)**: “amazing,” plus the noun, **χάρις (*cháris*)**: “grace, i.e., unmerited favor.”
2. Therefore, a tip of the cap to John Newton’s famous hymn, “He gives us amazing grace.”
3. James then concludes the parenthesis with the phrase, “Therefore it, Scripture, says.” At this point James closes the parenthesis. This requires us to go back to the first sentence of verse 5:

**James 4:5a** Do you presume that Scripture speaks to us for no purpose with regard to jealousy?

<sup>12</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, נָצַח in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Wilke (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 682–83.



4. In verse 6b, James quotes a verse from the Old Testament. His congregation consists primarily, if not totally, of Messianic Jews who are quite familiar with the Septuagint, the Koine Greek translation of the Hebrew *Tanakh*, תנ"ך (*Tanakh*), and that portion of it called the כְּתוּבִים (*Kethuvim*): the Writings, whose three Poetic books include Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.

**James 4:6b** “God is opposed [ the static present middle indicative of the verb, ἀντιτάσσω (*antitássō*): a military term describing the battle order of divine deployment in the Invisible War ] to the arrogant,” [ ὑπερήφανος (*huperēphanos*) ], but gives grace to the humble [ ταπεινός (*tapeinós*): a devout reverence toward God ]. (EXT)

5. The static present of *antitássō* represents a divine policy which is assumed as perpetually existing, or to be ever taken for granted as a fact. God is eternally in opposition to the arrogant: *huperēphanos*.
6. Simultaneously, God is eternally gracious to the *tapeinós*, those having reverence toward Him.
7. We are now able to pull together the expanded translation of James 4:4–6:

**James 4:4** You adulteresses, do you not already know that keeping on being a lover of *cosmos diabolicus* is tantamount to alienation from God? Therefore, whoever has decided to be a lover of *cosmos diabolicus* appoints himself an enemy of God.

**v. 5** Do you presume that Scripture [Proverbs 3:34] speaks to us for no purpose with regard to jealousy? (“The Holy Spirit Who dwells permanently within us deeply loves us.”)

**v. 6** Moreover He gives amazing grace. Therefore, Scripture says,) “God is divinely deployed in order of battle against the arrogant, but gives grace to those who express reverence toward Him.” (EXT)

It took over two months to sort out the expanded translation of verses 4 through 6. All my commentaries on the Letter of James universally declared how difficult a passage it is and a lot of assumptions were included in their analyses.

For example, Dan G. McCartney’s commentary on James cites “six issues” that need to be resolved regarding the word “jealousy.” He considers “5 options,” followed by “7 considerations,” covering “3½ pages” including “10 footnotes,” followed by “five approaches.”

(End JAS4-39.Rev. See JAS4-40.Rev. for the continuation of study at p. 391.)

