

James 4:1-6: We might be inclined to think that the 1st-century church was so much better than we are today... They were not far removed from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

But then, when we read this text, we are reminded of what was written by wise King Solomon: Ecclesiastes 7:10:

"Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this."

Today we have the complete canon of scripture, many saints in ages past did not have copies of the Word; God has given us everything we need to know His revealed will right here. 2 Peter 1:3-4

So, what is the problem? Why does this happen in churches? Among brethren who profess to believe Christ? We are the problem!

In this text, James was dealing with sin that was destroying the NT churches of the scattered and dispersed believing Jews.

Here were professed believers meeting TOGETHER in the churches that were full of discord, contention, and fighting! You expect behavior like this in the world, (remember this, we'll come back to it), but what a terrible thing when this happens among God's people, in church gatherings!

In (V1) James went right to the root of the problem, these wars, these fights that are happening "AMONG YOU" are coming from "WITHIN" YOUR own hearts, "from your lusts that war in your members". You're fighting among yourselves because you're full of self-serving sinful passions within! Behavior LIKE THIS should immediately be recognized by any of us as children of God, if it does rear its ugly head among us, we should seek to stop it and not perpetuate it. But anger and pride so often blind to those who are immersed in it.

James wrote you're fighting and warring among yourselves... but you're engaged in the wrong fight! You're fighting the wrong war!

While you're fighting against each other, you're losing the real war. You need to be fighting the good fight of faith in Christ! That's good warfare!

James identifies (3) wars in this text, we need to be engaged in all (3): There's the war against yourself, the world, and Satan. The first battlefield is the war against your sinful self, the old you!

If you don't actively engage in this spiritual warfare within you with the wisdom that God has given you, against YOURSELF, to kill sinful lusts, passions, and sinful attitudes within you, they will come out in your life, and then YOU will be the cause of strife & contention in the church and among your brethren! 1 Peter 2:11, Romans 7:22-25, Galatians 5:16-26

This is who we should be: Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 3:12-16

Now, I would like to think that we (GFBC) are NOT warring and fighting among ourselves, but how do we as saints keep ourselves from fighting like sinners"? How do we KEEP the unity of the faith in the bond of peace?

TEND TO YOURSELF! This is Christianity 101: You must walk by faith in Christ, and in obedience to His Word, (His revealed will), YOU must seek God daily in communion and prayer, (I encourage you to pray like the Lord Jesus taught you to pray) when you've sinned, confess your sins to your Heavenly Father, and then forsake your sins. And then, forsake not the gathering on the Lord's Day!

When you make good use of these "means of grace" that God has given each of you, the more your spiritual senses will be exercised to discern both good and evil... the more ready you will be "to kill" sins within YOUR OWN thoughts when they're first conceived before they come out in your life! REMEMBER THAT sin doesn't start or originate when it is acted out and outwardly committed, it begins long before that..... it begins in your mind and thoughts where it was first conceived and birthed... Before anyone saw or felt its hatred and poison it was nourished and fed in the dark secret places of your heart! That's where you need to KILL IT!

James 1:12-15

I pray that you can see how important it is for each of you, children of God, to be on a constant search and destroy mission in your heart and mind... to constantly be on the lookout for "sleeper cell lusts and sins" that may be lurking and hiding in your heart. Matthew 15:19: Out of the heart!

Joshua 7:21-24: The unmortified sleeper cell sin of covetousness "rose" in Achan's heart when HE SAW the garment and gold!

Good King David, the man after God's own heart, gave quarter to his secret lust and so fixed his eyes on another man's wife and committed fornication with her!

Judas Iscariot's secret sin made him angry when Mary wasted her precious ointment upon Christ. John 12:4-6

Children of God, "keep your hearts with all diligence", never let your guard down, and never think that one little hidden sinful lust (that you are entertaining in your heart is harmless) never think that it cannot take you down! The little foxes! Jeremiah 17:9-10, Psalm 139:23-24

You must give no quarter to any sin/any lust within, but you must search and identify sin (sinful thoughts within) and kill them "preemptively" before they ruin your life and the testimony of Christ in you!

James was dealing with believers whose testimonies and witness for Christ had been greatly damaged by embraced and unmortified sin in their lives!

James 4:2-3: Ye lust, (and have not), ye kill, (ye covet and hate) and desire to have, (but you cannot obtain, you're not

satisfied), ye fight and war, yet (STILL) you have not, because ye ask not."

But then, "you ask and receive not because you ask amiss, (from evil hearts), your prayers are self-serving, selfish, and motivated by your lusts!

First (V2), James tells them: "ye have not because ye ask not."

Was James encouraging them to ASK GOD to give them their sinful lusts and desires? No! But perhaps by telling them TO ASK GOD, they might be convicted in HOW they were asking God!

I think (it goes without saying) that these "believers" were not people of genuine prayer and communion with God! What's worse is that THEY DID arrogantly ask God (IN WICKED PRAYERS) to give them what was their self-serving lusts and carnal desires!

James 5:16: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much".

In James' call to them to pray, perhaps (thought he) that they would remember how the Lord Jesus taught them/us to pray! "Thy will be done in earth (in my life, not my will), as Your will is in done heaven".

This raises the question for each of us as children of God to examine how are praying!

Are your prayers self-serving? Are you asking God to give you what you want to satisfy and gratify your fleshly and worldly desires? Or are you asking God for what is His will for you, and for what will bring Him glory and honor?

How did these professed believers get themselves into this sinful fix that they were in?

They allowed the god of this world to bewitch them and lure them away from Christ in their hearts and minds! HOW? They became intimate in their friendship with the world, they were allowing the world to win back their hearts... The result, they brought the world into the church.

They were committing spiritual adultery with the world!

2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 John 2:15-17

This is the battle on the 2nd front, which we will pick up next time! For now, child of God, tend to yourself and your hearts, as written:

Hebrews 12:1: Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, LOOKING unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith".

Psalms 139:23-24

Do you think that the scriptures speak falsely about lust, envy, pride, and contention? Or that God's Spirit within us would cause us to lust with envy? That is NOT how the Spirit of God will be revealed from the lives of His people!

