

BOOK OF JAMES
DEALING WITH STRIFE-PT 1
JAMES 4:1-6

Introduction

Last week we looked at the matter of *Worldly Wisdom Vs. Godly Wisdom* from *James 3:13-18*.

In those verses James stated that **bitter envying and strife** in our hearts doesn't descend from above but rather comes from that which is **earthly, sensual, and devilish!** (i.e. It is ungodly!)

He continues with this thread of dealing with strife in our life and elaborates more on it in Chapter 4. That's what we want to look at this evening!
DEALING WITH STRIFE!

I. WHERE DOES STRIFE COME FROM? (4:1-4)

James 4:1 asks the question "*From whence come wars and fightings among you?*"

The word "*fightings*" is a speaking of "*a battle or controversy*" of which we know there can be *many types of battles or controversies over many things!*

The word "*wars*" is a picture of what it sounds like. A drawn out series of battles between differing sides!

When we think of "*wars*" we like to think that is **something that is between countries and nations, not something going on in the Church!**

When we think of "*fightings*", again, we like to think that is **something that is out in the world not inside the walls of God's house or inside the hearts of God's people!**

But if you've been around Church long enough, sadly you may have seen or even been involved in some Church strife that escalated to the point where you thought an all out war had broken out! **(Let me just say that is not of God—it is earthly, sensual, devilish! But it is also very sad because it can cause great hurt among God's people and it both hurts and harms the cause of Christ!) *John 13:34-35***

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It is one of the reasons why I dislike Church business meetings so much! Some of the worst cases of wars and fightings that I have seen in my 62 years in Church have come out of Church business meetings!

So, *where does strife come from?* Well, we'll look at what James says here in Chapter 4, but I want you to understand that ultimately it comes from the one who is at war with God—That is Satan!

Let me just say that **Satan loves a good fight among the Brethren in Church because it serves his purposes so well!**

If he can **keep us fighting with each other instead of fighting him and fighting against sin in our lives**, he'll poke it and stoke it any way he can! (*e.g. Poking a fire.*)

If he can **keep us sidetracked with our battles amongst each other, then we can't focus on what Christ would have us to focus on!**

So, Satan will do all he can to **excite our passions and desires to the point where Holy Spirit leadership is forgotten!**

And even though James doesn't specifically state it here in Chapter 4 he alludes to it in Chapter 3 where he says that **bitter envying and strife is "devilish!" Satan seeks to stir up strife within the local Church! Yes, it is earthly and sensual...but it is also devilish!**

A. Strife Comes From The Lusts That War Within Us!(Vs. 1b)

The word "*lusts*" means "*the desires for sensual pleasure*"! There is at least a three-fold manifestation of lusts of the heart.

- (1) It is manifest in the desire for prominence. (pride)
- (2) It is manifest in the desire for power. (pride)
- (3) It is manifest in the desire for possessions. (pride)

These "*lusts*" are said to "*war in our members.*"

- (1) There is war between man and his conscience.
- (2) There is war between conviction and corruption.

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- (3) There is war between corruption and further corruption!
(Giving way to one sin in our life can lend itself to giving way to another. After all, think about it, is the flesh ever really satisfied? No!)

B. The Results Of Lusts.

1. **It Causes An Unsatisfied Longing In Some Who Never Obtain!** *“Ye lust, and have not.” 4:2a*
(i.e. Covetousness)
The word **“lust”** here is talking about **“the action of desiring, coveting, or wanting something!”**
Some people die without their lusts ever being fulfilled!

2. **It Causes An Unsatisfied Longing In Some Who Do Obtain Some Things But Don’t Obtain Satisfaction!**
“Ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not...” 4:2b
This speaks of those given to envy and/or covetousness.

Covetousness is usually accompanied by other sins.
Romans 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

- a. **The wars and fightings come about when men are unable to get their desires by legitimate means!**
Covetousness generally causes much strife and contention where it is found (home, neighborhoods, church etc.).
- b. **Sometimes actual physical murder can result!**
- c. **Sometimes character assassination results!**
(e.g. politics)

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- d. **Sometimes relationships are killed!**
How many families have been destroyed because of someone’s lust being out of control?
- e. **Sometimes we kill the truth!**
Covetousness drives some to dishonesty and lying and stealing!
- f. **Sometimes it causes all out war!**
How many wars have been fought over some leader trying to fulfill his lusts?

3. **Lusts And The Resulting Strife And Selfishness Hamper Our Prayer Life! (Vs 2c and 3)**
Sometimes we fail to legitimately ask God for things in accord with God's will and provision!
1 John 5:14-15 14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

God is not into answering our carnal prayers—prayers that are prayed for things that are just to fulfill our lusts! In fact, when we have abnormal desires for a thing, God often withholds it for our own good. **We need to thank Him for the prayers He doesn’t answer sometime!**

We need to learn to look at things from God's perspective when we fail to receive something we really wanted very much.
Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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4. Strife and selfishness cause wrong prayer motives.

"...ye ask amiss."

"Amiss" means "evilly or with evil intent."

The ends and aims are wrong! Our ends and aims are wrong when we ask for something just to fulfill our fleshly lusts and desires.

"...ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts!"

As Believers, we should seek to be givers, not receivers.

5. Strife and selfishness lead to spiritual adultery. (4:4)

Worldly lusts such as described in verses 1-3 will cause a person to commit spiritual adultery and make them at enmity with God.

Remember how Israel was spoken of as an adulteress?

Hosea 1:2 "... for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD."

Hosea 4:12 "...for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God."

The Church is presented as Christ's bride.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

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There is no harmony in a home with unfaithfulness. The Believer's relationship with Christ parallels the husband wife relationship.

Spiritual adultery means someone lusts after things rather than desiring a close relationship with the LORD! Friendship with the world and the things of this world have become more important to them than their relationship with God.

"...know ye not..." i.e. THINK!

He appeals here to what they should know to be true!

"...the friendship of the world is enmity with God."

We know that! Don't we?

Believers have no business being friends with the world...

(a) The world speaks of those things that appeal to the appetite, to imagination and to pride.
(1 John 2:15-17)

(b) Friendship with the world causes one to become a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.
(Part of the perilous times in *2 Timothy 3:4*)

Oh how we need to evaluate, from time to time, where our true friendship lies.

Certain things in our lives will show us a manifestation of spiritual adultery or friendship with the world.

- (a) Failure to pray and study God's Word.
- (b) Failure to be obedient to the Word.
- (c) When earthly, material things take precedence over Spiritual things.

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The world speaks of the world system headed by Satan.

There is no neutrality where God is concerned.

Luke 11:23 {He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.}

6. Our Human Spirit That We Are Born With Lusteth To Envy! (Our Fleshly Spirit!) (Vs 5)

Note that this point is a question: “*Do ye think?*”

i.e. This point is something that we must think about and know!

WHERE DOES STRIFE COME FROM?

II. HOW DO WE GET BEYOND THE STRIFE IN OUR LIFE?

We’ve seen where it comes from...

Our Lusts (Out Of Control Lusts!)

Our Failure To Ask For Things Or Asking Amis!

Our Spiritual Adultery Or Friendship With The World!

Our Human Spirit

So, How Do We Get Beyond The Strife In Our Life? (Vs. 5-6)

A. Believers Must Know That The Spirit Of God Yearns Over Us With A Holy Jealousy! (Vs. 5)

Just as our human spirit lusteth in us to envy the things of this world, the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers lusts, yearns, desires, and longs after us. In fact, He yearns with a holy envy and jealousy over us.

When does the Holy Spirit yearn over us with jealousy?

All the time, but in a special way when temptation confronts us and we do wrong.

The Holy Spirit is always yearning over us and He is always jealous over us. But if we turn away from Christ and become a friend of the world—if we become spiritual adulterers and adulteresses—the Spirit of God does not cast us off and turn away from us.

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He loves us and cares for us and wants to rescue us from the ways of the world! So He brings chastening in our lives!

He yearns and longs for us with deep, intense jealousy!

He yearns and longs for us to return to Christ with our full devotion!

B. Believers Must Know That God Gives The Humble Believer Grace And More Grace, But He Resists The Proud!

Of course we know grace means the favor and blessings of God, any favor and blessing which God gives.

When the believer faces temptation or does wrong, God meets the believer’s need, no matter what it is— strength, wisdom, power, perseverance, patience, forgiveness.

The believer does not deserve God’s grace and blessing, but God loves him. Therefore, God gives him whatever he needs. In fact, God gives more grace, that is, grace upon grace, grace and more grace.

The person who turns to God away from the world and his wrongdoing will receive all the grace from God he will ever need and then some.

God looks after and cares for His children—loving, nourishing, nurturing, sheltering, protecting, and fulfilling his child’s every need!

Luke 14:11—“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”