

James 4:1-10

Freedom to Live

I. What Cause Quarrels and Fights Among You? (Verses 1-2)

- A. James is talking to the church. Sometimes we believe the early church was a special, golden age in which everyone loved God, one another and lived to minister to the lost; there were no arguments, differences of opinion or theological debate. **Not so!**
- B. **“Quarrels”** — Can be translated “wars” and is the idea of ongoing, chronic battles.
- C. **“Fights”** — Is a word used for separate battles or conflicts within a war.
- D. **James uses both words to note both the chronic fighting which was taking place within the church as well as the flare up or single encounters which were happening.**
- E. **Stan Mikita, a professional hockey star, used to get into a lot of fights during games. He stopped when his eight-year-old daughter asked a very grown-up question: "How can you score goals when you're always in the penalty box, Daddy?"**
- F. **If our church or life is ever in turmoil...embroiled in conflict...we won't be much good for the Kingdom of God... We will find ourselves sidelined from the real battle...true fight...for God's glory and men's souls.**

- G. *The Question* — What causes the chronic fighting and momentary blow ups among you?
- H. *The Answer* — “The teaching in our passage is that quarrels and conflicts arise because men make pleasures their aim. Their lives are not God-centered but self-centered.” Vaughan, C. (2003). *James* (p. 83). Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press.
- I. Nothing wrong with a righteous pleasure. We will see that in a bit. **But, pleasure must be in accordance with God’s plan for our life and never become an idol to us.**
- J. Sin is a power at work in the members of our body. There is a constant war going on within us. **Our sin nature bombards us with the temptation to make pleasure an idol in our life**
- K. *The Westminster Catechism* asserts that the chief end of man is “to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” There is another philosophy of life which affirms that pleasure is the chief good in life and that moral duty is fulfilled in the gratification of pleasure-seeking instincts and dispositions. In other words the chief end of man is the gratification of self, not the glorification of God. Vaughan, C. (2003). *James* (pp. 81–82). Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press.
- L. “You desire and do not have so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel.”

M. Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.

N. James emphasizes here what *can* and *does* happen when men choose to live for pleasure and the gratification of self rather than God; the desire for pleasure drives men to do things they never dreamed they were capable of doing.

O. The passion or desire for pleasure will itself begin to control the person who lives by them. Its not just the person or possession that you lust for but the lust itself which begins to move you. That longing, lust, craving will begin to direct, motivate and destroy your life. Unbridled, sinful passion is deadly.

P. James wants us to see the power and potential for self-centered, hedonistic, unholy passion to destroy our fellowship with other believers and even our life.

I. You Do Not Have, Because You Do Not Ask (Verses 2b-3)

- A. Many of the pleasures we want would be ok to have if they were not an idol in our life. If we would pursue God and ask Him for them we just might have them.**
- B. Many of the things we desire in life would be ours to enjoy if we would simply ask God for them.** Herein is a great mystery for the believer in Christ, **“Prayer moves God to action on our behalf.”** This does not mean we will get everything we ask for but it does mean God hears, listens and gives us just the answer that we need.
- C. If you passionately want something then by all means ask God for it! He will give it to you unless He has something better for you. If your request is within the will of God you will absolutely have it!**
- D. 1 John 5:14-15 — “This is the confidence we have in approaching God, if we ask ANYTHING according to His will He hears us. And, if He hears us, whatever we ask, we have that which we ask of Him.”**
- E. If you are passionate for something then ask God to give it to you; to meet the desire in your heart with His resources and within His plan for you!**
- F. You Ask And Do Not Receive Because You Ask Wrongly, To Spend It On Your Passions**

- G. Their requests were legitimate, but their motivation for asking them was illegitimate. They wanted only to satisfy their own cravings, pamper their own passions. God's glory, God's service, consideration for other people—none of these things entered into their thinking. Such prayers are an insult to God** Vaughan, C. (2003). *James* (p. 85). Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press.
- H. Motivation is important when it comes to our prayer life. Is God the center of your life? Is His glory of greatest importance to you? Is God #1? If not then your prayer life will be a mess. You will be stuck praying for stuff so that your lusts and self-centeredness might be satisfied by God's supply.**
- I. Literally, the *storehouses of heaven* are ready to be opened on the one who makes it the business of his life to love and enjoy God while making Him famous to a world lost in sin.**
- J. Dr. Helen Roseveare, missionary to Zaire, told the following story. "A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. 'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord,**

send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.' That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, 'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!' And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child's sincere requests, and 5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles."

K. But God has little interests in handing out trinkets in order to make you and I more comfortable or pampered when it does not meet God's ends and intentions for us.

L. Selfish ambition, self-centeredness and the lusts of the flesh wreck the prayer life of the believer in Christ.

I. You Adulterous People! Do You Not Know Friendship With The World is Enmity With God (Verses 4-6)

A. Adulterous People — We are the bride of Christ. We are the apple of God's eyes. He is the object of our love and life. We are to be devoted to Him and make Him the priority. **If you begin to love the world, self and the pleasures of sin you have cheated**

on Jesus. You may not like having it put in those terms but your problem is the Bible not me.

B. Our commitment to Christ is serious. We belong to Him and if we begin to love someone or something more than Him we have cheated on God.

C. Friendship With The World is Enmity With God

D. World — The system of life and living which is in direct opposition to God and His way of doing things. **It is a system of thought and action that makes man the center of existence and his pleasure the chief end of all of life.**

E. When you choose to live a worldly kind of life rather than one centered on Christ you have chosen to take up arms against Christ and become an enemy of His will and person.

F. 1 John 2:15-17 — Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

G. “He Years Jealously Over The Spirit He has Made To Dwell In Us”

H. “God has put His Holy Spirit within the Christian and regards with intense concern the Christian’s harboring any

rival spirit in his heart. God claims us entirely for Himself. No alien relationship, such as friendship with the world, will be tolerated by Him. He wants the undivided devotion of every human heart.” Vaughan, C. (2003). *James* (p. 88). Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press.

- I. **God loves us with a complete and total devotion. He intends that we would love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is a tall order. He knows that we cannot do it on our own.**
- J. **But He Gives More Grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**
- K. God knows the temptations we face. He knows the difficulty involved with resisting the lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life. **But God never asks us to do anything without giving us the power to do that which He asks!**
- L. **Grace** — “God’s generous and effective help of men.” **This is God’s favor, strength, power and everything we need to live a righteous life (God’s kind of life).**
- M. **The greater the challenge the more grace God gives.** Every single time we face a crisis, challenge or temptation we can know with absolute certainty that God will give us the grace we need to succeed in the task ahead. **But, in order to receive it we must humble ourselves and seek it.**

- N. **God sets Himself against those who are proud. Those who refuse to recognize God's right to rule over them; refuse to recognize His sovereignty over their life.**
- O. **But to the humble, those who depend upon Him; those who recognize their dependence upon God and His right to rule their life, God gives grace.**

I. God's Plan For a Happy Spiritual Marriage Between Us And Himself

A. Submit Yourselves Therefore To God

- B. **Submit** — Set yourselves under God. This is a conscious decision that we make. Recognize that you are not God and place yourself under His authority, protection and sovereignty.
- C. This is a moment where we believe and live the fact that we are not God and Jehovah is. We are not in control and He is. We are completely, utterly and totally dependent upon Him for everything...period.

D. Resist the Devil And He Will Flee From You

- E. **Resist** — To take your stand against
- F. **If we submit ourselves to God we are necessarily turning our back on the devil. We are declaring ourselves a friend of God**

and an enemy of Satan and his kingdom. We take a stand against the devil in the name of Jesus and with a faith in His grace for our sufficiency to the task.

G. Flee From You — When we depend upon God and exercise our dependence upon Him by faith, the grace of God makes us strong and the devil runs. He does not hang around to inspect his failure. Of course we know he looks for a more opportune time to try his luck again. But when we resist him and depend upon God for our victory he flees.

H. Draw Near To God

I. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

J. Believers come near to God by spending time with Him and following His will for their life; by “pressing into” and enjoying the presence of God. It is to “bask in the warmth of His presence.”

K. When we reach out and call unto God He comes near to us. He is ready and waiting to be with the one who would call to Him. Ready to give His life and light to the one who would seek Him. To fulfill the promise of hebrews 11:6.

L. Cleanse Your Hands and Purify Your Hearts

M. Holiness and purity are supposed to be the hallmark of the Christian's life. It is supposed to be who we are and if we are to draw near to God and experience His life as James speaks of then we must repent of sin and leave behind all the things which lead to sin.

N. The question is, "What are you allowing to hang mourned in your life that ends you to sin?" "What sins are you allowing to be a regular part of your life?" James says repent! Turn from these things and rid your life of them! If not they will hinder the receipt of grace into your life.

O. Purify Your Hearts You Double-Minded

P. **Here James addresses the one who is trying to ride the fence of holiness and sin.** You cannot have things both ways...to repent means a choice and if you have not repented you are simply living with and protecting your sin and sinful rebellion against God.

Q. Be Wretched And Mourn And Weep...

R. Be real, serious and see your sin for the horror that it is. Turn around and flee from it to God.

S. Wabush, a town in a remote portion of Labrador, Canada, was completely isolated for some time. But recently a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. Wabush now has one road leading into it, and thus, only on one road leading

out. If someone would travel the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get into Wabush, there is only way he or she could leave---by turning around. Each of us, by birth, arrives in a town called Sin. As in Wabush, there is only one way out--a road built by God himself. But in order to take that road, one must first turn around. That complete about face is what the Bible calls repentance, and without it, there's no way out of town.

I. Humble Yourselves Before The Lord And He Will Exalt You

- A. God is ready to raise you up. His desire is to lift you from the ashes and allow you to enjoy a life of participation in Him and what He is doing in the world around us.
- B. But you have to turn from sin, resist the temptations of the devil, turn from a life lived for the lusts of the sinful nature and embrace a life far more pleasurable and valuable...a life in Christ and His plans for your life.