

James Part 9 - Study Notes

Introduction

At the beginning of Chapter 4 James dealt with open conflict amongst Jewish Christian believers. In the first ten verses James openly talked about these fights with their tragic results.

James 4:1-3 *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.* We should expect the unsaved people, who don't know God, or His Word and His Holy Spirit to be characterised by fighting. It is sad to say that believers fight in Church, there are **quarrels and conflicts**. The Greek word for **quarrels** meant that they were in an on-going state of quarrelling that exploded into open conflict.

This was not from Satan. It came from within the believer, from what we want, from our own desires, from having our own way, from our own lusts. Disorder and wickedness results from our own jealousy and selfish ambition: James 3:16 *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.* Satan may have a field day but we are to blame when this happens. James went straight to the point.

James used a neutral term for pleasures, which literally means enjoyment. When something, or someone, steps in the way of fulfilling our desires, our nature tends to fight until we get our way.

Those who fight out of frustration fail to turn to God for their provision. Jesus said in John 16:24 *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* Fighters fail to pray. Sometimes people respond with I've prayed but God doesn't give me what I want. James answered *you ask and you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* God's promise of answering our prayers, and giving us what we ask for, must be governed by all the Bible's teaching about prayer. **This isn't a name-it-and-claim-it theology.**

The Apostle John helps us balance our perspective on prayer. 1 John 3:22 *and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.* 1 John 5:14 *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

James warned about pleasure motivated prayer; John encouraged God-pleasing prayer. Spiritually minded Christians pray for things that please God, not for things that fuel their own desires.

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.* James addressed his readers as **adulterers**. That grabbed their attention. Because they were cheating on God! Their attention and affection was not on God and His people, but towards themselves and on the world. The word **world** is from the Greek word **cosmos**. It refers to the world system that is at odds with God, one that turns their back on Him. God calls people adulterers only if they are supposed to be faithful to Him and aren't. Unbelievers are not adulterers in this case. The Believer who looks to the world system is committing adultery.

So James referred to Christian believers committing spiritual adultery. It is this worldliness in the church that causes quarrels and conflicts. These split churches and destroy ministries. Frustrated inner desires lead to murderous thoughts, arguments, failure to pray, and prayer with the wrong motives.

James 4:5-6 *Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.'*

James followed the problem with a solution. God's jealousy for His people's faithfulness is like a husband longing for his wife's fidelity. This theme is developed in the book of Hosea, where God's relationship to Israel is illustrated by the prophet's relationship to his prostitute wife, Gomer. The first solution to the problem presented by James is the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants control of our life by His Spirit, and that means relinquishing our own control.

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Surrender to God's control is the key principle described in verse 6 *But He gives a greater grace.* This is greater than our will and our selfishness. This is part of the work of the Holy Spirit. It's not easy to turn from the self-centred pride of life and humble ourselves before God. But when we do, we'll find a storehouse of God's grace ready to be poured out on us and then through us.

James 4:7-9 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.* James gave practical advice on how to put the principle of humility into practice through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is imperative that we must submit to God. It is not optional. To follow the viewpoint of the world is to follow the demonic worldly wisdom.

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you.* James is talking about our daily relationship with God, our experience in knowing Him and progressively becoming more like His Son. James taught us how to draw near to God:

- ✚ Cleanse our hands (**stop doing evil!**)
- ✚ Purify our hearts (**stop thinking evil!**)
- ✚ Be miserable and mourn and weep (**feel remorse for your wickedness**)
- ✚ Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom (**Don't make a joke of your wickedness**).

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.* Drawing near to God means to turn our face towards Him, the One who cares about us most, and to open our hands for whatever He has for us.

James said instead of putting up a fight, put on faith. Instead of causing conflict, be content. Being content is feeling comfortable and secure with who you are, and where you are. Not having to **own more** or **reach the top**. Contentment means surrendering our frustrated hopes and missed goals to God. You and I are responsible to do the best we can with what we've got. Peace comes from contentment. Philippians 4:11-13 *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

We need to willingly submit to God and be obedient to Him. When we do He will give us the grace to handle whatever circumstance we face.

Let's look at the word OBEDIENCE. The middle of the word is DIE. Obedience means to **DIE** to ourselves, from what we want, from our own desires, from having our own way, from our own lusts Remember that disorder and wickedness results from our own jealousy and selfish ambition.

Today let's ensure that the worldly system, **cosmos**, does not have any hold into in our lives and the life of Oasis Christian Centre. Let us invite the Holy Spirit to help each of us so that there are no fight and quarrels among us.