

**JAMES SERIES #18:  
The Church from Hell  
James 4:1-8  
Grace Community Church  
Kingston, Tennessee  
Sunday, April 28, 2019**

**1. TEXT: James 4:1-12, (1) Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (2) You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. (4) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? (6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (11) Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. (12) There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?**

**2. INTRODUCTION:**

**a. ILLUSTRATIONS:**

- i. EX: A fictional church where the pastor and the Minister of Music were having their differences**
- ii. EX: A congregation of the Church of God in Christ in Wichita, Kansas, has asked a court to stop four of the members from disrupting services.**
- iii. EX: of other church squabbles**

**I. THE CHURCH DYNAMIC**

**A. COMPRISED OF CHRISTIANS**

**1. PROOF James' readers were believers:**

- a) PROOF #1 THESE WERE SAVED CHURCH MEMBERS: v. 11, they are called "brethren"**

- b) **PROOF #2 THESE WERE SAVED CHURCH MEMBERS: v. 4, James called his readers, “adulterers and adulteresses”**
- c) **PROOF #3 THESE WERE SAVED CHURCH MEMBERS: v. 8, they are called “double minded”**

**2. James’ readers claimed to be believers, but they were acting like lost people**

## **B. CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH**

**1. VICIOUS CLIMATE (“wars,” v. 1)**

**2. VARIOUS CONFLICTS, “Fights” (v. 1)**

**C. VENTED CONTINUALLY, clashes (v. 1, “wars” and “fights” are plural)**

## **II. CAUSE OF THE DISAGREEMENTS**

**A. PURSUIT OF PLEASURE (James 4:1, “Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members.?”)**

**1. The Greek construction is such that James is expecting an affirmative answer to his question**

**2. These fights within the church come from the “desires for pleasure” (v. 1) in the individual members**

**a) “Pleasures”**

**1) The Greek word is the word from which we get our word, “hedonism”**

**2) Hedonism is “the doctrine that...man’s primary moral duty lie[s] in the pursuit of pleasure....”<sup>1</sup>**

**3) A hedonist:**

**(a) Is someone who is only motivated to do something by whether or not that thing will bring him pleasure or not**

**(b) Will sacrifice anything and everything for pleaseure**

**b) The believers to whom James wrote:**

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<sup>1</sup> *The International Webster New Encyclopedic Dictionary*, p. 446.

- 1) Had an inordinate desire for pleasure
- 2) Were not concerned about what God wanted
- 3) Did not care that they were sacrificing church unity in pursuit of their pleasures

### 3. V. 1, James says that these wars were “In your members”

- a) Refers to the:
  - 1) Persons within this church
  - 2) Bodies of these members
- b) Romans 6:13, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
- c) These church members were expressing their old nature
- d) These “desires” WAR within your being (v. 1)
  - 1) The apostle Paul referred to such a conflict in Romans 7:23, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”
  - 2) The ATMOSPHERE of warfare within the church was a manifestation of warfare within the hearts of the individual members

### B. PERSISTENT PASSION (V. 2, “You lust”)

1. The word translated as LUST LIT. means: “To long for, strongly desire, crave”

### III. CONFLICT DELINEATED (v.2, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.”)

The Greek text does not contain punctuation. It is up to the translators to provide it. Many Bible commentators say that this verse should contain 3 sentences instead of the four it contains in our translation.

3 sentences seems to fit the flow of the passage better

I.e., (1) You lust and you do not have, so you kill. (2) You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and war. (3) You do not have, because you do not ask.

#### **A. YOU LUST AND YOU DO NOT HAVE, SO YOU KILL**

##### **1. Is “killing” to be taken literally?**

- a) It is possible. James is showing the extremes to which these believers have gone in their discord
- b) Most likely James used this word as a METAPHOR for “hatred”
  - 1) He speaks metaphorically in the next phrase of this verse, so it is possible he is here as well
  - 2) In the second part of v. 2, James said that the church was at war
  - 3) The apostle John did the same thing in 1 Jn. 3:15, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer....”

2. James goes on to say that this hatred that these church members felt on the inside was acted out on the outside

#### **B. V. 2, YOU COVET AND CANNOT OBTAIN, SO YOU FIGHT AND WAR**

#### **C. V. 2, YET YOU DO NOT HAVE BECAUSE YOU DO NOT ASK**

### **IV. CONDITION DENOUNCED**

James 4:4-6, (4) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? (6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

#### **A. SPIRITUAL ADULTERY (v. 4, “adulterers and adulteresses”)**

##### **1. def.**

- a) “Adultery” is when married individuals forsake their marriage covenant and are unfaithful to their mates
- b) Spiritual adultery is when believers forsake their marriage covenant to their Bridegroom and are spiritually unfaithful to Him

- 1) In Rev. 21:9, believers are called the “Bride of Christ”
- 2) Christ is our Bridegroom
- c) v. 4, “Do you not know...”; the statement is constructed in the Greek so that James is expecting the answer “yes”

## 2. James describes these believers as friends of the world (v. 4)

- a) FRIENDSHIP means “to love, have affection for”
- b) THE WORLD “represents ‘the whole system of humanity (its institutions, structures, values, and mores) as organized without God.’”<sup>2</sup>
- c) 2 Tim. 4:10, “For Demas, because he loved this present world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”
- d) To be friendly with the world-system meant that they had conformed to its philosophy of life

(a) The philosophy of this world says if someone hurts you, hate that person

(1) The Bible says Matthew 5:44, “ ... love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you ....”

2) Being friends with the world automatically made one the enemy of God, v.4, “...Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

## V. COUNSEL AND DIRECTIVES

### A. PERSONAL REQUIRED

#### 1. SUBMIT TO THE SOVEREIGN (V, 7a, present yourself to God)

- a) You need to understand that when you submit yourself to the Lord, the place you end up may be:
  - 1) Diametrically opposed to your own personal desires
  - 2) The opposite of what is your RIGHT to do

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<sup>2</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: James*, p. 134.

(a) Ex—1 Cor. 8, eating meat sacrificed to idols

### 3) Emotionally excruciating

(a) Ex—Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, Mt. 26:39, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

(b) Mt. 5:39-41, (39) "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (40) "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. (41) "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."

## 2. SHUN SATAN, (v. 7, “resist the Devil”)

a) Notice that the **PRESENTING** yourself to God comes before the **RESISTING** the Devil

**B. PERSONAL REPENTANCE** (v. 8, “...Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”)

1. **CLEANUP YOUR ACT** (v. 8, “Cleanse your hands....”)

2. **CORRECT YOUR ATTITUDE** (v. 8, “purify your hearts”)

**C. PRAY RIGHTLY** (James lists 2 problems with his readers’ prayer life):

1. **NOT SCARCELY** (v. 2, “...you do not have because you do not ask.”)

a) God has promised to answer our prayers, Jn. 16:24, “...ask and you will receive....”

2. **NOT SELFISHLY**, (v. 3, “ ... can consume it upon your pleasures.”)