

James 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

James is asking the believers to think—What is it that causes conflict, battle, and quarrels among you? Why do you ever fight? Isn't it because of the desires and lusts of the flesh? I thought it was interesting that the Greek for the word "war" (war in your members) had as a meaning "to contend with carnal inclinations." It seems that most wars are fought over a desire for power or a desire to have control—no matter how noble the stated reason. Discord and fights between family and/or friends are usually caused by injured feelings—whether intentional or unintentional—or jealousy or pride.

James 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

The first part of this verse seems to be describing mankind in general. We tend to lust for or desire what we do not have. People kill in order to get what they want and find out it is never enough; you always want more. All this fighting and war never seems to fulfill. I think the next part of this verse is directed specifically to his audience of believers—"ye have not, because ye ask not."

(1/05) In looking at this verse again I'm inclined to think I opted for the easy out on this verse originally. James is talking to believers. Believers can be just as guilty of lust and murder and fighting as unbelievers. We may be more prone to be guilty because of the attitude of the heart instead of overt actions—but we are just as guilty. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus was quite clear that it is the intent of the heart that establishes guilt.

James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Even when we as believers make requests of God, we often don't receive what we ask for because we ask for things for the wrong reasons—to fulfill our own selfish desires.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

James is using pretty strong language. Why is he calling his audience adulterers and adulteresses. Adultery involves unfaithfulness; it involves giving to someone else what belongs to another. These believers were evidently being unfaithful to God and putting their efforts toward fulfilling selfish desires instead of toward obedience to God. If our desire is for the things of this world, we put ourselves in direct opposition to God. You have to make a choice. You can't serve the God of heaven and the "god of this world."

2Cor. 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

James 4:5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

We have a sin nature. It has corrupted our relationship with God. It doesn't just go away when we get saved. That is why the scripture warns us that it isn't in our nature to do what is right—our nature is to want what we do not have.

James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

"But He" – I believe this is talking about God. He is the giver of grace. The Greek makes the statement that grace includes "especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life." What is the significance of "more" grace. I think this is referring in proportion to the influence of the "spirit that dwelleth in us" in verse 5.

"Wherefore he saith" – Again, I think the he should be He; a reference is being made to scripture which is God's word to mankind. (**Prov. 3:34**--Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.) The word *resisteth* seems to indicate opposition and setting oneself against, and the word *scorn* seems to indicate mocking. We seem to have that God mocks the mocker and strongly opposes the proud, the haughty, those who think they are better than others. On the other hand, God makes provision for those who are humble, lowly in spirit, meek; He strengthens and provides for them to get victory over that "spirit that dwelleth in us" in verse 5.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

"Submit yourselves" = obey, place yourself in subjection to, subordinate yourself

My paraphrase – Obey God. Strongly oppose Satan and he will run away from you. How do we strongly oppose Satan? We can't in and of ourselves. If you are obeying God, He will strengthen you and enable you to have victory over the temptations of the "god of this world." The next verse is the key to this victory.

(5/07) Time for another quote from Wiersbe.

There are two trinities in the Bible. The heavenly trinity is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The other is the world, flesh, and the devil; this is the unholy trinity. The battlefield is the will. There used to be a line drawn between the world and the will of God. These days they keep moving the line. [These notes are from 1971; how much more true is this statement today.] First of all, it is easy to get friendly with the world. Then you can get spotted by the world, because you can't walk with someone that is defiled without getting dirty. Finally, you begin to love the world. The world doesn't love you until you get spotted. Don't be afraid to have scriptural standards. The unsaved will respect you for it. This doesn't mean the world will love you, but it will respect you. The mature Christian is a peacemaker instead of a troublemaker. This is because he lives in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Also, he loves the Father and not the world. The test of whether or not you are in a right relationship with God is by judging your relationship with people.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

The more we are obedient to God and the more we immerse ourselves in His Word, the more intimate our relationship will be. Do we want to give Him the most prominent place in our life, or do we just want Him around, but not close enough to interfere with “our” plans and choices?

I think the emphasis on the second half of the verse is regarding our actions in the flesh (hands) and the desires and intents of our inner being (hearts). James is telling us to clean up our acts and clean up our thoughts and desires. It is a fact that as believers we are dealing with a dual nature—one that is fallen and one that is new (born again, restored).

Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Rom. 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.

James 4:9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your joy to heaviness.*

Recognize who you are without Jesus. Let it cause you misery, grief and tears; show your grief and sadness by lack of laughter and joy as you realize how empty your life is without Jesus. You can't find fulfillment without the Lord.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Take on a position of humility and meekness before the Lord. Those who are humble before Him—“He shall lift up.” This is a promise. How will He lift you up? I believe by providing for you in direct contrast to the person presented in verse 9. He will give you joy and happiness and laughter and fulfillment.

James 4:11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*

The first phrase is simple enough. We are not to slander or speak about a brother in Christ in an evil way. I had no clue how to go about explaining the next part of the verse, so I broke down and read a couple of commentaries. I was trying to figure out how James could equate the brother with the law. I think what I understood is that how we respond to our brother reflects our thoughts concerning the law. If the law says we are to love one another, and we choose to disobey that law (in this case speak evil of our brother), then we are saying in effect—That law isn't worth the paper it is written on. Once we make that choice, we have put ourselves in the position of judge regarding that law. That is not our position—as the next verse is quick to point out.

James 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

The law originated from one being—God. He is the only one with the power to save our lives eternally or condemn us for eternity. James is basically saying—Who do you think you are to pass judgment on anyone? (The implication being

that we are not perfect either and are therefore in no way qualified to pass righteous judgment on someone else)

James 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

“Go to” = come; it is an imperative, a command

I think James is using strong language to get their attention. He wants them to think about their attitude and assumptions. They are assuming that they have more than just “NOW” to make plans and implement them. The fact of the matter is that no one is guaranteed future time on this earth. Our lives are just like a vapor, a mist; you can see it, experience it, for a short time and then suddenly it is gone—vanished; it is over.

James 4:15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Because of the uncertainty of our lifespan, we should always make plans with the understanding that “only if the Lord will” will we be able to implement it.

James 4:16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

Evidently these believers are taking pride in and being arrogant about their successes in life; i.e., “Look what I have done.” That is wrong! Only by the grace of God and through His provision are we able to do anything that is good. In and of ourselves we can do no good thing.

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

This verse has stuck with me through the years. Much to my shame, I have often ignored its teaching because of selfish motives and “human” reasoning. It is the verse that the Spirit has used over and over again in my life to bring me to conviction and a place of shame and repentance before the Lord. Many compromises made on behalf of the kids were made with this verse hovering in my conscience. I justified that I had to make these compromises in order not to lose communication with my children. Sometimes it was making compromises just to “fit in” and not appear to be holier than thou to family and friends. Those were wrong choices that reflected a lack of trust in God to take care of the outcome. My duty as a parent and as a representative of Jesus is to make the right choice. I have gotten better in later years in following through with the “good” things the Lord plants in my heart to do—no matter what friends/family may think.