

Series: James
Title: He Giveth More Grace
Text: James 4: 1-10
Date: February 21, 2010
Place: SGBC, Princeton, NJ

Only God through the continual renewing of grace, can subdue the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

James 4: 1: From whence *come* wars and fightings among you?

All the wars and fighting within nations and between nations is due to the lusts of the flesh. But we must remember to whom James is writing.

James is writing to believers.

James 1: 1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 2: My brethren...

James addresses them fourteen times in this epistle as “brethren.”

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

I. BELIEVERS ARE SINNERS STILL.

When the LORD brought the Israelites into the land of Canaan he did not completely cast out the enemy that he might prove his people. So it is with the believer. The Lord is pleased to leave the enemy of sin in this land that he might prove to the believer our constant need of the God of all-sufficient grace.

A Distinction Made

Throughout the letter, James is reminding us, brethren, to make a distinction between the spirit that is of God and the spirit that is of our flesh. **From whence *come* wars and fightings among you?** We like to play the blame game. But let's get down to the bottom of the matter. What is the real cause of wars and fightings among you? If we strive with each other in this place. From where does that come?

James 1: 14: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed...16: Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning

The believer knows this warring in our members.

Romans 7: 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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.

The believer says, “Truth, Lord.”

James 4: 1: Wars and fightings come *even of my own lusts that war in my members?*

Would James be addressing the brethren concerning this matter, where it not necessary? The unrenewed man is nothing but bitter envy and strife. Oh, but the believer, created anew by the believer, still has the body of sin and death, the same evil imaginations.

Illustration: The apostles only strove with each other when they coveted who should be greatest.

Galatians 5: 2: Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Notice the difference in the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

James 1: 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.

Sin is the lust to be preeminent over others and the lust to have. In chapter 3, James dealt with strife from bitter envy—the evil desire to be masters over others. Here he speaks of strife and contentions from ambition, covetousness—the desire to have.

Notice the different effects of the old nature and the new. The flesh is only contentious. Ye kill, ye fight, ye war. The fleshly nature wars against the new man within us and brethren without. There is no care for the welfare of others in the fleshly spirit. Ye lust, and have not, Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain—there is no contentment, no satisfaction, no peace in the corrupt nature. Where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. That is all we are in the corrupt man of Adam, brethren.

But the fruit of the Spirit is altogether different:

James 3: 17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

II. THE FLESHLY SPIRIT KEEPS US FROM SPIRITUAL COMFORT.

James 4: 2:...ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3: Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

This is the two-fold pollution of the evil nature within us.

The fleshly spirit either tries to gain for “self” without prayer—OR—2) we pray for the carnal end of feeding the fleshly appetite—it is called, inordinate affection.

Hosea 7: 14: And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, *and* they rebel against me.

Illustration: Do you give your children everything they cry for? Do you think your heavenly Father will? What mercy! I cannot think of a worse judgment than to have our carnal desires filled up. But our faithful Father will not allow it.

Gomer said, “I will go after my lovers.” God said, Hosea 2: 6: Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. 7: And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

Praying to a carnal end is spiritual adultery.

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.

Surely, James would not address the believer as adulterers and adulteresses? Turn to Matthew 7. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking to believers in his sermon on the mount. He instructs the believer to ask God and to expect our Father to give that which glorifies his holy name. The Lord gave a simple illustration. Listen to how he addresses you and I, believer:

Matthew 7: 7: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. [next is the illustration] 9: Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10: Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11: If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Self-righteous men have very little difficulty saying, “I am a sinner.” But to be told that in your flesh you are nothing but adulterers and adulteresses—evil--is an offense. So be it. We need to have our lewdness made manifest to us that we might continually flee to Christ in true faith.

The Friendship of the World is Enmity With God.

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

You may try to bridge a friendship with this world and a commitment to Christ but you seek to reconcile two of the most irreconcilable things that exist. Friendship of the world is enmity with God--it makes a man hate God, and to be hated by God. If you are a friend of the world you are an enemy of God; it spiritual adultery; it is leaving our first love, our Husband, and playing the harlot. The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.

Matthew 7: 24: Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Thomas Manton: When we make self the end of prayer, it is not worship of God, but self-seeking. It is not enough to make God the object of the prayer, but the end also.

Examples of lustful prayer: health and long life--that WE may live pleasantly; wealth--that WE may “fare deliciously every day”; estates--that WE may raise up OUR name and family; victory and success—rather than glorifying God’s grace in our weakness; deliverance for the church--out of a spirit of wrath and revenge.

Luke 12: 13: Master, speak to my brother to divide the inheritance....15: And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Simon Magus wanted gifts from God to further the name of Simon among men

Now lets consider an example of true prayer.

I can think of no greater example of true prayer than what our Master said in the midst of soul agony—listen how short and how direct and how singular this prayer is:

John 12: 27: Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?

But for this cause came I unto this hour. [here is the cause for his hour of suffering, and for ours, brethren, and here is true prayer] **28: Father, glorify thy name.**

What do you really pray for?

In infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, are you content to gladly suffer, that the power of Christ may rest upon you? Is it your prayer that Christ might be glorified in his power to comfort your inner man while as yet your body suffers? If so, the Holy Spirit shall be given to comfort and give you peace even in the midst of your utter weakness.

Or is your prayer an abuse of his tender mercies for the sake of revenge, luxury, and excess? If so, we play the adulterer and the adulteress. God, in great mercy and faithfulness, will not give it. As long as we ask to consume it upon our lusts there will only remain, strife and envy and bitterness, but no rest.

III. GRACE SAVES US FROM OURSELVES

James 4: 6: But he giveth more grace.

Though we see what we are in our flesh, the lust that wars in our members, the lust that would have us separated from Christ our Husband, God who changes not will not suffer his children to be lost.

Hosea 2: 10: And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

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

No sinner will ever submit until God has given you a submissive heart.

Has he made you to see the folly of fighting against him? God resisteth the proud—can you overcome God? Has your proud haughty self-serving way brought you any peace? Where God has begun a work of grace, he gives more grace. We are talking about God giving MORE grace.

How Does the Believer Seek More Grace?

James 4: 7: Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Illustration: A hungry stray dog cowers.

James 1: 21: Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 4: 7:...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

As you hear these words that contrary spirit within you that is crying out, "No! No!" is not of God, it is devilish—of the devil. If your hope is that God chose you in free grace, that Christ put away your sin by the sacrifice of himself, if the Holy Spirit has convinced you that your only refuge is Christ Jesus then the only way to resist the devil is by submitting to Christ. But then the devil will flee from you.

Christ has purged the sin of his people—the devil has nothing to accuse to God with. Christ cleanseth the believer continually purging the conscious from dead works to serve him—the devil has no wood to build a fire anymore. The devil once held the power of death and kept God's children in bondage, but not now that the Spirit of grace has quickened and made alive.

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.

James merely repeats what our Savior declared in his sermon on the mount:

James 1: 5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

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

Hosea 2: 11: I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

God humbles by his chastening hand. Has God made you to see that all you are in yourself is sin? Has he turned your laughter to mourning and your joy to heaviness? The proud will not come to the light because you love your deeds and you fear being ashamed. But when God afflicts you in grace, the sinner comes confessing what we are—God upbraids not!

James 1: 21: Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Be not a hearer only but a doer—come to Christ. Listen to this word of promise!

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