

James Chapter 4A

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

- Like the dawning of the sun on a bright and clear summer's day the glory of God that shines in the face of Jesus Christ has shattered the darkness.
- By his appearing He has rescued undeserving sinners from the corruption of and from the penalty of sin.
- Powerfully, lovingly Christ has secured eternal life for all who repent and believe from every tribe, language and nation under heaven.
- For those who believe: the weight of guilt is lifted, the fear of death is gone.
- Now a glorious HOPE fills the heart of the redeemed. The one who rescued them will come again to take them to himself where they will live forever in righteousness, joy and peace.
- John that beloved Apostle and Prophet saw and recorded that great day for us:

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Revelation 22: 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. How our hearts long for that eternal day, when the darkness is past, when Jesus will literally be the light of the world.

- That day when the old things of this corrupt world will finally pass away and God will make all things new.
- That day when we will walk, without fear or compromise in the presence of God.
- When we will finally put off this tent of flesh with all of its pain and corruption.

Until that day we wait and we groan for our fleshly struggles to be over:

2 Corinthians 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened — not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

- If you are like me, most of your groaning is with yourself. As Paul said:
- Romans 7:15 **I don't understand my own actions. I don't do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate.**

As we move on in James Chapter 4, He addresses the ongoing conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit. He will show us THREE areas where this conflict affects our lives.

1. Hostility within the church (*that hostility actually arises out of*)
2. Hostility within Ourselves (*Inevitably it is a*)
3. Hostility With God

Hostility within the church

James 4:1a, **What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?**

- The words quarrel and fight are very strong words. They could be used to describe physical fights. Then again, they could refer to armed conflicts between opposing armies.
- Figuratively the words Quarrel and Fight describe the angry disputes and verbal assaults that take place between individuals or groups of people.
- In this particular context, it seems that James is using a more figuratively language to address the violent disputes that were taking place in the church.
- The words “**Among you,**” indicate that these combative relationships were in fact between members of the church.
- You might wonder, could there really be quarreling and fighting within the church?
- Well, James is not alone in addressing this problem; Paul spoke of similar issues taking place in the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:10 **I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.**

Jewish Philosopher Spinoza:

“I have often wondered that persons who make boast of professing the Christian religion – namely love, joy, peace, temperance, and charity to all men should quarrel with such rancorous animosity and display daily towards one another such bitter hatred, that this, rather than the virtues which they profess, is the readiest criteria of their faith.”

- Ouch! That statement should cause us to take a step back and evaluate our own behavior, review our own attitudes and actions.
- Do I hold animosity against a brother or sister in the church?
- Do I use my tongue to spread gossip within the fellowship? How frequently and how easily do slanderous words spring from my lips?

- Have you ever walked into a room unannounced only to find that the conversation that was taking place before you arrived ended abruptly? And the people involved in the conversation now looked like deer in the headlights.
- Eventually those words that are spoken in secrete find their way out into the open and battle lines are drawn.

James would have us take a long, hard look at the way that we treat one another in the fellowship. Certainly, he remembers the words of the Lord Jesus when he said:

John 13:34 **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

- While we know and agree with the words of Jesus we also remember that James said, **if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.** I am certainly not a perfect man.

NOW, It's important that we understand, within the church, there are some battles that really do need to be fought: Battles for Biblical Truth, Conflicts that arise in the preservation of sound Theology, lively discussions regarding church discipline. All of these can be quite spirited, and yet they are all necessary to uphold the purity of the church.

- But even those battles must be fought without sacrificing Christ-like character and virtues.

Some would say that Martin Luther was stirring up strife when he called the Pope "the Antichrist." His harsh words and bold statements were offensive to many people. BUT they served to bring the church back from what He called Babylonian Captivity.

- He exposed corruption, abuses and false doctrine within the church that needed to be reformed.

There came a day when Luther was forced to stand before the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire

- On that day, Luther's writings were placed on a table before him and he was called to give an account for his doctrine, asked if he would renounce his Biblical stand.

He replied, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me."

James description of the hostility within the church could describe the events of the Reformation. "Quarrels and Fights, Passions and War."

- I think it is important that we understand, the hostility of the Reformation actually served to purify the church.
- God used the courage and steadfastness of men like Luther, Huss, Zwingli and Calvin to restore Biblical truth to the church of Jesus Christ.
- Some might say that they were hostile to the Authorities of the Roman Church. To which I would have to respond:
- A surgeon has to cut deeply into the body to remove cancerous cells. The procedure and the after effects can be quite painful but the end result is wholeness and life.

NOW I would like you to see that the same Hostility that worked to purify the church in the Reformation works within you transforming your life into the image of Christ.

- Within every true child of God, there is an ongoing internal reformation that is taking place. A battle between the flesh and the Spirit.
- The hostility of this internal struggle can be seen in Paul's command to the church at Colosse.

Colossians 3:5 **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**

- I don't know about you but the words "Put to death" sound quite hostile to me.

Moving on in James we see how the external battle in the church arises from the internal battle in the lives of men and women in the church.

2. Hostility within Ourselves.

James 4:1 **What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?**

- James tells us that the external hostilities we experience are brought about by the internal hostilities that wage war deep within us.
- The source of this internal conflict according to James is the "**passions that are at war within**" the fleshly man.

Listen - The word that is translated "Passions" here in Vs 1 is the word (HEDONON) this is the word from which we receive our English word Hedonism.

- Hedonism is the uncontrolled desire to fulfill every passion, to satisfy every whim that promises sensual satisfaction and enjoyment.
- Hedonism, this love of pleasure is the chosen form of worship that fills the pagan world around us. It flaunts its delicacies before us in order to draw our affections away from the Lord.
- Like the sirens of Greek mythology, their captivating melodies called out to every sailor only to leave them shipwrecked in the end.

Until we put off this tabernacle of flesh; until we find ourselves standing in the presence of Christ we will be engaged in a battle.

- On the one hand We have been reconciled to God, given a new heart and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. We are called to fight the good fight of faith.
- On the other hand, we continue to live in a body of flesh,
 - This process of sanctification is an ongoing battle against the world the flesh and the devil.
 - Efforts to surrender more of our thinking to the mind of Christ is met with resistance
 - Surrendering our plans, our hopes and our desires to the will of God doesn't happen overnight. It is a struggle – a battle

James helps describes the internal battle and the effect it has on our prayer life.

2 **You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.** 3 **You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.**

- The life that James describes in these two verses is an unfulfilled life of continual frustration that produces increasing irritation and anger.
- Unfulfilled desires, always wanting but never obtaining the objects of our misplaced affection.

The hostility within us can be seen in our prayer life. **You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.**

- SOME people treat prayer as if it were a domestic intercom? (I am guilty)

“Excuse me, Excuse me. God, Are you listening? I need another pillow down here.

I know how much you love me. I read somewhere that I am the apple of your eye.

I could really use another pillow while I spend all of my time worshipping these Idols on my 70 inch LCD TV.

I know, Lord that you really like to be a servant so could you please bring me a drink with that pillow?”

- How much of our prayer life is spent petitioning God for a more comfortable life in this passing world? How much really has eternal value?

OK we have seen that the hostilities we have with one another arise from the hostilities that abide within ourselves, NOW we come to the root of all hostility and that is our deep and abiding Friendship with the World.

3 Hostility with God

James 4: 4 **You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** 5 **Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?** 6 **But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."**

It seems to me that Verse 4 could very well be the heart of James letter.

All of the tests of true faith and all of the commands that push the readers of this letter toward greater sanctification come from a very deep concern.

- It is a concern over the divided affections of those who claim to be believers, those who have entered into a covenant with God.

When James says “**You Adulterous** (Unfaithful, Immoral) **people**” who is he addressing? It may seem strange but James is addressing the people of God, those who have entered into a covenant relationship with Him.

- Adultery is the sin of violating the marriage covenant, having an affair, entering into an intimate relationship with someone other than your spouse.
- Were James’ readers unfaithful to their spouses? No they were unfaithful to God.
- Throughout the Scripture, when the covenant people of God chase after idols they are called “Adulterers.”

Ezekiel 23: 36 **The LORD said to me: "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Declare to them their abominations. 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me.**

So James confronts the divided heart of the people who “CLAIM” to be in covenant with Him and yet set their affections on this present world.

- James asks this penetrating question:

James 4:4b, **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?**

- The word Friendship describes an emotional attachment, a special love for the things of this fallen world.
- This “Friendship” (Phileo – Love) for the world is an expression of “Enmity” hostility, hatred and opposition to God.
- God sees the dividing of our affections as ADULTERY!

Example by John Piper

God is like a husband who has a wife that he deeply loves and yearns for. “I want her. I want her for myself. I am jealous. I want her sleeping with me in my bedroom and nobody else’s.”

And what is she doing? She is praying. She is coming into the bedroom, into the holy of holies, getting down on her knees and saying, “Oh, husband, I need fifty dollars. Would you please, in your great mercy grant my request?”

Now, because he loves her dearly, he honors her request, reaching into his pocket he hands her a crisp fifty dollar bill.

Immediately she goes down the hall and hands that same fifty dollar bill over to a man that she was attracted to in the hallway a stranger who has captures her affection. The stranger takes the fifty dollars and brings the woman into his bed.

- That is what James is describing here.

He is describing a double-minded bride who breaks covenant with her faithful husband, taking the very riches that he has provided for her sustenance using them in the pursuit of worldly pleasure.

Do we use prayer that way? Do we seek to manipulate God in order to express a perverted love for the passing pleasures of this fallen world?

- Remember the words of the Lord Jesus:

Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

- And Again

1 John 15 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. 16 For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life — is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- When I first announced that we would be studying this book of James a good number of people expressed excitement, saying James is such a practical book.
- I don't know about you this book has beat me up!!

It constantly exposes my sin and leaves me repentant, crying out for more GRACE!

LETS END THIS MORNING WHERE WE BEGAN

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

The grace of God has appeared!!!! He has brought salvation to all kinds of people.

THAT grace teaches us to renounce ungodliness, IF you have been convicted of sin by the Word of God this morning... That is a good thing. The Spirit is at work in you training you, changing you.

HOW do we respond to conviction??? Gospel, Repentance and Faith