

How the Church Can Become Enemy of God

Pt. 2

James 4:1-6

James 4:1–6 (NKJV)

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.”*

Introduction:

Because of the cultural compromises and denials of the sufficiency of scripture in our confession and practice, the church of America has lost its effectiveness. We are told by our Lord in Matthew 5 that we are the salt of earth and light of world, but in many ways the church has failed in her responsibility. We are more like a salt substitute with very little effect and a dim flickering light nearly extinguished. True salt will raise your blood pressure, whereas a salt substitute will not. Our presence here in this world should raise the blood pressure of the world. And true light will expose what is in the darkness. All the nocturnal creatures should be exposed and run for darkness when the true light is on. But the dim flickering light with no power and no ability to extinguish the darkness will never expose anything but only allow those who are comfortable with their darkness to remain in it. The church has been seduced by the devil to believe that the more it looks like the world, the more attractive it will be to the world.

But frankly, that is not the means by which we accomplish our mission or determine our success in the world. We do not get where God wants us to be by being a friend of the World and we don't succeed in our evangelism by the world being fond of us. In fact the opposite is true.

We find our mission accomplished and our evangelism successful by how much the world hates us.

The more the world hates us for our christian confession and practice the more successful and honoring to God we are.

Another way to say this is the more you become like Christ, the more the world will hate you. The more the church becomes like Christ the more the world will hate her.

If the world loves you, it only means one thing. You are not like Christ. If unbelievers are comfortable in your church, that means that you are not like Christ. We don't gauge our success or faithfulness to Christ by how much the world loves us but rather how much it hates us.

And I am not talking about you be unnecessarily offensive or arrogant or prideful about your righteousness or legalistic lifestyle. I am talking about the world hating you because you are like Christ. You live a holy life. You deny ungodliness and worldly lust and you are not resentful, but forgiving, loving and gentle. You do not revile in return and are not revengeful. You seek to honor and obey Christ with your thoughts, words and deeds. You are a faithful Christian.

John 15:18–19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 7:7 (NKJV)

⁷ The worldhates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

John 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Matthew 10:22 (NKJV)

²² And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

1 John 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

John 17:14–16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You

should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

John 15:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Based on what I see, I fear for the church of America. We are for the most part a compromised world loving church. We are much more like the world in our thinking and practice than we are like Christ. If the gauge of how faithful we are to Christ is by how much the world hates us, then we are a miserable failure.

However, in the last 10 years, the lines are being drawn that will not allow you to be neutral. It is becoming harder and harder to remain inoffensive to the world as a christian. It used to be that you could live a stealthy christian life and never say a word about Jesus and just be considered a good moral person or perhaps even a religious person. But that is rapidly coming to an end.

You are more and more being required to stake a firm and absolute stand on Biblical Marriage

between a man and women and you are being required to take a stand on what a man is and what a woman is.

And if you give the Biblical and obvious teaching of Scripture, you are accused of hate speech, or bigotry, intolerant and hateful. You are an enemy of society and the love of humanity.

Gone are the days of hiding as a christian. If you are a christian and you believe the Bible and are not a compromiser, the hatred of world is coming after you.

But already, churches are and believers are positioning themselves so compromise on these very truths. More and more have given in the language and believes of spirit of the age.

Major denominations are splitting over there very truths that should be simple to affirm and believe.

The full fallout of this has yet to be completely seen but it is coming rapidly.

The line will be drawn along the

Biblically speaking, the Christian should not be a friend of the world. He should not be in love with the world system. The world and its evil system is antithetical to the Christian World view. It is

darkness, we are light. It is based on lies, we are of the truth. It is a culture of death, we are a people for life. It is temporary, we are eternal. It is destined for destruction, we are destined for resurrection.

We are sojourners and pilgrims passing through. Our citizenship is in heaven not on earth. We are looking for a city not made with hands. The city of God, not the city of man.

This is why John says

1 John 2:15–17 (NKJV)

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 lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 4:5–6 (NKJV)

⁵ They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. ⁶ We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 5:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

² And do not be **conformed** to this **world.....**

Present Mid/Pass.Indicative

συσχηματίζω *suschēmatízō*; fut. *suschēmatísō*, from *sún* (4862), together with, and *schēmatízō* (n.f.), to fashion. To fashion alike, conform to the same pattern outwardly. With a dat. following, to conform to (Rom. 12:2 and also 1 Pet. 1:14). In Rom. 12:2, “be not conformed,” *mḗ suschēmatízesthe* (*mḗ* [3361], not, and *suschēmatízesthe* [pres. imper. of *suschēmatízō*]). An expanded rendering might read, “Stop being molded by the external and fleeting fashions of this age, but undergo a deep inner change [*metamorphoústhe* {3339}] by the qualitative renewing [*anakainōsei* {341}] of your mind.” Such a transformation can be wrought only by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Syn.: *summorphóō* (4833), to conform in one's inner nature and not only in the outer form, as conveyed by *suschēmatízō*.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

αἰών *aión*; gen. *aiónos*, masc. noun. Age, referring to an age or time in contrast to *kósmos* (2889), referring to people or space. Denotes duration or continuance of time, but with great variety.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL WHEN THE CHURCH BECOMES LIKE THE WORLD THIRD EDITION JOHN MACARTHUR

Worldliness is rarely even mentioned today, much less identified for what it is. The word itself is beginning to sound quaint. Worldliness is the sin of allowing one's appetites, ambitions, or conduct to be fashioned according to earthly values.

Yet today we have the extraordinary spectacle of church programs deliberately designed to cater to fleshly desire, sensual appetites, and human pride—“the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions.” To achieve this worldly appeal, church activities often go beyond the merely frivolous. For several years a colleague of mine has been collecting a “horror file” of clippings that report how churches are employing innovations to keep worship services from becoming dull. Since the late 1970s, some of America’s largest evangelical churches have been employing worldly gimmicks like slapstick, vaudeville, wrestling exhibitions, and even mock striptease to spice up their Sunday meetings. No brand of horseplay, it seems, is too outrageous to be brought into the sanctuary. Burlesque has become the liturgy of the pragmatic church. Moreover, many in the church believe this is the only way we will ever reach the world. We’re told that if the unchurched multitudes don’t want classic hymns, serious doctrine, and biblical preaching, we must give them what they want. Hundreds of churches have followed precisely that theory, actually surveying unbelievers to learn what it would take to get them to attend. Acceptability in the culture and increased church attendance have subtly but steadily usurped holiness and true

worship as the primary objectives of our church gatherings. Preaching the Word and boldly confronting sin are seen as archaic, ineffectual means of winning the world. After all, those things actually drive most people away. Why not entice people into the fold by offering what they want, creating a friendly, comfortable environment, and catering to the very desires that drive their strongest urges? As if we might get unconverted worldlings to accept Jesus by somehow making Him more likable or making His message less offensive. That kind of thinking badly skews the mission of the church. The Great Commission is not a marketing manifesto. True evangelism does not require salesmen but prophets. It is the Word of God, not any earthly enticement, that plants the seed for the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23). We gain nothing but God's displeasure if we seek to remove the offense of the cross (cf. Gal. 5:11).

MacArthur, John. *Ashamed of the Gospel* (3rd Edition) (pp. 32-33). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

This along with other alliances and affections for the world system is exactly what James is addressing. This has been a problem for the church. To be

tempted to believe Christ and His Word is not sufficient and that the world and its delicacies of lust are the way to be fulfilled.

So James says.... verse 4,

“.....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.”

Boulomai (**wishes**) connotes more than just wanting a desire or wish to be fulfilled. It carries the stronger idea of choosing one thing over another.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 193). Moody Press.

2525. καθίστημι *kathístēmi*; or *kathistáō*; fut.

katastēsō, aor. *katéstēsa*, from *katá* (2596), down, and *hístēmi* (2476), to stand. To set, set down, place.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

“Becomes” (*kathistatai*), the very term used in 3:6, asserts that by his decision to foster friendship with the world the individual “becomes,” “constitutes himself,” or takes his stand as, God’s enemy. The

present tense points to the continuing condition, whereas the middle voice marks it as a self-chosen position. It is not a matter of a Christian quite unintentionally finding himself in an atmosphere pervaded by worldliness. He has made his deliberate choice to be a friend of the world. Neutrality Godward is impossible. His decision to love the world defies God's rightful claim to his total allegiance. As Moo remarks, "God will brook no rival, and when the believer behaves in a way that is characteristic of the world, he demonstrates that, at that point, his allegiance is to the world rather than to God." The startling result of their attitude is a serious call to repentance

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 229). BMH Books.

Friendship with the world and friendship with God are mutually exclusive.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 194). Moody Press.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light

with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*“I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”*

¹⁷ Therefore

*“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”*

Reasons I believe that James is talking to Christians who can become and enemy of God.

Some teach that this passage cannot refer to Christians because Christians are no where referred to as an enemy of God. They are called the friends of God, not enemies. To be and enemy of God is reserved for the lost man, who is called an enemy in Romans 5. The assumption then is that those who have an affection for the world system, indicate that they are lost and an enemy of God.

Although I believe that unbelievers are characteristically lovers of the world and that they are enemies of God.... I do not believe that this passage is to be restricted to unbelievers only. In fact I believe the power of the text is found in the warning of the potential danger of a believer making himself an enemy of God or setting himself at odds with God.

Here are the reasons why I believe James is addressing Believers

1. The Believer is who is writing to

James 1:2 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

James 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

James 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

James 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

James 2:1 (NKJV)

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality.

James 2:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

James 3:1 (NKJV)

3 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

James 5:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

The primary audience are professing believers. But he also recognizes that potential of false brethren, fake christians among them. Those that may not have true saving faith. But as a general rule James is addressing the professed believing community. Those who would identify as a believer or Christian. It is no different for James 4

2. He refers to the believer not receiving what he asked for because of his wrong desire. A specific reference to why a believer may not have answered prayer.

James 4:2–3 (NKJV)

2..... 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.

3. He calls believers who are friends with the world Adulterous.

The only way you can be an adulterer is to be married. An unbeliever is not in any relationship with God. Only believers are the bride of Christ.

James 4:4 (NKJV)

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.

4. He specifically references the Spirit living within us.

Only the believer has the Spirit of God.

James 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

5. Grace is Given to the Humble

James 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

*“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”*

Only believers can be truly humble, having experienced the saving grace of God.

6. James states that we can determine to be friend of the world and make ourselves an enemy of God.

James 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Unbelievers are already enemies of God by birth and nature.

Romans 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 8:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.
⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But what James says it that you determine, willfully to be a friend of the world and you make your self an enemy. Something that you are not as a believer

7. James refers to a war that is only the war a believer would know.

James 4:1 (NKJV)

4 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?

LESSON

I. The Source of Worldliness

II. The Shock of Worldliness

III. The Seriousness of Worldliness

I. The Source of Worldliness

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.

James begins by describing the turbulent and conflicting ways worldly wisdom affects a believer and then rebukes them for the adulterous affair with the world.

1. Where do **wars** and **fights** come from among you?

wars

4171. πόλεμος *pólemos*; gen. *polémou*, masc. noun.

(I) **Generally, war** (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 14:31; 21:9; Sept.: Ex. 1:10; 2 Kgs. 3:7).

(II) **Particularly, fight** (1 Cor. 14:8; Heb. 11:34; Rev. 9:7, 9; 11:7; 12:7, 17; 13:7; 16:14; 19:19; 20:8; Sept.: Ex. 13:17; 2 Sam. 19:11; Job 39:25).

Hyperbolically referring to strife (James 4:1).

Deriv.: *poleméō* (4170), to make war, fight.

Syn.: while *pólemos* embraces the whole course of hostilities, *máchē* (3163), battle, includes the use of arms of hostile armies; *agón* (73), struggle; *pálē* (3823), wrestling.

Ant.: *eirénē* (1515), peace; *hēsuchia* (2271), quietness.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Pólemos (**quarrels**), from which we get the English “polemics,” relates to general, prolonged, and serious

disputing or combat and is often rendered “war” (e.g., Matt. 24:6; Heb. 11:34; Rev. 11:7; 16:14)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 184). Moody Press.

fight

3163. μάχη *máchē*; gen. *máchēs*, fem. noun from *máchomai* (3164), to fight. Fighting, battle (2 Cor. 7:5; 2 Tim. 2:23, controversies respecting the Mosaic laws; James 4:1; Sept.: Gen. 13:7; Prov. 15:18). The NT includes many kinds of battles such as legal battles as in Titus 3:9, and battles of words (*logomachíai* [3055]) in 1 Tim. 6:4.

Deriv.: *ámachos* (269), not contentious.

Syn.: *agón* (73), strife, fight; *pálē* (3823), wrestling; *pólemos* (4171), war which embraces the whole course of hostilities, not a mere battle; *máchē* (3164), battle, strife; *stásis* (4714), insurrection or sedition as a civil war; *pólemos*, a battle between nations.

Ant.: *anápausis* (372), inner rest; *anápsuxis* (403), revival; *ánesis* (425), liberty, relief; *katápausis* (2663), rest from, cessation of work; *eirénē* (1515), peace; *hēsuchia* (2271), quietness.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Conflicts translates *máchē*, which refers to a specific fight or battle. Both terms are used here metaphorically of violent personal relationships, which, in the extreme, can result even in murder (v. 2).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 184). Moody Press.

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

The answer is clear, the source of all conflict and worldly desires comes from within.

The unpleasant fact is that their turbulence comes “from” (*ek*, “out of”) “your desires that battle within you.” It derives not from “a noble fighting for the truth,” nor an evil environment beyond their control, but from their own self-seeking desires.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 223). BMH Books.

The source of all of our problems is us. We have met the enemy and it is us. The world would have no conflict, no strife and not sin if we were not here.

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do they not come from your desires for **pleasure** that war in your members?

ἡδονή *hēdonē*; gen. *hēdonēs*, fem. noun from *hēdos* (n.f.), delight, enjoyment, which is from *hēdomai* (n.f.), to have sensual pleasure. Pleasure, gratification, enjoyment. In the NT, used only of physical pleasure (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; James 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:13).

Figuratively used as desire, appetite, lust (James 4:1).

Deriv.: *philédonos* (5369), a lover of pleasure.

Syn.: *epithumía* (1939), strong desire of any kind; *órexis* (3715), desire; *páthos* (3806), passion; *euphrosúnē* (2167), joyfulness, gladness; *aréskeia* (699), pleasing, pleasure; *apólausis* (619), enjoyment.

Ant.: *pónos* (4192), pain; *odúnē* (3601), dejection; *lúpē* (3077), grief; *ōdín* (5604), pain of childbirth; *brugmós* (1030), gnashing; *pikría* (4088), bitterness; *stenochōría* (4730), straightness, depression.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

“Desires” (*hēdonōn*), the term from which we derive our English term “hedonism,” denotes the enjoyment derived from the fulfillment of one’s desires or, as here, the craving for the pleasure itself. This hedonism, “the playboy philosophy that makes pleasure mankind’s chief end, still wages battles in people’s hearts.” The Greek term is rare in the New Testament,¹⁰ always with a bad connotation, being “one of the many forces which belong to the world of unsanctified carnality, which strive against the work of God and His Spirit.” The cause of their widespread bellicosity lay in their strong desires to please themselves, the yearnings of self-love.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 223). BMH Books.

2 Timothy 3:1–4 (NKJV)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

φιλήδονος, ον: pertaining to being fond of pleasure and enjoyment—‘given over to pleasure, lover of pleasure, loving pleasure.’ φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι ‘they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God’ 2 Tm 3:4.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 300). United Bible Societies.

φιλόθεος, ον: pertaining to love for God—‘loving God, having affection for God.’ φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι ‘they are persons who love pleasure rather than loving God’ 2 Tm 3:4

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 292). United Bible Societies.

Luke 8:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Do *they* not *come* from your
desires for pleasure that **war** in your
members?

στρατεύομαι *strateúomai*; Pres. Mid Participle fut. *strateúsomai*, mid. deponent from *stratós* (n.f., see *stratēgós* [4755]), camp, army. To lead an army, wage war, be a soldier. In the NT, to serve in war, to war, be a soldier, warrior. Intrans.:

(I) To wage war (1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Tim. 2:4); part. *ho strateúómenos*, a soldier (Luke 3:14).

(II) Figuratively, to war, as spoken of:

(A) The apostolic office as connected with hardships, trials, dangers (2 Cor. 10:3); with the acc. of a cognate noun (1 Tim. 1:18).

(B) Desires and lusts which war against right principles and moral precepts (James 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11).

Deriv.: *antistrateúomai* (497), to war against; *strateía* (4752), military service; *strateuma* (4753), an army, soldiers.

Syn.: *poleméō* (4170), to make war; *máchomai* (3164), to fight, strive; *diamáchomai* (1264), to fight fiercely; *pukteúō* (4438), to box, fight with fists; *agōnízomai* (75), to struggle, fight; *antagōnízomai* (464), to strive against.

Ant.: *eirēnopoieō* (1517), to make peace.

These wars, conflicts, arguments and strife that are symptom of Worldliness happen because there is a war within.

James is not talking about the war with evil forces without. The war that is referred to by Paul in

Ephesians 6:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

And James is not talking about the war against the strongholds of philosophies and ideologies that so often entrap and mislead the mind, heart and thinking.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NKJV)

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the

knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

James is talking about the battle, that war that every believer faces, that every one of us are intimately acquainted with. The one that every morning we wake up, it is already in high gear.

He is talking about the battle of flesh.

The appositional present participle *tōn strateuomenōn*, “that battle,” depicts these pleasures as soldiers carrying on a military campaign aimed at securing the satisfaction of their cravings. This self-centered, pleasure seeking activity stands over against their proper submission to God (cf. v. 7). “The ultimate choice in life lies between pleasing oneself and pleasing God.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 223). BMH Books.

Do they not come from your
desires for pleasure that war in your
members?

Romans 7:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Romans 7:18–23 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to 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.

Romans 6:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 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.

Paul clearly identifies the source of all sin as that which resides in our flesh and is literally fleshed out in our members. Our eyes, mouth, tongue, hands and feet.

Paul talks this way in
Romans 3:12–15 (NKJV)

¹²

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

¹³ “Their **throat** is an open tomb;

*With their **tongues** they have practiced deceit”;*

*“The poison of asps is under their **lips**”;*

¹⁴ “Whose **mouth** is full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their **feet** are swift to shed blood;

For the unbeliever, there is not war, only
collaboration *Romans 8:5–8 (NKJV)*

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

*But for the believer, it is a real war, a daily
sometimes moment by moment battle,*

Galatians 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Colossians 3:2–9 (NKJV)

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

James 4:1-2b

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.

The sources of external conflicts among people invariably arise from internal conflicts within each person.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 186). Moody Press.

Because of your hedonistic mindset, being led by your sinful flesh the fruit of this is

² You **lust** and do not
have. You murder and covet and cannot
obtain. You fight and war.

The evidences of internal conflict are legion in society today. The proliferation of psychologists and psychiatrists, counselors and therapists of all sorts; clinics for the treatment of a host of emotional and psychological disorders; the increased problems of drug addiction, domestic violence and abuse, dreadful crimes, alcoholism, and of suicide give abundant evidence that personal disorders have reached a crisis point. The increase of impatience, frustration, anger, and hostility is not only seen in street crime, but vividly portrayed on modern

highways, where drivers use obscene gestures, dangerous acts of intimidation, and sometimes even gunfire to vent their displeasure at what another driver does or fails to do.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 186). Moody Press.

² You **lust** and do not have.

ἐπιθυμέω *epithuméō*; contracted *epithumō*, fut. *epithumésō*, from *epí* (1909), in, and *thumós* (2372), the mind. To have the affections directed toward something, to lust, desire, long after. Generally (Luke 17:22; Gal. 5:17; Rev. 9:6). To desire in a good sense (Matt. 13:17; Luke 22:15; 1 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:12); as a result of physical needs (Luke 15:16; 16:21); in a bad sense of coveting and lusting after (Matt. 5:28; Rom. 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor. 10:6 [cf. James 4:2; Sept.: Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; 14:26; 2 Sam. 3:21; Prov. 21:26]).

Deriv.: *epithumētēs* (1938), one who desires; *epithumía* (1939), desire.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The verb *epithumeō* (to **lust**) refers to having a desire or longing of any kind, but the context makes it clear that the desire mentioned here is inordinate, misdirected, and sinful. James does not mention a specific object of desire, doubtless because the particular object does not matter as far as his point

here is concerned. When *any* strong, sinful **lust** is not gratified, the worldly person is prone to lash out in angry frustration, sometimes even committing **murder**. Even the Pharisees, who lusted for the personal satisfaction of having a reputation for virtue and holiness, murdered the Savior who unmasked their hypocrisy.

²You lust and do not
have. You murder and **covet** and cannot
obtain. You fight and wa

Murder translates the verb *phoneuō*, which, in this context, could include murderous hatred, extremely destructive behavior, and even suicide. When the lusting person cannot achieve his desired goals—whether for reputation, prestige, sexual gratification, money, power, escape through drugs or alcohol, success, possessions, the affections of another person, or whatever—the result is often catastrophic to others and always destructive of oneself. Even when they were struck blind by the angels in Lot’s house, the men of Sodom were so obsessed with their perverted lust that, ignoring their blindness, they continued groping for the door in a vain attempt to gain entrance and satisfy their unrelenting passions (Gen. 19:11).

Zeloō, here rendered **envious**, is a synonym of *epithumeō*, and connotes an even stronger, more compelling feeling of desire. It is the word from which we get “zealous” and “zealot.” The noun form is rendered “jealously” in James 3:14, 16.

ζηλώω: set one’s heart on something that belongs to someone else—‘to covet.’ φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε, καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν ‘you kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want’ Jas 4:2. It is, of course, also possible to render ζηλώω in Jas 4:2 as meaning ‘to be envious’ or ‘to be jealous’ (see 88.163).

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 290). United Bible Societies.

When people harbor such fierce desires but **cannot obtain** what they covet, they **fight and quarrel**. Marital conflicts, family conflicts, job conflicts, national conflicts—all these are the result of unsatisfied personal lust and envying.

The Greek of verse 2 literally reads: “You lust and do not have. You kill. And you are envious and cannot obtain. You fight and quarrel.” But the **so** supplied by the nasb translators rightly indicates the

causal relationship between lusting and killing and between envying, fighting, and quarreling.

As John makes clear, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15–16). The lust and envy that James mentions in 4:2 are reflections of “the boastful pride of life” that characterizes the worldly passion for personal satisfaction.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 188–189). Moody Press.

² You lust and do not
have. You murder and **covet** and cannot
obtain. You fight and war.

Unlike what the world says, that all of conflicts, strife and sinful actions arise from our environment. The Bible says all of this exist because of what is in us. We are the problem.

Any worldliness on our part can't be blamed not temptation from without, but from the hedonistic self seeking lust the rages from within.

Any believer that pursues the hedonistic lust of his fallen flesh, if he continues in it unrepentant, and make himself an enemy of God.

This is why there are so many warning and commandment in Scripture to kill the deeds of the flesh.

Colossians 3:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Romans 8:13 (NKJV)

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Galatians 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 6:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Romans 13:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

1 Peter 2:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,