

"The Peace of God"

James 4:1-10

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"1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 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. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 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? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (Jas 4:1-10)

Last week I cited Doriani, who highlights a number of things in this passage that are useful and illuminating. He notes five things:

1. First fact and its result: You desire and do not have, so you murder.
2. Second fact and its result: You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.
3. Third fact and its reason: You do not have, because you do not ask.
4. Fourth fact and its result: You do ask, but you do not receive.
5. Summary: Because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions, your own desires, your own envying. Even your prayers serve you selfish desires.

I also said that these message have been painful to prepare and to preach. Very often a minister will find that a sermon is very convicting to himself and it is self-convicting to preach. So it is with this sermon. In its preparation, this minister has discovered things in himself that are convicting. On such occasions, it is a temptation to soften the message, but that would be dishonest and self-serving and the minister would be guilty of the very thing that the passage warns against: using the ministry to serve his own desires, a frightful sin in the eyes of God.

I expect to preach several sermons from these verses which build upon the themes and doctrines already introduced in the three previous chapters.

Here we find it becoming clear what has been hinted at in the previous chapters as James' epistle unfolds. He speaks of the double-mindedness that is the mark of the hypocrite. He

conceals his real agenda, lest he be shamed. This leads to hypocrisy for he puts on the face of an actor, and pretends to be something other than he is. He claims to be religious but seeks worldly things and riches. His tongue boasts great things and he seeks the chief seats for himself, for he does not seek the glory of God. He pretends to care for the poor and the widow, but he is only a hearer and not a doer of the law. He is careful to do those commandments that are seen of men, but picks and chooses which commandments to keep, not realizing that if he neglects one commandment in the law, he is guilty of all. He gives favor to the rich and his tongue is taught by the wisdom of the world and not by the wisdom from above. All of this leads to envy and strife and the soil of peace is disturbed and the fruit of righteousness is uprooted.

The evil of envy and strife is born of pride, the very sin of the devil himself, and James turns his heavy artillery upon it in this passage. But let us look at the words. He turns the light of Christ upon the inward springs of the heart that create wars and strifes among people, including the people of God.

1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Wars and fightings come from within. There is a war going on inside the soul that causes the wars outside the soul. Members: all the parts of the soul. We are a bundle of desires

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 lusts results in murder; usually not actual murder, but spiritual murder: hating and fighting. We use all the wisdom that we know naturally in order to arrive at the fulfilling of our desires. We use our tongues that are fired with this wisdom. We may even use prayers and scriptures to fortify our desires.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. But, but, but. We do pray. We pray all the time. We ask for everything. But you ask amiss: you do not seek the will of God, you seek God to serve your desires. We would make God the servant of our desires.

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. Jesus Christ will brook no rival. You cannot be a friend of the world and be faithful to Jesus Christ. Abraham gave up the son of the promise; Rahab came aid to the spies against her own country. The church must never be the instrument of seeking earthly goals. The problem is double-mindedness.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? The fallen soul of man wars against righteousness. The spirit of the flesh wars against God. This envy comes from the pride and sinfulness of man. Scripture" the whole of scripture, not just one verse.

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. The cure is grace. He is going to develop this theme as he continues.

this is the reason the rich and poor are to both rejoice; grace raises up the weak and poor, and it abases the rich and proud. It is grace that makes the humble humble. Humility is not a natural condition; it IS natural, however, to pretend to be humble.

1. Isaiah 54:7: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." (Isa 54:7)
2. Matt. 13:12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Mt 13:12)
3. "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." (Ps 138:6)
4. "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." (Pr 3:34)
5. "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Mt 23:12)
6. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and ne clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (1Pe 5:5)

Let us look now, at Verses 7-10, for these verses puts legs under what has gone before. What does it mean to humble ourselves.

I. We are reminded of Proverbs "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."

A. The word translated "well advised" means those who have taken counsel with others, with wise people, especially those who will hear the counsel of the apostles and prophets.

B. Solomon said in another place, Pr 28:26 "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

C. As James said earlier, the wisdom that is from the earth is such that it deceives the heart: Jas 1:26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

D. Thus we have emerging the picture of the vain and empty man or woman: He is doubleminded, led by pride and his own desires, but pretending otherwise.

E. He discriminates in terms of his own desires with regard to people or scripture. He uses the wisdom of the world to put down others and to exalt himself, producing envy and strife.

F. He is proud and does not seek the wisdom from above; he has no peace in his heart; his heart is a tangle of conflicting desires and lusts, wars and slayings.

G. The root of all this is pride and the desire for earthly goals and advancement. He worships the Lord but serves his own gods, as was said of the Samaritans by the prophets.

II. Look at verses 7-10

A. Vs. 7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The way we resist the devil is to submit to God." We will serve either God or Mammon, you cannot serve both, Jesus said. You cannot serve Mammon without giving yourself over to the devil and becoming his instrument. Peter thought he was serving the Lord Jesus in Matt. 16:

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

1. Peter was moved by earthly goals, not those of God; in giving himself over to human wisdom and words, he fell under the very power of the devil for a time. Peter was double-minded. He got better later, thank God.

2. James might even have been quoting Peter here, for Peter knew that you had to submit to God in order to resist the devil. Paul also said, Ro 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" You will be somebody's servant.

3. We must resist pride with our whole heart and mind, but we can only do that by giving ourselves up to God. No one knows the pride of his own heart, for there is nothing so blinding as pride.

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

1. We draw nigh to God by turning to His glory and will, rather than our pride and selfishness. How vicious and deadly is envy and strife:

a) Cain envied Abel's acceptance of God

b) Esau envied Jacob's approval of God

c) Joseph's brothers envied Joseph because of the prophecy that they would bow before him.

d) Saul of jealous of David's success and favor with the people

e) Absalom envied his father's kingdom and power.

f) The Jews envied the Lord Jesus

g) The disciples were jealous of one another and wanted the chief seats in the kingdom of God.

h) Some even preached the gospel because they were envious of the Apostle Paul.

2. If there is envy and strife there is confusion and every evil work. The wisdom that destroys others and promotes strife and contention is of the very devil himself.

3. The outward works are to be repented of: the hands are to be cleansed. The defiling deeds of hatred, envy, strife, contention, anger are to be washed away.

4. The heart is to be purified: purify your hearts, ye double-minded. You cannot serve God and mammon. Cleanse your heart. Your business is always with God. "Purify" is the verb form of the adjective in 3:17 "pure." Love of the world defiles the soul and makes it unfit for the presence of God. That's why it is called "adultery" in verse 4. Where there is love of the world there will be all kinds of defilements. Strange and ugly birds will nest in the uncleanness of our hearts and their defilement will spread all around.

C. Vs. 9: Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

1. The condition is a grievous one and calls for "affliction" "mourning" "weeping"

2. Not a time for gaiety and lightness: laughter to mourning; joy to heaviness.

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

1. This is the grace he speaks of in verse 6: He giveth more grace. The grace of humility and repentance from the sin of the love of the world, which has all the evil results described in James.

2. The root of the idolatry and love of the world is pride; the cure is

humility and abasement.

3. God resists the proud, but He will exalt the humble.

a) Note: it is not the desire for excellence and a good reputation that is at fault here. We are created in the image of God, and our natural desires are good and proper, as we have said before. The desire for bodily good, for aesthetic beauty, for good reputation are all good in themselves, but they have been taken captive by sin, set on fire in hell by our pride and self-will, so that we seek them not from God. They become, therefore, the instruments of the devil to destroy us.

b) Give us this day our daily bread: all our bodily desires are to be subject to the Lord our God, and He will provide abundantly for us.

c) Beauty: Ps 90:17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

d) Reputation: Isa 66:22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain." God that sees in secret shall reward you openly.

e) We must seek all things in God through our Lord Jesus in faith, or else all things become cursed for us and defile and destroy us.

Amen and Amen
God bless you.