

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

SPIRITUAL BATTLES – JAMES 4:1-12

1. IN JAMES 4:1-12, JAMES SAYS THAT THERE ARE **THREE "WARS" (BATTLES)** GOING ON IN THE **BELIEVER'S MIND**... AND, THESE **INTERNAL CONFLICTS/ STRUGGLES MANIFEST AS EXTERNAL "FIGHTS AND QUARRELS"**.
 - A. **THREE "WARS"/BATTLES:**
 1. WE ARE AT **WAR WITH EACH OTHER** (4:1a, 11-12).
 2. WE ARE AT **WAR WITH OURSELVES** (4:1b-3).
 3. WE ARE AT **WAR WITH GOD** (4:4-10).
 - B. **"WAR" AS DESCRIBED** IN JAMES 4, IS AN **EXTREME TERM** REFERRING TO THE **INTENSE INTERNAL STRUGGLES AND CONFLICTS CAUSED BY A BELIEVER'S SELFISH DESIRES THAT ARE AT ODDS WITH GOD'S WILL**.
 1. THESE **INTERNAL CONFLICTS/STRUGGLES MANIFEST AS EXTERNAL "FIGHTS AND QUARRELS"**.
 2. THEY **STEM FROM SELFISHNESS, COVETOUSNESS, AND A DESIRE FOR PERSONAL PLEASURE RATHER THAN FOR GOD'S PURPOSES**.
 3. **AN INTERNAL CONFLICT:**
 - a. THE **PRIMARY "WAR"** IS THE **BATTLE WITHIN = THE BELIEVER'S MIND**, WHERE OUR **SELFISH "PASSIONS"** (**STRONG DESIRES FOR GRATIFICATION**) ARE IN **CONFLICT WITH GOD'S WILL AND IN CONFLICT WITH OTHERS**.
 - 1) **OUR MINDSET CAN BECOME MY WILL BE DONE... NOT GOD'S WILL... AND CERTAINLY NOT YOUR WILL!!**
2. **AT WAR WITH EACH OTHER:**
 - A. **James 4:1a, 11 (NLT2)** "**What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?... Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law.**"
 - B. **NOTE: "EACH OTHER" INCLUDES:**
 1. **SPOUSES**
 2. **CHILDREN**
 3. **SIBLINGS**
 4. **PARENTS**
 5. **FRIENDS**
 6. **PEOPLE WE WORK WITH AND FOR**

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3. AT WAR WITH OURSELVES:

- A. JAMES STATED THE REASON WE ARE AT WAR WITH OURSELVES AND, CONSEQUENTLY, AT WAR WITH EACH OTHER IS BECAUSE WE ARE AT WAR WITH GOD!

4. AT WAR WITH GOD:

- A. James 4:4-10 (NLT2) “You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.”

B. HOW DO BELIEVERS DECLARE WAR AGAINST GOD?

1. THE ANSWER... BY BEING FRIENDLY WITH GOD’S ENEMIES.
2. JAMES NAMED THREE ENEMIES THAT BELIEVERS MUST NOT FRATERNIZE WITH IF WE WANT TO BE AT PEACE WITH GOD.
 - a. THE WORLD
 - b. THE FLESH
 - c. THE DEVIL

5. THE WORLD (V. 4)

- A. James 4:4 (NLT2) “You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.”

B. NOTE: CHRISTIANS GET INVOLVED WITH THE WORLD GRADUALLY.

1. FIRST... THERE IS “FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD” (JAMES 4:4).
2. SECOND... “FRIENDSHIP” LEADS TO LOVING THE WORLD.
 - a. 1 John 2:15-17 (NASB) “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. 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. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”
3. THIRD... LOVING THE WORLD MAKES IT EASY TO CONFORM TO THE WORLD.

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- a. Romans 12:2 (NASB) “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
 - b. THE SAD RESULT OF BEING CONFORMED WITH THE WORLD IS BEING CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD... OUR SOULS SAVED... BUT... like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NLT2) “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.”
 - c. THE WORLD IS THE ENEMY OF GOD, AND WHOEVER WILLS TO BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD CANNOT BE THE FRIEND OF GOD.
 1. NEITHER CAN WE BE A FRIEND OF GOD IF WE LIVE FOR THE FLESH... WHICH IS THE SECOND ENEMY JAMES NAMED.
6. THE FLESH (v. 1).
- A. James 4:1 (NLT2) “What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don’t they come from the evil desires at war within you?”
 - B. “THE FLESH” MEANS THE OLD NATURE THAT WE INHERITED FROM ADAM, THAT IS PRONE TO SIN.
 1. NOTE: THE FLESH IS NOT THE BODY.
 - a. THE BODY IS NOT SINFUL; THE BODY IS NEUTRAL.
 - 1) THE SPIRIT MAY USE THE BODY TO GLORIFY GOD... OR THE FLESH MAY USE THE BODY TO SERVE SIN.
 - C. WHEN SINNERS YIELD TO CHRIST, THEY RECEIVE A NEW NATURE WITHIN, BUT... THE OLD NATURE IS NEITHER REMOVED NOR REFORMED.
 - a. FOR THIS REASON... THERE IS A BATTLE WITHIN US:

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- 1) Galatians 5:17 (NASB) “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”
- 2) THIS IS WHAT JAMES TERMED “the evil desires at war within you” (JAMES 4:1).
2. LIVING FOR OUR FLESH MEANS GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD WHO LIVES IN US. (JAMES 4:5)
3. JUST AS THE WORLD IS THE ENEMY OF GOD THE FATHER, SO THE FLESH IS THE ENEMY OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.
 - a. THERE IS A HOLY, LOVING JEALOUSY THAT A HUSBAND AND WIFE HAVE FOR EACH OTHER, AND RIGHTLY SO.
 - b. IN LIKE MANNER, THE SPIRIT WITHIN JEALOUSLY GUARDS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, AND THE SPIRIT IS GRIEVED WHEN WE SIN AGAINST GOD’S LOVE.
- D. THEREFORE, IT FOLLOWS THAT LIVING TO PLEASE THE OLD NATURE MEANS TO DECLARE WAR AGAINST GOD.
 1. Romans 8:5-8 (NASB) “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. To allow the flesh to control the mind is to lose the blessing of fellowship with God.”
7. THE DEVIL (VV. 6–7)
 - A. THE THIRD ENEMY OF THE BELIEVER’S PEACE WITH GOD IS THE DEVIL.
 - B. James 4:6-7 (NLT2) “But he gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
 - C. THE WORLD IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE FATHER; THE FLESH FIGHTS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT; AND THE DEVIL OPPOSES THE SON OF GOD.

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1. **PRIDE** IS SATAN'S GREAT **SIN**, AND IT IS ONE OF HIS **CHIEF WEAPONS** IN HIS **WARFARE** AGAINST THE **SAINT**.
 2. **GOD WANTS US TO BE HUMBLE... SATAN WANTS US TO BE PROUD.**
"YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD," SATAN PROMISED EVE, AND SHE BELIEVED HIM.
- D. **GOD WANTS US TO DEPEND ON HIM AND HIS GRACE... THE DEVIL WANTS US TO DEPEND ON OURSELVES.**
1. **NOTE" SATAN IS THE AUTHOR OF ALL "DO-IT-YOURSELF" SPIRITUAL ENTERPRISES.**
 - a. HE ENJOYS **INFLATING THE EGO** AND **ENCOURAGING BELIEVERS TO DO IT "MY WAY"**.
- E. **ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY IS THAT WE HAVE TOO MANY CELEBRITIES AND NOT ENOUGH SERVANTS.**
1. **CHRISTIAN WORKERS ARE PROMOTED SO MUCH THAT THERE IS VERY LITTLE PLACE LEFT FOR GOD'S GLORY.**
- F. **HERE, THEN, ARE THREE ENEMIES THAT WANT TO TURN US AWAY FROM GOD: THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL.**
1. **THESE ENEMIES ARE LEFT OVER FROM OUR OLD LIFE OF SIN.**
 - a. **Ephesians 2:1-5 (NASB)** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this **world**, according to the prince of the power of the air (THE **DEVIL**), of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our **flesh**, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even **when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved),"
 - b. **CHRIST HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL BY GIVING US THE POWER TO RESIST THEM IN HIS NAME... BUT THEY CAN STILL ATTACK US.**
 - 1) "I GIVE NO CONSENT TO THAT THOUGHT IN THE NAME OF MY SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST!"
 2. **QUESTION: HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THEM?**

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- a. **HOW CAN WE BE THE FRIENDS OF GOD AND THE ENEMIES OF THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL?...**
8. **JAMES GAVE US THREE INSTRUCTIONS TO FOLLOW IF WE WANT TO ENJOY PEACE INSTEAD OF WAR:**
 - A. **FIRST, SUBMIT TO GOD (V. 7)... IF BELIEVERS WANT TO ENJOY PEACE INSTEAD OF WAR.**
 1. **James 4:7 (NASB) “Submit therefore to God.** Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
 2. **UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER IS THE ONLY WAY TO COMPLETE VICTORY IN JESUS.**
 - a. **IF THERE IS ANY AREA OF OUR LIFE KEPT BACK FROM GOD, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE BATTLES.**
 - 1) **NOTE: THAT EXPLAINS WHY UNCOMMITTED CHRISTIANS HAVE TROUBLE LIVING WITH THEMSELVES OR WITH OTHER PEOPLE.**
 3. **SATAN NEEDS A FOOTHOLD IN OUR LIVES IF HE IS GOING TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD, AND WE GIVE HIM THAT FOOTHOLD WHEN WE SIN.**
 - a. **“and do not give the devil an opportunity.” PAUL CAUTIONED IN EPHESIANS 4:27.**
 - b. **NOTE: THE WAY TO RESIST THE DEVIL IS TO SUBMIT TO GOD.**
 - c. **SUBMISSION IS AN ACT OF THE WILL; IT IS SAYING, “NOT MY WILL BUT THINE BE DONE.”**
 - B. **SECOND, DRAW NEAR TO GOD (V. 8)... IF WE WANT TO ENJOY PEACE INSTEAD OF WAR.**
 1. **James 4:8 (NLT2) “Come close to God, and God will come close to you.** Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.”
 2. **HOW CAN WE “DRAW NEAR TO GOD”?**
 - a. **BY...**
 - 1) **REPENTING OF OUR SIN,**
 - 2) **CONFESSING OUR SINS,**

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3) BY ASKING GOD FOR HIS **FORGIVENESS** FOR OUR **SIN**, AND FOR HIS **CLEANSING**.

i. DR. A. W. TOZER HAS A PROFOUND ESSAY IN ONE OF HIS BOOKS, TITLED “**NEARNESS IS LIKENESS**.” HE SAYS **THE MORE WE ARE LIKE GOD... THE NEARER WE ARE TO GOD**.

b. **GOD GRACIOUSLY DRAWS NEAR TO US WHEN WE DEAL** WITH THE **SIN** IN OUR **LIVES** THAT **KEEPS HIM AT A DISTANCE**.

c. HE WILL **NOT SHARE US WITH ANYONE ELSE**; HE **MUST HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL**.

d. THE **DOUBLE-MINDED CHRISTIAN** CAN **NEVER BE CLOSE TO GOD**.

C. **THIRD, HUMBLE YOURSELVES BEFORE GOD ... IF WE WANT TO ENJOY PEACE** INSTEAD OF **WAR**.

1. **James 4:10 (NASB)** “**Humble yourselves** in the presence of the Lord, and **He will exalt you**.”

2. THIS WORD (“**HUMBLE**”) IS A **MILITARY TERM** THAT MEANS “**GET INTO YOUR PROPER RANK**.”

a. WHEN A **PRIVATE ACTS LIKE THE GENERAL**, THERE **WILL BE TROUBLE!**

3. **NOTE: IT IS POSSIBLE TO SUBMIT OUTWARDLY AND YET NOT BE HUMBLD INWARDLY**.

4. **GOD HATES THE SIN OF PRIDE**, AND HE WILL **ALLOW “TRIALS”** IN THE LIVES OF **PROUD BELIEVERS** UNTIL THEY ARE **HUMBLD**.

a. **Proverbs 16:5 (NASB)** “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”

1) WE HAVE A **TENDENCY TO TREAT SIN TOO LIGHTLY, BUT SIN IS SERIOUS**, AND **ONE MARK OF TRUE HUMILITY IS FACING THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN** AND **DEALING WITH OUR DISOBEDIENCE**.

2) **Psalms 51:17 (NASB)** “The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit**; A **broken and a contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise.”

D. **IF... WE OBEY THESE THREE INSTRUCTIONS, THEN GOD WILL DRAW NEAR TO US, CLEANSE US, AND FORGIVE US; AND WAR WILL CEASE!**

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1. WE WILL NOT BE AT WAR WITH GOD... SO WE WILL NOT BE AT WAR WITH OURSELVES... AND THAT MEANS WE WILL NOT BE AT WAR WITH OTHERS.

9. DISCUSSION: