

James 4

James 4.1-4 – The cause of conflicts

V1 – Generally speaking, are human beings peaceful characters? No

- According to historians, there have been only about 130 years of peace out of last 3000 years
- The Roman Empire was constantly at war; they conquered over 50 nations of the world (all the way from the Hadrian Wall in northern England to the Persian Gulf)
- At the War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Nashville, there are huge marble slabs listing people from Tennessee killed in WWI, but it is not called World War I - it is called "The Great War"

-**Why?** Because they could not imagine anything worse than World War I – they never dreamed that there would be a World War II

-**Were the Jewish people in the First Century peaceful people?** No:

- Pharisees
- Sadducees
- Herodians
- Essenes
- Zealots (believed in assassinating Roman officials)
- They become so rebellious against the Roman Empire that the Romans had to destroy the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., along with Masada and the rest of Palestine
- Peace is one of the greatest blessings of mankind – it is so good to have peace in a nation
- Why is James saying those things about conflicts and quarrels?** Apparently because congregations were having major problems and divisions
- And the some things that causes warfare between nations can cause warfare within a congregation
- What question therefore does James ask?** What is the source of warfare among us?
- The answer?** People seeking their own pleasures, wanting more things, more territory, more power, more goods, more pleasures of the flesh, more money, more prestige, wanting to have their "needs" met, wanting more natural resources such as oil
- But James says that this is all sin!
- Many times even in neighborhoods, there are neighbors who cannot get along together

V2 – Who in the Old Testament lusted after something and eventually ended up committing murder? David and Bathsheba, also Ahab and Naboth's vineyard

-**Why do people not have things?** Because they do not ask God for them

V3 – Why don't we get what we ask for in our prayers? We ask with the wrong motives, to spend things on ourselves

-**Are those charges of James still true today?** Unfortunately

James 4.4-6 – Sins that cause strife

V4 – Why does James use the female form here? Guy N. Woods: because the church is the bride of Christ (*2 Corinthians 11.2, Ephesians 5*)

- So Christians were in friendship with the world
- What does it mean to be a friend of the world?** We are enemies of God

- Popular bumper sticker today: "COEXIST," but as Christians we have to be distinctive
- Those people who believe in peaceful coexistence, who just want to go along to get along, who don't want to rock the boat or cause any problems at work – they are enemies of God, even if they attend church and claim to be Christians.
- The truth: there is to be a fundamental difference between the people of God and the people of the world.
- Mark 13:13 - You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.*

V5 – There is no specific Scripture that says this, but it seems to be a combination of several Scriptures: *Genesis 6.3-7, Exodus 29.5, Deuteronomy 32.1-21, Job 5.12, Ecclesiastes 4.4, Proverbs 27.4*

-How can James say that the Bible says this, when no one Scripture says this? Our concept of a direct quote is different from the ancient concept

-*Merriam-Webster* dictionary (ninth edition), p. 968 – quotation marks date from 1883 (quote = 1582, quotation = 1646) (KJV has no quotations marks)

-Why did James talk about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a passage about warfare and strife and adultery? Because if we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we ought to be behaving better

-So he is reminding them of the same thing that Paul talked about in *Romans 8* and the gift of the Holy Spirit that Peter talked about in *Acts 2.38*

-Message of v 5: God the father is proud of the Holy Spirit, which dwells in Christians – therefore, let us not dishonor the Holy Spirit by fighting and causing strife

V6 – God hates the proud people, but loves the humble

James 4.7-10 – How to overcome strife and a warlike attitude

V7 – **How do we overcome wars, conflicts, and arguments?** Submitting to God and resisting Satan

-**What will Satan do?** Flee from us

-**Thought question: How do we resist Satan?**

-Too many people today want to flirt with Satan, rather than resist him

V8 – **How do we get God to come near to us?** We have to get near to God

-**What does it mean to cleanse our hands?** To no longer do evil things

-**Is that enough?** No – We must cleanse our hearts also

-**Who in the Bible cleansed his hands but not his heart?** Pilate (*Matthew 26.24*)

V9 – **Why did James tell the Christians to mourn and weep?** To realize how wicked they had been and to be conscious for their need for forgiveness

-*Matthew 5:4 - Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*

V10 – **What does James recommend here?** We must humble ourselves, then God will exalt us

James 4.11-12

V 11 – What sin is James talking here? Slander

- The emphasis should be on the word “*against*”
- What is the result when we slander a fellow Christian?** We are attacking the law (notice “law” again) **Read 1 John 4.20**
- In other words, to keep peace in the church, we must not slander each other
- What does James recommend in the place of slander?** To carry out the law of Christ
- “Slander” = unjust criticism
- James is criticizing his fellow Christians in this verse – so there must be times when we have to correct a brother or sister who has departed from the faith, but that is not the same as slander

V 12 – Christ will be the judge of us all

- Who is the lawgiver?** Christ
- Matthew 28:18 - All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

James 4.13-17

V 13 – James is still dealing with pride in the hearts of Christians

- “*Come now...*” = Listen here...
- What is the implication of these words?** Something was seriously wrong with the attitude of some of the Christians James was writing to in this letter
- What were some of them saying and bragging about?** What they were going to do the next day
- We have plans for retirement, the golden years, for next year
- We have it all planned out
- We even worry about things years away from now, don’t we?

V 14 – **What is the problem when we worry about tomorrow and make plans for tomorrow?** We don’t know what will take place tomorrow

- What are the implications of this verse to psychics, fortune-tellers, palm readers, tarot card readers?** They are wrong!
- What do we not know about tomorrow?** If we will even be alive
 - If we will be healthy
 - If the world will still be here
 - If the country will still be in existence
- What nation mentioned in the Old Testament fell in one night?** Babylon (*Daniel 5*)
- To what does James compare our lives?** A vapor - **Read Job 7.6-10**
- Over and over, the writers of the Bible try to tell us that this life is going to be very short

V 15 – **What does be our attitude?** If it is the will of God

- People use to put at the end of their letters: D.V. = Latin: *Deo volente* – “If the Lord permits”
- Not just a rote phrase that we put at the end of a sentence, but it should mean something to us
- Today, many Christians will put at the end of their letter: *Lord willing* (same message)

V 16 – **What does James say about boasting about tomorrow?** Evil

V 17 – Sin of omission

-People will be lost for not doing some good deed

-**Two kinds of sins?** Commission and omission

-**Sin of Omission?** If we admit that something is good to do (for example: to come to church on Wednesday night), then we ought to do it

Revised 2013-01-28