

# THE BOOK OF James

*LIVING COUNTER-CULTURALLY*

*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

*You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

*<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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"?*

*<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." **James 4:1-6***

## **Focus Point:**

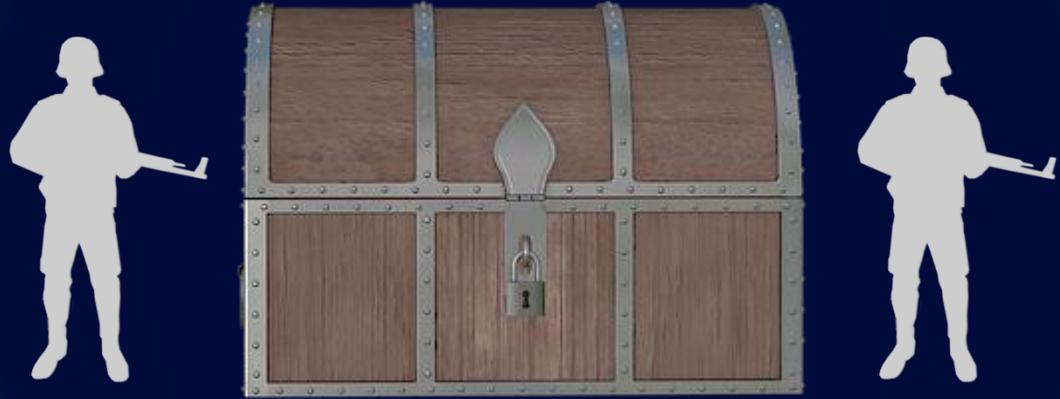
*A follower of Jesus will take every desire and filter it through the desire of Christ.*

- 1. Deadly Desires**
- 2. Powerless Prayer**
- 3. Adulterous Affections**
- 4. Heavenly Help**

## ***1. Deadly Desire***

**v.1 *What* causes quarrels and fights among you? James says it is our own passions, desires, or pleasures.**

***Where* is the war happening? Inside of you. The implication is that you are either blind to it or are deceived by it.**



James uses “war” language to describe our response:

1) Quarrel

2) Fight

3) Murder – This is taken from SOM in Matt. 5:21-22 *You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.”<sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.*

Jesus is explaining the intent or heart of the law. Many believed they were not guilty of breaking the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment because they had never actually taken someone's life. Jesus puts anger and murder on the same level. In other words, He is explaining what the Law always meant.

*Matt. 5:20, 48 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

James does not identify any particular passion or pleasure and he does so for a reason.

If he identified a particular *sinful* desire, we might dismiss it if we don't struggle with that sin. Some desires are not sinful, but the desire to have it is. We want it so badly, we are willing to sin to get it.

A follower of Jesus will take every desire and filter it through the desire of Christ.

James uses this “warring” language to illustrate how awful and terrible this sin is.

When sinful conflict happens because of our desire to sinfully have what we want, it ruins and can even destroy the relationship with the other person.

## *2. Powerless Prayer*

*vv.2b, 3 You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

This affects our prayers in two ways:

1) Don't ask for what we should (v.2b) – Why?

- We don't recognize the things we should be asking for.
- We don't ask because we know the answer will call us to something from God that we don't want to participate in.

2) When we do ask, we do so wrongly to spend on our pleasures (v.3)

- This is the epitome of hedonism.
- I pray for what I want, (not always something material) to change the other person or circumstance so I can enjoy my passion or desire, so that it can be fulfilled.

The result is in effective prayer.

*Matt. 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

*Note:* Not if you have something against your brother, but if you know they have something against you!

Prayer and worship become meaningless because the only response from God will push us back to reconciliation.

*1 Peter 3:7 Husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, WHY? so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

### ***3. Adulterous Affections vv.4-5***

*You adulterous people! (Literally you adulteresses) 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. <sup>5</sup> 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"?*

James addresses two issues: Spiritual Adultery and Political Treason.

*Spiritual Adultery:* God is the husband and His people are the bride.

In the OT – Isaiah 54:4; Jeremiah 2:1-3; Ezekiel 16:8; The whole book of Hosea – Israel is the bride, the wife of God.

In the NT – Romans 7:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:2 – The church is the bride of Christ.

v.5 addresses God's jealousy concerning the new creation He has made in us.

*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"?*

When we live to sinfully fulfill even good desires, it is not just idolatry, but adultery, spiritual unfaithfulness.

*Political Treason:* Being friends with the world is considered being enemies of God.

Understand what James means by this, not that we are God's enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:2), we were made God's friends *while we were still* His enemies.

James is saying that when we love our passions or pleasures sinfully, we are acting like the world, an enemy of God.

*We are A.D. children we live B.C. lives.* Motyer.

Consider the devastation caused by marital unfaithfulness. Some marriages do not survive. The pain inflicted on both the faithful spouse and the children.

A follower of Jesus **MUST** take every desire and filter it through the desire of Christ.

## ***4. Heavenly Help***

All our sin, the rebellions. James uses 128 words describe or build his case describing our sin. However, he doesn't leave us there.

One word, rectifies the other 128 – ***GRACE!***

*v.6 But he gives more grace!*

This is not to indulge or wink at our sin, but because Christ has already been judged for it, we receive forgiveness.

*Psalm 103:13-14 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

Grace has two elements:

- 1) Forgiveness – God gives us what we don't deserve.
- 2) Empowering – Grace is a means by which we can resist that desire to love or want something sinfully.

*Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Opposing the proud is more than God just disagreeing with you. It means that God is *actively* opposing you.

Grace is given to the humble. Humility is more than just meekness or gentleness. It is the acknowledgment of sin.

Luke 18 (the tax collector) ...*who would not even look up to heaven but instead beat his chest and said, "God have merciful to me a sinner."*