

JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

VIII. Addressing Interpersonal Conflicts

(James 4:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. Because of the continued presence of the sin nature in believers along with the influences of the world and Satan, we believers can face interpersonal conflicts. James 4:1-12 addresses this problem for our insight:

II. Addressing Interpersonal Conflicts, James 4:1-12.

- A. Addressing a "state of war" (*polemoi*) and "battles" (*machai*) that occurred among his readers, James claimed these evils came "out of" (*ek*) "inner sensual lusts or pleasures" (*hedonon*) that arise from the sin natures that exist in believers in Christ, James 4:1-2 with Galatians 5:19-21; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 829.
- B. Consequently, spiritual fellowship with the Lord had been curtailed: those afflicted with these ills asked God for favors in prayer but God did not provide them since the ones making the requests asked with the wrong motives of using God's provisions to gratify their sinful lusts, James 4:3 ESV. [In the context, these "lusts" are the lusts of the world that 1 John 2:15-16 defined as (1) the **unbiblical** gratification of drives of the body ("lust of the flesh"), (2) the **unbiblical** gratification of aesthetic desires of the mind ("lust of the eyes") and (3) the **unbiblical** gratification of desires to be proud in relation to issues in this earthly life ("pride of [this earthly] life (bios);" Arnd & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 141).
- C. James accordingly laid out the solution for such interpersonal conflicts in James 4:4-12 (as follows):
 - 1. First, believers afflicted with interpersonal conflicts must understand certain spiritual truths, James 4:4-6:
 - a. Believers must realize that friendship with this world is enmity with God, James 4:4. A believer cannot have fellowship with God and enjoy answers to prayer if he befriends the world and indulges in its lusts.
 - b. Believers must realize that the Holy Spirit indwelling them longs jealously over them, that they must cleave to God and not the world and its lusts, James 4:5; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to James 4:5.
 - c. Believers must realize that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, James 4:6.
 - 2. Second, believers afflicted with interpersonal conflicts must make practical adjustments, James 4:7-12:
 - a. Instead of befriending the world, such believers must submit to God, James 4:7a; 1 John 2:15-17.
 - b. Instead of befriending the world that Satan rules (1 John 5:19), such believers must resist the Devil (James 4:7b), a feat that is achieved by staying strong in their faith in the Lord, 1 Peter 5:8-9.
 - c. Instead of befriending the world and being at enmity with God, believers must draw nigh to God, Jas. 4:8a.
 - d. Instead of indulging in sinful lusts while trying to follow God, such believers must cleanse their hands [figurative for actions] and purify their hearts [minds] of sin, to cease being double-minded in seeking to love the world's lusts and love God at the same time, James 4:8b ESV.
 - e. Instead of continuing on in their evil ways, such believers must be afflicted, mourn, weep, let their laughter of indulging in their lusts be turned into mourning and their false joy into gloom in humbling themselves to repent of their sin that God might exalt them in due time, James 4:9-10 ESV.
 - f. Thus, instead of being at war and battling one another, such believers must not speak evil against each other, for they cannot rightly sit in judgment of one another since only God can do that, James 4:11-12.

Lesson: *Interpersonal conflicts arise from unbiblical lusts or pleasures that come from the sin nature and reflect the lost world's values and thinking. This state makes fellowship with God impossible because the world is at enmity with God, so believers in interpersonal conflicts fail to obtain answers to prayer. For victory over this condition, (1) one must first become a spiritual child of God by trusting in Christ for salvation from sin and hell (John 3:16) followed by taking actions as a believer (as follows): (a) the believer must understand that friendship with the world and its lusts is incompatible with friendship with God, and that God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud who adhere to their sinful lusts. (b) Then, the believer needs to take corrective action in submitting to God, resisting the Devil, drawing nigh to God, regretting one's waywardness to repent of sin that God might exalt him and refusing to sit as an authoritative judge of others since only God rightly possesses that role.*

Application: *(1) May we heed James 4:1-12 to address interpersonal conflicts. (2) HOWEVER, GODLY believers WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION from the UNGODLY (2 Timothy 3:12), so IF the conflict is one-sided, that is, WE are NOT oppressing the OTHER party, the FAULT for the conflict is NOT with US, but with THEM!*