

The father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, was not a fan of the epistle of James. He referred to it as "an epistle of straw" and he even argued that it should be removed from the school at Wittenburg. His reason was two-fold. First, he thought James' teaching on works conflicted with Paul's teachings on grace. The second is that it didn't mention Jesus enough.

While I respect and appreciate Luther's work within the Reformation I couldn't disagree more with him. Nor can most biblical scholars. James' teachings on works (as Luther saw them) are actually lessons on living faith. And while it is true that Jesus' name only appears twice in the letter, anyone who takes the time to study the book will recognize it as a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

If a spiritual giant like Luther struggled with James, it is understandable that we may as well. It is a challenging book. It starts with an exhortation to take joy in suffering, moves to a discussion of living faith, and addresses difficult practical aspects such as taming the tongue, foregoing favoritism, dealing with double-mindedness, and misusing money.

At the beginning of chapter 4, James' attention and instruction is focused on fractures and factions within the church. His Spirit inspired words offer an explanation for the cause of such quarrels. He then confronts the core truth about factions in general and fractures within the church specifically. And just as Jesus always did, he didn't stop with a diagnosis but he included curative commands.

These are lessons that apply to our study of Satan's scheme of using sinful desires for sinful pleasures so let's take a look.

Scripture: James 4:1-10

## I. Satan's Scheme: Fractures and Factions

### A. Cause of Quarrels (1-3)

#### 1. Sinful Pleasures/Cravings/Lusts/Desires

a) *hedonon*

b) Hedonism - philosophy that views pleasure as the chief goal of life

c) Human nature - Sinful

(1) Evil desires lead to evil deeds

(2) Lust leading to murder (hatred)

(3) Envy ending in quarrels and conflicts

d) Human approach - Selfish

(1) Impotent actions

(a) Self-reliant attempts

- (i) Sad results - didn't get what they wanted and ruined relationships and unity
  - (2) Improper asking
    - (a) Santa God
      - (i) Seeking to gratify themselves rather than please God by serving others
- B. Confronting the Core Truth (4-5)
  - 1. Spiritual Adultery
    - a) Affair
      - (1) OT - wife of the Lord
      - (2) NT - bride of Christ
      - (3) Worldly friendship is something that Christians can flirt with (adultery of the heart)
        - (a) Seeking satisfaction and pleasure from the world rather than from God
    - b) Adversaries
      - (1) Incompatibility
        - (a) Friendship with the world makes us hostile enemies of God
    - c) Affection of God
      - (1) He jealously desires the totality of our love and loyalty
        - (a) Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Jos. 24:19; Na. 1:2
    - d) Affects all relationships
      - (1) A person at enmity with God will be at enmity with other people
        - (a) God desires accord within the church while Satan desires discord
          - (i) Within the church God is supposed to rule
        - (b) God desires amity among men while Satan desires animosity
          - (i) Rom. 12:18 - if possible, peace with everyone
          - (ii) Eph. 6:15 - gospel of peace
          - (iii) Heb. 12:14 - pursue peace with everyone
          - (iv) Within the world Satan has been given rule
- C. Curative Commands (6-10)
  - 1. Sincere Repentance
    - a) Resign yourself to God (stop resisting)
      - (1) Resignation leads to obedience

- b) Resist the Devil
- c) Return to God
  - (1) Reciprocal action for believers
- d) Remove the filth
  - (1) From your Ways
  - (2) From your Will
  - (3) From your Wants
- e) Reorient your perspective
  - (1) Laughter to mourning, gloom to joy (Lk. 6:21, 25)
    - (a) Miserable, Mourn, Weep
- f) Recall your condition
  - (1) Remember you have no reason to be proud
- g) Receive His grace
  - (1) Real strength to resist comes only through God's grace
  - (2) Results in exaltation

As we've studied Satan's schemes we've learned that he wants us to mistake worldly knowledge for godly wisdom. When he is successful we become tricked soldiers. When he convinces us to doubt God and live in fear he has created trembling soldiers. And when he persuades us to think more of ourselves and be proud, the result is treacherous soldiers. But when he successfully lures us with sinful desires for sinful pleasures, we have become treasonous soldiers.

It is impossible to overstate the impact of sinful passions and pleasures on the army of God. The army of the Lord can't be the force it is designed to be when it is filled with people who are actually hostile toward the Lord.

So as we come to our time of invitation, I encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to inspect your life and reveal your allegiance. Are your relationships fractured by sinful cravings? Are you guilty of spiritual adultery? Are you a friend of the world and thus an enemy of God? If the answer to any of those questions is "yes," then the cure is repentance. And now is the time for you to stop resisting God and start resisting the devil. Return to God knowing that he will reciprocate. Remove the filth from your life, reorient your perspective, recall you needy condition, and receive the grace God promises to the humble; the grace that restores the necessary strength to resist the devil and remain in the Lord.