

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING ABOUT?

James 3:13-4:6

Based on title, you might expect me to say something about war. However, James is concerned about a different kind of fighting.

He's not nearly as concerned about what's going on in Afghanistan or Iraq, as he is about what's going on in the church!

How do you deal with turmoil in the midst of suffering?

James told us in his introduction (1:5) that when you can't figure it all out,

ASK GOD for wisdom!

A living faith faces the problems of suffering 2:1-5:6

Living faith shows no partiality for the rich and powerful 2:1-13

Living faith produces works in support of others 2:14-26

Living faith controls the tongue 3:1-12

4th problem: *conflicts and quarrels.*

James begins with question: **3:13 "Who is wise and understanding among you?"**

Answer: "Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

Wisdom => humility => appropriate behavior

LIVING FAITH PRODUCES PEACE 3:13-5:6

TWO WAYS PEOPLE APPROACH THEIR PROBLEMS

3:13-18

1. We can approach our problems from man's point of view which produces conflict. 3:13-

16

[Man's way leads to conflict]

When we approach hard times from man's perspective, it results in two things: bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. 3:14 *"But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth."*

This kind of "wisdom" isn't from God.

Three sources of these attitudes: 3:15-16 *"Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."*

The world The flesh The devil

These combine to produce instability and evil deeds.

Let's trace back up through this sequence in reverse:

When you find things out of control and all kinds of evil practice, ... ↘

When you find envy and selfish ambition, . . . ↘

When conflict and quarrels are prevalent, . . . ↘

. . . *assume that MAN'S point of view is at work!*

This way of thinking doesn't come for GOD!

Don't blame it on Him!

- 2. We can approach our problems from God's point of view which produces peace. 3:17-18
[God's way leads to peace]**

God's perspective produces godly spiritual fruit.

*What are some things that God's way of seeing things produces? **3:17-18** "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."*

Seeing things from God's perspective produces His brand of righteous behavior! –everything normally thought of as the conduct of the righteous. **In a word, peace**

When you consider these alternatives, which do you expect to find at church?

Which do you look for among GOD'S people?

James' next question is striking!

"Then why are there fights and quarrels AMONG YOU (God's people)?

Where do these come from? **4:1a**

"What causes fights and quarrels among you?"

You've gone to the wrong source! You're seeking the wrong thing!

Source of the problem: Our desires are causing the conflict

4:1b *"Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"*

It's OUR DESIRES that produce this!

"I want what I want when I want it!" "I want MY way!"

This is what *man's way* produces!

FOUR FRUSTRATIONS OF PEOPLE WHO TRY TO SOLVE

OUR PROBLEMS MAN'S WAY: 4:2-3 “Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

Do you feel the struggle going on here?

We fight and claw to get our own way

–we try everything we can think of—it doesn't work!

We come up empty!

1. **You want something, but don't get it.**
2. **You kill and covet to get something, but can't have what you want.**

They were “killing each other.”

May refer to hating a brother (cf. Matt. 5:21-22)

To get what they wanted, they may have betrayed each other

Some may have actually died by betrayal.

At the least they weren't showing love.

Where did all this get them?

3. **You quarrel and fight, but don't have what you want.**
4. **You ask for what you want, but don't receive it.**

Words that describe what *the church* looks like:

Fights, quarrels, battle, killing, coveting, jealousy, selfish ambition!

among GOD'S PEOPLE!

With all that effort, we still aren't satisfied:

"You don't have what you want!"

Do you know that feeling?

Have you been fighting to get something that God hasn't let you have?

Have you been going through hard times—tried to get away from it—only to discover that you get away from one wave, get back on your feet, look up, and here comes another one crashing down on top of you?

"Count it all joy when you're BOMBARDED by all kinds of attacks!"

Fighting and struggling to get out of the turmoil doesn't work

—IT WON'T GET YOU WHAT YOU WANT!

WHAT REASONS DOES GOD GIVE FOR THEIR FRUSTRATION?

All this struggle doesn't bring peace. Why? **—3 REASONS:**

1. We aren't looking to God for what we need.

4:1-2 *"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. **You do not have, because you do not ask God.**"*

Your desires—you want something—you kill and covet—you quarrel and fight

—but **WE DON'T ASK GOD!!**

When we do this *man's* way, it's not GOD we're seeking!

We aren't looking to God for what we need.

We'd rather *fight* than ask God for it!

2. **We ask for what we want with the wrong motives.** **4:3** “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

When we *do* ask God, we don't receive what we ask for because our motives are wrong.

We're seeking what WE want apart from God—*leaving God out*

We aren't trusting Him—we're after what WE want.

We're seeking our comfort, instead of God's will for us.

Two common errors in interpreting this verse:

1. We see these desires as *more evil* than they are.

We think these desires are evil, perverse, immoral lusts

The word simply refers to *OUR* desires.

We want things to come out *our way—the way WE want it!*

2. We see these desires as *less evil* than they are.

While not perverted, immoral desires, they are sin!
 Our reason for being is to accomplish God's will, NOT
 ours!

Any other goal IS sin!

3. We are seeking friendship with the world. 4:4-6

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

We don't get what we want because it involves
 friendship with the world for personal benefit
 and personal exaltation.

We hope to find a way to be sons of God,
 but, stay on good terms with the world.

We haven't understood the nature of the conflict.

We haven't understood that the world is at war with God.
 To be friends with the world, we must give up God.

The world wants a God-free society.

We can't bring God into a friendly relationship with this
 world system. They're headed in opposite directions!

We think we have a better plan for ourselves than God's
 plan!

God knows what's best for us!

He knows how to give it to us.

Throughout his letter, James treats this attitude as pride and promises that God will oppose it.

Stop trying to use the world as your ally to get away from what God sends our way. Submit our will to His plan for our life!

He gives grace to endure—v.5 says He gives *MORE* grace.

He gives us more than enough to endure the hard times!

He gives grace to triumph to those who submit to Him.

To experience God's peace, we must submit to Him

To refuse to submit to His plan for us is pride.

=>

4:6 *“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

IF MAN'S WAY OF SOLVING PROBLEMS DOESN'T PROVIDE PEACE, WHERE DO WE FIND IT?

=> **3:17-18** *Where do you find peace in times of trouble?*

We find peace in times of trouble from the wisdom God gives.
And where do you find that?

=> **1:5** *“If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask GOD who loves to give!”*

We have turmoil in times of trouble because we seek the wrong thing.

We seek relief! –In affliction

We seek OUR way!

You won't find *PEACE* there!

Let's be sure we get the picture!

We want something—we want our way—we set our hearts on it.

So we go after it. We fight and struggle to get our way.

But we don't get what we want.

Why? Because we're fighting for it, instead of talking to God about it.

And when we do ask God for what we want,

we ask God for what *WE* want—instead of what *HE* wants.

And since we're struggling to have *our own way*,

He doesn't respond the way we want.

Prayer is about *GOD'S* will being done on earth as in heaven,

NOT about manipulating God to get what *WE* want.

Until we learn that, we'll always come up empty.

So how does this work in real life?

You want God to do something about a difficult home situation?

You want God to change something at the office, or at school?

You want God to change something at church?

How do you go about getting it?

Have you been fighting for a change?

Fighting and quarreling won't get it done!

How about asking God for it?

–not asking Him to do what *WE* want, but asking Him to do what *HE* wants

–what will please *HIM*?

If we want God to change our church, . . .
 If we want God to change our community, . . .
 If we want God to change our home, . . .
 If we want God to change our personal life, . . .

**Then, we must quit fighting to change it ourselves
 and seek HIM and HIS WILL first!**

We find peace when we turn to God and seek HIM
 and HIS way!

We need to get our eyes off ourselves and onto God.

- stop defending ourselves and start depending on God.
- seek His purposes for our lives, and praise Him for them.
- pray and ask for guidance and strength to endure until He comes.
- seek first His purposes and His glory.

=> Like a River Glorious is GOD's Perfect Peace

We've been talking about hard stuff—this is fruit only GOD can produce in us.

If you're here without God in your life, and think you can pull this off on your own, you just don't understand what you're up against!

All a normal, natural-born person can produce comes from those sources we saw at the beginning: the world, our natural selves, and the devil! In our own strength, we aren't capable of any other lifestyle.

I might as well tell a dead person:

“Get up and clean yourself off!”

We can't do it ourselves!

That's why God says that He gives MORE GRACE!

He wants to give you a gift this morning.

He wants to give you the gift of eternal life; make you His own child!

Until you trust Jesus as your personal savior, you are His creature, but NOT his child.

You must be BORN into God's family.

He is offering that to you, if you will acknowledge YOUR sin and receive His gift: Jesus who died in your place.

You can do that right where you're sitting this morning.