

Series: The Peril of Praying

YE ASK AMISS

JAMES 4

Text: James 4:3

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³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Introduction:

The Christian life is one struggle after another it seems.

We struggle with our flesh, with this world, with the other believers sometimes, with Satan, and with the Lord Himself.

James addresses the issue of these struggles. He speaks about the causes of these struggles the results of these struggles and how to have victory over them.

Note:

Sermon Content:

1. THE SOURCE OF OUR STRUGGLES (VS. 1)

James 4:1

¹ From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

James says, "Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from?" These Christians faced the same type of conflicts that we face today. The word "**wars**" which means a fight, a battle, a dispute, strife or quarrel.

The word "**fightings**" is derived from the word which means "a fight or combat, a battle of individual conflicts or persons at variance, disputants."

The source of our fussing is our lust. Our passions that battle within us are the root of our problems. The Bible says our lusts "war" in us.

The word "**war**" means a military mission.

Remember that our lust is always on "active duty" in our body.

Our conflict with our flesh is a constant, continual battle.

When we are controlled by our flesh we become hard to get along with.

Our lust is the source of our external conflicts with others.

This word “**lust**” carries the idea of the gratification of sensual, natural, fleshly desires.

When this word is used in the New Testament it is always used in a negative, ungodly sense.

Paul warned men would be like this in the end times.

2 Timothy 3:2-4

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

The fighting was taking place among God's people.

James says, "among you." When Christians are fussing and fighting, the world watches and says, “Look how they hate one another.”

Nothing does more to hurt the cause of Christ than when Christians fight and argue with one another over petty, senseless things.

External conflicts are usually an indication of conflicts taking place within a person. James refers to this here.

The New Testament has addressed this problem of conflicts among believers in several places.

- **The Church at Corinth**

1 Corinthians 1:11

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

- Christians were suing one another in the church

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

¹ *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*

² *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?* ³ *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?* ⁴ *If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.* ⁵ *I speak to your shame.*

Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? ⁶ But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. ⁷ Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? ⁸ Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

Paul was concerned that when he saw them again there would be strife in the church.

2 Corinthians 12:20

²⁰ For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

- **The Church at Galatia**

Galatians 5:15

¹⁵ But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

- **The Church at Ephesus**

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- **The Church at Philippi**

Philippians 4:1-2

¹ Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved. ² I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

- **The Disciples**

Luke 9:46-48

⁴⁶ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. ⁴⁷ And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, ⁴⁸ And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

God is pleased and honored when we get along with one another.

Psalm 133:1

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

God has given us all different gifts and abilities that can accomplish great things when we are working together.

Illustration:

There was trouble in the carpenter's workshop one day.

The tools were fussing and quarreling with one another.

One of them said, "The problem is with the hammer. He is much too noisy."

The hammer replied, "Nonsense! The blame should go to the saw.

He goes backwards and forwards all the time."

The saw said, "Wait a minute. I'm not to blame. I think the problem is with the plane. His work is so shallow. He does nothing but skim the surface."

The plane protested loudly, "I think the real problem lies with the screwdriver. He is always going around in circles."

The screwdriver shouted, "That's ridiculous, the whole trouble began with the ruler. He is always measuring other people by his own standards."

The ruler was rank and furious. He barked out and said, "What about the sandpaper? Surely he is always rubbing people the wrong way!"

"Why are you picking on me?" said the sandpaper. "I think you ought to blame the drill because he is so boring."

Just as the drill was about to protest, the carpenter came into the wood shop and began to work. Using every one of his tools, he eventually built a beautiful pulpit from which the Gospel was preached to thousands of people. There is no limit to what God can do when we are yielded to His control and working together for His glory.

Note not only The Source of Our Struggle but secondly:

2. OUR STRIFE AND STRUGGLES (VS. 2-3)

James 4:2-3

² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

What a picture of confusion.

Ye lust and have not, desire to have and cannot obtain.

The truth of the matter is our flesh is really never satisfied.

There are things we desire physically, mentally, and emotionally.

James says that we lust, kill, fight, war, and ask. We struggle with our flesh.

There are many frustrated Christians today that have the wrong priorities in their lives.

The war in their hearts creates war in their homes or churches.

Anger and hatred at God spills over in anger toward God's people.

This is the idea behind the word "to kill."

This expression means murderous hatred, destructive behavior.

When a lustful person cannot fulfill his desires, the result is often catastrophic to others and to oneself.

Illustrations:

When the men of Sodom were struck blind by the angels, they continued groping for the door in a vain attempt to gain entrance and satisfy their lust.

Genesis 19:11

¹¹ And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Absalom was consumed with the thought of ruling the nation of Israel to the point that he was more than willing to murder his father.

Hatred is put on the same level as murder in the Bible.

1 John 3:15

¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

People complain about blessings they don't have instead of the blessings they do have.

They become very selfish, hateful, and ungrateful.

Some folks don't know what they want, but feel sure they don't have it.

James gives the reasons for our strife and struggles:

A. Lust

The word "**lust**" means "to set your heart upon a thing or anxious self-seeking."

Remember:

If the focus of our life is wrong, our actions will be wrong.

B. Desire

The words "**desire to have**" means "to burn with zeal, to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger."

This is where we get our English word "zealot or zealous."

Remember:

Jealousy and bitterness will leave you unfulfilled. It will create conflicts in your marriage, church, family, work, and school.

Not only are Lust and Desire reasons for strife and struggles but also note:

C. Ye Ask Not

Another reason for the strife and struggles in our lives is our lack of prayer.

Remember:

Daily prayers lessen daily cares.

Don't fall into the trap of prayerlessness.

Notice what the prophet Isaiah said about this problem:

Isaiah 64:7

⁷ And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Note one other reason for strife and struggle:

D. Ye Ask Amiss

James 4:3

³ *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

"**To ask amiss**" meant they were praying selfishly, with the wrong motives. They were asking for the wrong purpose and for selfish, evil motives.

They desired to fulfill their sensual desires. The word "**consume**" means "to spend or squander."

They were asking the Lord for something for the purpose of spending it on their lust.

This is what the prodigal son did with his possessions.

Remember:

God supplies our need not our greed.

The Bible makes it clear that we are to petition the Lord for things according to His will.

1 John 5:14

¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

When we are consumed with "things" we tend to get distracted.

Matthew 13:22

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

There are several examples in the Bible of those who struggled with lust:

1. Herod – Lust for Immoral Pleasures

He coveted his brother's wife. (Mark 6:14-29)

2. Judas – Lust for Money (Mark 14:10-11)

3. Hezekiah- Lust for "Showing Off"

He flaunted all of his precious things: silver, gold, armor, and other treasures to the visitors from Babylon. Isaiah warned him they would be taken away in the future, and his prophecy was fulfilled.

4. Adoni-bezek – Lust for Power (Judges 1:5-7)

5. Diotrophes – Lust for Pre-eminence (3 John 1:9-10)

3 John 1:9-10

⁹ *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

¹⁰ *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

Close:

We will close the message at this point and continue with this passage next week.

These struggles are a peril to our prayers. May we never allow pride and selfishness become a peril in our praying.

3. OUR STRUGGLE WITH GOD (VS. 4-5)

James 4:4-5

⁴ *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* ⁵ *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*

4. THE STRENGTH FOR OUR STRUGGLES (6)

James 4:6

⁶ But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

5. STEPS FOR VICTORY IN OUR STRUGGLES (VS. 7-10)

James 4:7-10

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Close: