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The last portion of James 3 taught us that worldly wisdom will bring trouble, but godly wisdom brings blessing and fruit (v. 16-18). This leads into James 4 which opens talking about warring and fighting among believers.

How we think affects how we live. Life is about sowing and reaping. If we live according to man's worldly wisdom, we will sow discord. God desires that His people live together in peace and harmony "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psalm 133:1).

The Bible records instances of disagreement within local churches. The Corinthians struggled with proper orderliness within their meetings, were divided with one another, and were even suing one another in court. The Galatian believers were "*biting and devouring one another*" (Galatians 5:15). Paul admonished the Ephesians to cultivate spiritual unity (Ephesians 4:1-16) and two women were generating strife in Philippi (Philippians 4:1-3).

James 4 gets to the root of the problem. Why are people, even believers, at war with one another? We read here that there are underlying wars going on. These internal wars are manifested externally.

First, people are at war within themselves. The essence of sin is selfishness and pride. The original sin in the Garden of Eden was disobedience borne out of a lack of trust in God and a desire to be one's own god.

Selfish desires lead to evil actions, coveting what is not ours, and fighting (v. 2). They also can lead to prayers that ask God for things with the wrong motives (v. 3). Our prayers should always be blanketed in God's will.

The Lord Jesus prayed for unity within believers "*that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 17:21-22).

People who are at war within themselves fail to have true joy. Rather than being thankful for their blessings, they complain about what they do not have. They covet and envy what others have, which leads them to not get along well with others.

While there are internal wars within people, ultimately the underlying war is rebellion against God. God created the world in harmony, but through rebellion sin came into the world. People declare war against God by joining forces with His enemies. We read about those enemies in James 4:4-7.

The first enemy of God mentioned is the world (v. 4). Throughout the Bible, the world system is declared to be in rebellion against God. It prefers to go its own way without God or His Word. Friendship with the world system leads to loving it (1John 2:15-17) and conforming to it (Romans 12:2). The result is being condemned with the world (1Corinthians 11:32).

Friendship with the world is compared here to adultery (v. 4). The church is the bride of Christ (Romans 7:4) and is expected to be faithful to Him. We must choose - we can walk with God and be judged by the world, or we can walk with the world and be judged by God.

The second enemy of God is the flesh, which is described in verses 1 and 5. This is not describing our physical body (it is spiritually neutral and can be used for good or evil). It speaks of the sinful nature. The believer has received the Holy Spirit, but there remains a battle within. Will we yield to the Spirit, or yield to sin and grieve the Spirit?

The devil is the third enemy of God. He seeks to devour and destroy God's people. He opposes God every way he can. But if we resist him, he will flee from us! (James 4:7)

## James 4

## Pride Promotes Strife

<sup>4</sup> What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You lust after something and do not have it, so you commit murder. You covet something and cannot obtain it, so you fight and quarrel. Yet you do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture says without purpose that the Spirit that indwells us yearns (to be loved) with a jealous love? [Jer. 3:14, Hos. 2:19]

<sup>6</sup> But God gives more grace. Therefore, He says:

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”  
[Prov. 3:34]

## Humility Cures Worldliness

<sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve (*your sin*) and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

## Do Not Judge a Brother

<sup>11</sup> Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge another?

## Do Not Boast About Tomorrow

<sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”. <sup>14</sup> But you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead you *ought* to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we shall live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup> But as it is you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, anyone who knows what is right to do and does not do *it*, is sinning.

## Memory Verse

*"Submit to God. Resist the devil  
and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)*