

**Practical Christianity**  
**Rising Above**  
**James 4.1-10**

[In our study of James, our text has just addressed the two mindsets that each of us wrestle with daily. **There is the wisdom that is from above or Spiritual Wisdom, but there is also the wisdom that is not from above called Worldly Wisdom.** The Apostle Paul wrote of these as well in Corinthians he referred to those who were Carnal Christians and those who were Spiritual Christians. Paul's text reads,]

*[1 Corinthians 3:1-4 <sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. <sup>3</sup> For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? <sup>4</sup> For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?]*

**[The marks of Carnal Christians:]**

[Envyng.]

[Strife.]

[Division.]

[A Natural Walk]

[This brings us to our text in James. Conflict is a natural part of life. We ought to expect conflict and if we would consider ourselves to be spiritual Christians then we must learn to properly handle conflict. Notice that James and Paul both were led to identify the marks of worldliness and of carnality. They include envy, strife, and division. Now, this does not mean that a spiritual Christian does not face conflict. But when the spiritual Christian faces conflict he has learned how to properly and effectively handle conflict so that his conflicts are quickly resolved.]

**[Locking Horns And Dying -** In an old monastery near Bebenhausen, Germany, one may see two pairs of deer horns interlocked. They were found in that position many years ago. The deer had been fighting; their horns got jammed together and could not be separated; so they died. Dr. Kerr, who first told the story, added, "I

would like to carry those horns into every house and school." We might add, "And into every church."—Harold P. Barker<sup>1</sup>[1]]

[Learning to handle conflict is important for your friendships, for your marriage, for your parenting, for your work relationships, and for everything else in your life. Life is about people, and to be around people means you must learn to interact properly with them, especially when there is a disagreement with them.]

[So in addressing our text let's consider,]

## A. The Reality of Strife (vs 1-5) [- The Symptoms of Strife]

1. **Inordinate Desires** (vs 1) [*– From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* - When there is strife in our life it is, more often than not, the result of something that is **self-inflicted**. On many occasions I have counseled someone with a conflict with another person to discover that the other person is completely unaware of the problem. Things that worry us, or cause hate and bitterness within us, or cause heartfelt issues for one person are often non-existent with their presumed assailant.]

[**Members** - μέλεια (Gk) – **A limb or member of the body** (Matt. 5:29, 30; Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:12, 14, 18–20, 22, 25, 26; **James 3:5, 6**). In the pl. *tá mélē*, the members of the body as the seat of the desires and passions (Rom. 6:13, 19; 7:5, 23; 1 Cor. 6:15; Col. 3:5; James 4:1). Used metaphorically, meaning a member of the Church of which Christ is the head (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30). In Rom. 12:5, “members one of another” means intimately united in Christian fellowship (Eph. 4:25).<sup>2</sup>[2]]

[Members here is speaking of a part of oneself rather than speaking of various members of the body of Christ. The source of the conflict is likely within you.]

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1[1] Paul Lee Tan, “10236. Locking Horns And Dying,” in *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "10236. Locking Horns And Dying".  
<sup>2</sup>[2]Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G3196). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

[**Lust** - ἡδονῶν (Gk) - delight, enjoyment, which is from *hēdomai* (n.f.), to have sensual pleasure. Pleasure, gratification, enjoyment. In the NT, used only of physical pleasure (Luke 8:14NT, used only of physical pleasure (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3NT, used only of physical pleasure (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; James 4:3NT, used only of physical pleasure (Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; James 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:13). Figuratively used as desire, appetite, lust (James 4:1).<sup>3[3]</sup> ]

[Our lust or inordinate desire causes us more grief and conflict than anything else. There is nothing wrong with having desires. God has given us emotions and desires, but when our desires mutate and become so strong within us that they begin to cause fighting and wars among us then they have become inordinate.]

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**A. The Reality of Strife – The Symptoms of strife**

1. Lust - Inordinate Desires
- 2.

[**Placing the Blame** - Our Lord is letting us know through this passage the likely source of our conflicts. Invariably when there is a conflict we hesitate to look at ourselves. We are all adult enough to say, “Oh, I know I have my part in this.” But the truth is that we have decided that it is someone else’s fault and we will often defend our position to the end. **James is quick to write, look in your own heart first.**]

2. **Selfish Determination** (vs 2; 1 John 4.7-11; Matt 5.44-45; Prov 16.7) [– *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.* – Desire is a powerful thing within people. It drives us with passion to do things that we normally would not consider doing. Even to the point of killing, as James wrote it.]

Matt 5.44

[**Is this possible in God's people?** Saul, before he became Paul, was determined to the point of murder. He thought he was doing a service for God. As a matter of fact most wars are religious wars in that someone claims they are doing something for God and they begin killing to accomplish their goals.]

[Killing other people is not a mark of godliness it is the mark of godlessness. Love, on the other hand, is the mark of spiritual maturity. The Bible says,]

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<sup>3[3]</sup> Ibid.

*[1 John 4:7-11 <sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. <sup>8</sup> He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.]*

*[Matthew 5:44-45 <sup>44</sup> But I say unto you, **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** <sup>45</sup> That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust].*

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A. The Reality of Strife – The Symptoms of strife

1. Lust - Inordinate Desires
2. Selfish Determination

*[Proverbs 16:7 <sup>7</sup> When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.]*

[Hence, conflict, and the desire to kill or the longing to see someone die are not marks of godliness and spiritual maturity. They are marks of selfishness and lust.]

3. **Inner Deception (vs 3)** [- *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* - The depth of one's desires has taken them to the point of actually believing that their lust is God's will for them. They actually are pleading with God for their own selfish desires and lusts.]

**[The Test Of Your Conflict – Consider this. If you are in some conflict and you find strife and division welling up because of this conflict. If you have been praying for your desired outcome and God has not answered, perhaps you need to consider that your desired outcome is not as justified as you would like to think. **The evidence of right praying is answered prayer.** Your Heavenly Father clearly states that if your prayers are not being answered then **you are asking amiss. Will you hear God?**]**

[If your conflict is resulting in bitterness, hatefulness, and a lack of answered prayer, **perhaps you need to start praying in a different way.** Perhaps you need to ask God to help you see this whole thing under a different light.]

4. **Misplaced Dedication** (vs 4; 1 Cor 14.33) [- *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.* – Be careful if the worldly seem to be supporting you in your cause. The world is not the friend of God and if the world is supporting you in your battle then perhaps your allegiances are wrong. By the way the Bible reminds us,]

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A. **The Reality of Strife – The Symptoms of strife**

1. Lust - Inordinate Desires
2. Selfish Determination
3. Inner Deception - Ask amiss

[*1 Corinthians 14:33*<sup>33</sup> *For God is not the author of confusion, **but of peace,** as in all churches of the saints.*]

[If your conflict has been raging for some time, and is not persecution, then it is likely that your battle has little to do with God.]

5. **Spiritual Digression** (vs 5; Luke 22.31-32; 1 Pet 5.8) [- *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? - **Digression means to detour or go aside.** Our natural man and our spiritual adversary love to draw us away from our Heavenly Father, his people, and His lifestyle. If you have been diverted from your purity and godliness then your conflict is not worth its fight.]*

Luke 22.31

[*Luke 22:31-32*<sup>31</sup> *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, **behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:***<sup>32</sup> *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*]

1 Pet 5.8

[*1 Peter 5:8*<sup>8</sup> *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*]

**B. The Remedy for Strife (vs 6-9)** [- If you are in the midst of a vicious conflict, if you find the symptoms listed above marking your life and cause then you need God's prescription and cure. **You need an,**]

**1. Inoculation of Divine Grace (vs 6; Psalm 34.18; 51.17) - *But he giveth more grace.* Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, *but giveth grace unto the humble.* - You need a good boaster shot of grace.]**

*[Justice is when we get what we deserve.]*  
*[Mercy is when you don't get what you deserve.]*  
*[Grace is when you get what you don't deserve.]*

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**A. The Reality of Strife – The Symptoms of strife**

1. Lust - Inordinate Desires
2. Selfish Determination
3. Inner Deception - Ask amiss
4. Misplaced Dedication
5. Spiritual Digression - Wrong spirit

Psalm

[It's just like anything else in life. If you are sick, and the doctor has a cure, you have to go to the doctor and let him give you whatever that cure is. **God has a cure for conflict,** envy, and division in your life and that cure is God's grace.]

**[How do you get a boaster shot of God's grace? The Bible says,]**

*[Psalms 34:18 <sup>18</sup> The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. ]*

*[Psalms 51:17 <sup>17</sup> **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:** a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. ]*

[The pathway to grace is **desire mixed with submission.**]

**2. Inauguration of Divine Authority (vs 7, 2 Tim 2.15; Eph 4.30-32; Heb 10.25; Col 3.8-10; Eph 6.10-11; 1 Pet 5.8-9) - *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* - To Submit to God you must,]**

a. [Study Gods Word]

*[2 Timothy 2:15 <sup>15</sup> Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ]*

b. [Surrender to God's Spirit]

*[Ephesians 4:30-32* <sup>30</sup> *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* <sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* <sup>32</sup> *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. ]*

c. [Seek out God's people]

*[Hebrews 10:25* <sup>25</sup> *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. ]*

d. [Put on Jesus.]

*[Colossians 3:8-10* <sup>8</sup> *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.* <sup>9</sup> *Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;* <sup>10</sup> ***And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*** ]

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**B. The Remedy For Strife**

1. Inoculation of Divine Grace
2. Inauguration of Divine Authority
- 3.

e. [Resist the devil.]

[When a Moslem makes a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, he kisses the Black Stone (the stone that came down from heaven), drinks from the well of Hagar, and throws stones at the three pillars that represent Satan. No doubt Satan is more amused than offended. Certainly he is not wounded. If we want to do battle with evil, we will have to do more than throw stones at pillars. We will have to live holier lives and help others to do the same.]

f. [Put on the whole armor of God]

*[Ephesians 6:10-11* <sup>10</sup> *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* <sup>11</sup> *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ]*

g. [Be sober and watching (1 Peter 5.8-9)]

*[1 Peter 5:8-9<sup>8</sup> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:<sup>9</sup> Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. ]*

**3. Infusion of Divine Direction (vs 8; James 1.8) [-  
*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.  
Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your  
hearts, ye double minded.***

[To cleanse your hands deals with repentance, confession, and cleansing. It seems clear from our study in this text that if bitterness and hatred have been marking your conflict that your conflict stands in opposition to God rather than is the affirmation of God. Therefore, repent and turn away from your sin.]

[Purify your heart from a double mind - two minded, two faced]

*[James 1:8<sup>8</sup> A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.]*

**4. Introspection of our Divine Dependency (vs 9; Rev 3.17) [- *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* – This speaks to the need of those warring in the conflict to stop defending their personal positions and agendas and to realize that their division and conflict are not marks of spiritual maturity, nor are they indications of their standing with God. They reveal their distance from God and their spiritual immaturity. They need to repent and get themselves right with God.]**

[The Laodicean Church failed to recognize the depth of their need or the reality of their need. Maybe they just failed to reckon with the nature of their need, the need for the presence of God in their lives. Of them the Bible states,]

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*[Revelation 3:17 <sup>17</sup> Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: ]*

**C. The Reward for Surrender (vs 10; Matt 23.12; Luke 14.11; 1 Pet 5.6) [-  
*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* – If you are currently in a conflict then there is a course of action for you to follow. If you are not in a conflict today, then rest assured one is on its way. How will you handle it? Will you humble yourself to your Heavenly Father? The Bible says,]**

*[Matthew 23:12 <sup>12</sup> And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. ]*

*[Luke 14:11 <sup>11</sup> For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. ]*

*[1 Peter 5:6 <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:]*

[Can you trust God to deal with your problems?]

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CrossRoads Baptist Church, March 8, 2009, Evening

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