

For the Love of God and Country **Excerpt – Part Seven**

*From whence come wars and fightings among you?
come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?
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.
James 4:1-3*

In a previous article we addressed the proper attitude to have before God when we go to Him to ask for His favor: now, let's look at motive. Motive -- the reason behind what we do. Motives are inclined to get murky and even deadly when we begin to do something for the Lord. We need to examine them in light of the Word of God.

Pastor James asks a question in James Chapter 4. It is a question that seems to be easily answered; however, I found that the answer is not as cut and dried as we sometimes want to make it. Now, we all know that Satan is the author of all conflict. James knew that as well. So, what was he asking? I think the understanding is in the process of looking at the question. Where *do* wars and fightings come from or what *is* the cause of wars and fightings?

The word "wars" speaks of armed conflict, acts of hostility and active opposition. My trusty dictionary, Funk & Wagnalls, tells us that these come from strife and confusion. The Word tells us in James 3:16, "*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*" Strife speaks of self-seeking ambition and carries the idea or flavor of enmity. If you look up that word "strife" in the Greek we see that there is an implication in the word that speaks to factions, or seeking to win followers.

If you just take that one word "wars," it is not difficult to end up in politics. Why? Because politics is all about seeking to win followers to a way of thinking. In the process of winning followers, contention seeps in, as well as jealousy. My husband is fond of saying, "envy is where someone has something that you want for yourself, while jealousy is where you have something that you want to keep all for yourself." The political arena at all levels is rife with envy *and* jealousy, so it is easy to see that strife is not a strange concept in politics. Each politician strives for an advantage over his opponents; each political party contends for the superiority of their platform. The whole scene is adversarial and has become vindictive. The attacks may not be physical, but they are just as vicious; and, they cause much pain and trauma. What a shame that operating with courtesy, respect, and kindness is no longer a hallmark of statesmanship.

The word "fightings" speaks of controversies, quarrels, and disputes. It is a word that comes from a second word that also means war. What is the difference? It seems that the first word "war" has connotations of active conflict while "fightings" indicates verbal conflict. We have both in the political arena of today. Political competitors accuse each other of everything except something nice. The whole focus of their rhetoric seems to be to shame, blame, and slander. They use name calling and "leak" innuendos, stories, and downright lies. What a national embarrassment! My parents and teachers used to tell me, "If you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything at all." I wish we would go back to that type of social rule; you know, the Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you. What a difference it would make!

Where do these wars and fightings come from? They come from focusing on and striving to please and delight ourselves – lust. This type of attitude and activity divides families, churches, friends, and nations. The sad thing is that God told us very clearly that a "*house divided against itself*"¹ will fall.

¹ Matthew 12:25, Mark 3:25

He didn't say might fall; He clearly said, "*cannot stand*"² – it is just not possible. This is a warning that our nation seems to disregard and it is time for us to wake up and take the warning to heart.

God tells us in this passage that one of the results of lust can be murder. We don't have to take someone's physical life to kill them off. We can kill their reputation, their dignity, their friends, their families, etc. Our political process has become a lesson in character assassination. It is a disgrace to our country – an embarrassment to our people.

What does this have to do with motive? Look at verse 3, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" The problem shows up when we pray with a *wrong* motive. We pray "badly" because our asking is all about our feelings, our pleasures, our wills, and our desires. We rarely consider that we should be seeking God for His guidance and then pray according to His will – not ours. We want to win; we want to be superior; we want what we want regardless of what it does to anyone else. Lust seems to boil down to this one thought: a willingness to use people, places or things, regardless of the damage it does to them, in order to get what one wants. We call an extreme case of this type of response, malicious narcissism. God just called it lust. Don't kid yourself! If lust is indulged, it will grow in intensity and in scope. And, the main point here is – God will not hear our prayer, nor answer it.

We come to God with our ideas and our plans, attempting to get God to see things our way and get Him to carry out our plan. We ask Him for things that will promote and please us, wasting what we have asked for in a vain effort to be satisfied. We may indeed get a result, but I guarantee you it will not be the outcome that we wanted or expected. God is not going to answer a prayer that is motivated by self interest and self promotion, but the devil may give us a thing or two! We really do need to think and seek God's guidance before we go around asking God for things. In other words, we need to be mindful of what we ask. We must be sure we are asking according to His will. If we do that, then we have a wonderful promise found in 1 John 5:14, "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*" What a promise! When we ask God for those things that are in one accord with His will, humanity gets served; and, best of all, His kingdom comes into ascendancy.

May we all check our motives and ask the Holy Spirit to identify where lust, strife, envy, jealousy, and self-interest finds its way into our lives. Ask Him to guide us into right motives and then rejoice – our prayers will be heard and answered! God is so good!

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² Matthew 12:25, Mark 3:25