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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

25200 Sorrento Avenue, Sorrento, FL 32776; 352.383.5052

Web Site: [www.RefugeSorrento.com](http://www.RefugeSorrento.com)

**Bishop M. Ruel McCoy, Sr., Pastor and Diocesan**

**Elder Alfonzo Baptiste, Supply Pastor**

**“MATURITY AND HUMILITY”**

**James 4:1-17**

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

Chapter three ended in a statement of Christian Maturity and Humility.

***James 3:18 “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”***

In this chapter, James questions his readers engaged in wars and fights among themselves. This is an indication of their lack of Christian maturity. You can’t have the peace of God or peace with God, if you’re constantly at war with yourself and others. What caused them? What was the source? Ask people why they’re fighting, and they’re likely to point their fingers at others. But James insists that wars come from your passions that wage war within you. Conflicts emerge from within. The strongest statement someone can make is usually in the form of a question. It’s called the Socratic method of teaching. It gets us to thinking about figuring out what the problem is. James is speaking to them about the fightings (internal conflict) being caused, because of the immaturity and worldliness they still have in their lives and their walks. If we are dead in Christ, there should be no reason to fight ourselves or the brethren.

***Hebrews 12:14 “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”***

***John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”***

***James 4:2 "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."***

***James 4:3 "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts."***

The human heart manufactures desires, frequently selfish ones. These can range from the mundane (“I want a little peace and quiet”) to the weighty (“I want power and significance”). When someone prevents you from satisfying a desire, you are tempted to view that person as an obstacle to be overcome, as an enemy to be defeated. Therefore, the natural tendency is to murder and covet. It’s not necessarily that you intend to slay anyone physically. Jesus, after all, reminds us that murder begins in the heart with hatred.

***Matthew 15:19 “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:”***

Thus, the believers James addressed were relating to one another as adversaries. Importantly, James says one of the reasons they did not have what they wanted was because they didn’t ask. How tragic to declare war against a friend or spouse about something that God may have granted if only asked! On the other hand, often it’s the asking that’s the problem. Many people don’t receive what they want from God because they ask with wrong motives, so they may spend it on their pleasures. The kingdom of God and the needs of others don’t factor into the equation. A helpful question to pose when we pray about something for ourselves is this: “How will God’s program be advanced through the granting of my request?”

***Psalm 19:14 “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”***

James is speaking here to believers in Christ. It is paradoxical that Christians would be this caught up in the flesh. Lust is of the flesh, and not of God. It seems they want things so badly that are not their own, that they even kill to get them. They have not crucified the flesh and its lust.

***Romans 7:15-22***

***15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.***

***16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.***

***17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.***

***18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.***

***19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.***

***20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.***

***21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.***

***22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:***

James gives them the secret in the last few words of the verse. Christians, do not fight to get the things you want, pray for them instead. If they are good for you, the Lord will give them to you. The answer is prayer. They do not have these things, because they have not asked in prayer. Sometimes we, like these Christians, pray for things that would not be for our own good, or the good of those around us. God will not answer a prayer to fill our greed. He will, however, answer a prayer for our needs.

***James 4:4 "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."***

Adultery is one of the worst sins a Christian could commit, because it is a sin of the body. The Christian, filled with the Holy Spirit, would be involving the Holy Spirit in the sin. A person who is still involved in adultery, is not a friend of God. They have chosen the way of the flesh. The flesh, or the spirit, rules over our will. If the flesh rules over your will, you are of the flesh. When we want the satisfaction of our own desires above all else, we commit idolatry and worship something other than God. Worldliness and godliness cannot coexist. When Israel strayed after other gods, the Lord accused them of adultery because he was Israel’s husband. Therefore, it’s not surprising that James calls these church members adulterous people. The church is the bride of Christ. So friendship with the world is hostility toward God. If you cozy up to the world and pursue worldly desires, you make yourself the enemy of God. And when you put yourself in that position, you cannot expect your prayers to be answered.

***James 4:5 "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"***

God will not share you with any other. You are either 100% His, or you are not His at all. To lust with envy would not be Godly. We must choose today whom we will serve. Is it God, or the fleshly lust, that we serve? If we are God's, we will not lust with envy. God wants you. If you commit adultery with the world, then, he won’t sit back and do nothing. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us envies intensely. The Lord is a jealous God who won’t share his bride with false gods.

***II Corinthians 11:2 "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ."***

***James 4:6 "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."***

So, what does a holy, jealous God do when his people foolishly pursue the world and treat him like an enemy? He gives you more grace! When we humble ourselves before God, we are in a place to receive from Him.

***I Peter 5:6 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"***

We are saved by the grace of God, and we have nothing to be proud about. Salvation for us is a free gift. His grace is sufficient for me. God resists the proud. If you place yourself in opposition to God through your attachment to the world, he’ll resist you. He’ll oppose you because such pride imitates the king of pride, Satan, who exalted himself above God. The only solution is to humble yourself before him in order to experience the outpouring of his grace. Pride is like a beard. It grows without our cultivation, and we have to daily, humbly shave it off.

***1 John 2:16 “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”***

***James 4:7 " Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."***

What does it look like to daily humble yourself before the Lord? First, you must submit to God. To submit to God is to recognize your weakness, to stop fighting, and to surrender to him as your ultimate and final authority. This is just saying that it is within the willpower of every man to resist the devil and the temptations that he puts before him. We have been given the power of attorney to use the name of Jesus to defeat the devil. The temptations that the devil brings before us are really temptations of the flesh. The temptation will leave, if we say no to it. God will not over-rule our will. He gives us the power to choose. We must decide right, or wrong, for ourselves. The minute you emphatically say no to the devil and his temptations, he will go on to someone else and leave you alone. Flee means leave in a hurry. A heart and will controlled by God, will have no difficulty in saying no to the devil and his temptations.

***James 4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded."***

To draw near to God is to come into his presence with prayer, praise, and obedience. However, if you reserve this for Sundays only, you won’t draw near enough. Second, you must resist the devil. Submitting to God is one side of the coin; resisting the devil is the other. In the spiritual war, we must surrender to the true King and join in opposition to the wicked usurper. To be double minded, means you cannot make up your mind just what you want to do. We see from the following verse, that we cannot ride the fence. We must decide who we will serve. God or man.

***Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."***

Cleansing of the hands means the work you put your hands to must be clean, as well as your heart being pure, stayed upon God. When we make a step toward God, we will find that He has been there to help us all along. He just wanted us to reach out to Him. Regularly repent of your sin: cleanse your hands and purify your hearts. Some people don’t receive the help they need from God because they believe they “don’t sin.” Rather, they “make mistakes.” But Jesus didn’t die for mistakes; he died for sins.

***Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;***

***1 John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”***

We live in a culture that rejects personal responsibility and downplays sin. Those are symptoms of pride, which takes us right back to where James started and where he ends: humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. Admit your sin and eradicate pride. Riding God’s elevator to the top always starts with a trip down.

***James 4:9 "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness."***

This is speaking of true repentance from the heart. Worldly laughter and worldly joy must change into a true repentance for sin. The joy that comes later is from God, not worldly pleasures. To be a sinner and truly sorry for the sin, means a grieving, and mourning, and even crying for forgiveness. The new life that true repentance brings is not a life of worldly pleasures, but of godly joy.

***James 4:10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."***

When we are down, as far as we can go, we look up and see Jesus who gave His body on the cross that we might be lifted up. He will lift us up from the depths of despair.

***Psalms 147:6 "The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground."***

***James 4:11 "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of [his] brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."***

James gives an illustration of what humility requires. It demands a change in how you speak of others. Don’t criticize. Don’t speak about a fellow believer with the intent of doing harm rather than providing help. The one who defames and judges a brother or sister defames and judges the law. Thank goodness, we are not the judge, Jesus is. How can we judge another? We are free from sin ourselves, only because we are forgiven. Judge not, that you be not judged. The very best thing we can do, is live our own life as free from sin as we can and leave the judgement (condemnation) up to Jesus. We do not fully understand the law, or grace, how could we judge righteously?

***James 4:12 "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"***

When we pass judgement on someone else, it is as if we think we are perfect ourselves, and we are not. Remember what Jesus did when the accusers had the woman caught in adultery and were about to stone her to death. Scriptures doesn’t say what Jesus wrote in the sand, but to show their unrighteousness judgment and willful hypocrisy, he could have written “Where is the man?”. He then righteously judged them by saying, you without sin cast the first stone. They all had to leave because they were not without sin.We, Christians, are justified {just as if we had never sinned} in Jesus. Jesus, as Judge, decides who are saved and who are lost. He is the just Judge.

***James 4:13 "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:"***

***James 4:14 "Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."***

We see, from this, that we do not even know whether we will be alive tomorrow or not. Our life is of God. We are born when and to whom the Lord has planned for us to be. Our death is the same. There is an allotted time for each of us to die. We leave this house of flesh when the breath of life, that God put in it, leaves. We leave at the time that God has chosen, and not at our own choosing. We leave not one second before our allotted time. Man's days are numbered as the hair on his head. Let me share what Jesus had to say about this very thing. This is about a rich man, who had no idea he was about to die. He had a very big harvest, and we will see what he did with his abundance. We do not have control of how long we live, God does. Make good of today, it may be the only day you have.

***Luke 12:17 "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"***

***Luke 12:18 "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."***

***Luke 12:19 "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, [and] be merry."***

***Luke 12:20 "But God said unto him, [Thou] fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"***

***James 4:15 "For that ye [ought] to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."***

It is a very rash statement on our part to say what we will do tomorrow. Only God knows if we will be alive tomorrow. The only truthful statement we can make is, if it is the Lord's will, I will do it.

***James 4:16 "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."***

Why should we boast? We know that God has control over everything and everyone. Then where is there room for boasting. We do not control even our own life and death. Knowing this, we should be humble above all men. To think of ourself too highly is sin. In fact, it is the same sin that got Lucifer thrown out of heaven.

***James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth [it] not, to him it is sin***."

This is saying that not only the bad things we do are sin, but we can sin by omitting to do good. Sin is anything displeasing to God. When we know to do good and do not do it, it is displeasing to God. Then, it is sin. The sin, here, is in full knowledge, so that would make it worse.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What caused the fightings among them?
2. Ye have not, because ye \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_.
3. Lust is of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and not of God.
4. Instead of fighting for what we want, we should do what?
5. In verse 3, they ask \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. God will not answer a prayer to fill our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
7. Friendship of the world is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God.
8. Why is adultery such a terrible sin for a Christian.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, rules over the will.
10. What percentage of you must the Lord have?
11. God resisteth the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but giveth grace to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
12. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the devil and he will flee from you.
13. What will cause the devil to leave you alone?
14. What does being doubleminded mean?
15. What is the mourning in verse 9?
16. Who is the Judge of the world?
17. What did Jesus do when the woman caught in adultery was brought before Him?
18. Why should we not say for sure what we are going to do tomorrow?
19. What should we say regarding the things we are going to do?
20. What, besides the commission of sin, is sin?