



1 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. 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? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 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. 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. 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? (James 4:1-12)

An unlikely opening focus for today's devotion is the subject of "War" and "Fighting." A very effective tool of teaching is the pointed question, and that is what James, as our teacher, employs in verse 1. **1 "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"** Every thinking adult has, at some point, pondered this question. How is it that wars are forever with us and seemingly unavoidable? Great wars begin with smaller skirmishes. The soul is full of contradiction and uncertainty. The great continental wars have always been ignited by the small match of lust and hate that wars in the heart of perhaps a single man. Caesar had his insatiable ambition, and Napoleon lust for unlimited power. These strong sentiments, embraced by strong and charismatic personalities, found their expression in the broader scale of armies and navies. But the spark began in a single heart. A small spark kindles a great fire.

James defines the cause of wars and strife in simple, yet forceful, terms: 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." Have you ever killed? Have you lusted after that which was not meet? Yes, you have done these things that are common to the sinful soul of every man, woman, and child. Hate is the thought which, when consummated, results in murder. Lust is unlawful and immoral desire, unchecked, for gold, for sex, for power, or for pride. We all know those emotions that derive from a sinful heart, do we not? We cannot acquire all that satisfies completely because we go about the acquisition in the wrong way. We attempt to acquire those things that we presume will make us happy by our own devices. Once gotten, we realize that those things only add to our misery. Should we not ask of the hand of God, and all such things that are needful, and of which we may not even be aware, will be added to us?

Perhaps you have, indeed, prayed for those possessions that are not suitable for you. Why were they not granted? Did Jesus not say, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" (John 14:13) So, if we have asked for unsuitable things, and in the name of the Lord, why have they not been granted? There is authority in prayer, even. But the authority to grant, or to withhold, belongs to God and not the supplicant. When we pray in Christ's name, we are in the same position as an ambassador of a great king conducting business on his behalf and with his authority. We can ask nothing, or offer nothing, that it is not the will of the king to grant. The same is true of praying in Christ's name. For that means praying with the Mind of Christ. 3 "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" When we pray out of lust, we pray amiss. A sinful heart can offer no prayer that goes beyond the brazen sky. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*" (Psalms 66:18) Our prayers must be offered for those Godly things that it will be the Lord's pleasure to grant, not out of our own selfish ambitions.

It is disheartening to observe what small circumstances can lead to general wars that devastate the country and rob the cradles of their precious contents. How wondrous is the opposite circumstance when men and women can dwell in peaceful havens together without war and malice. "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalms 133:1) This is very nearly impossible for men so to live. Why? Because even the just cannot abide wicked and evil invasions and excursions against those things men hold as Holy. I am not saying that there is never any justification for war, but such an extremity should be the last resort of the Godly nation. If Satan stirs up evil and wicked inclinations in our enemy, we must deploy our arms on the frontier against him, lest a greater evil ensue. Wars are often fought on the Holy ground of the Church, and within the very walls thereof.

There is a declared war, even in our own souls. Satan believes he has purchased the soul of every man and woman with a LIE in Eden; but when the Holy Ghost has brought us to the Throne of Grace, a spiritual war is declared against the malefactor. It is a war that is ceaseless in the space-time continuum. It will rage and burn until we close our eyes in the sleep of the saint. That war is between righteousness and wickedness. We are not innocent bystanders of the war. We must ally ourselves with the Holy Ghost and He will clean our hearts of all sinful debris of war. 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.*" The Persians have a fitting saying: "If you are the friend of my enemy, you are also my enemy." This is completely true of the war that wages in our members. We must choose sides. There is no neutrality when it comes to this spiritual war. If we love the world, and if the world loves us, then God has not part with us. We cannot love God AND Mammon.

Remember that you and I were just as taken in adultery as the woman brought to Jesus in the Temple grounds in John 8. We have been caught red-handed, and there is no defense for our sins. But we must become mute in our justifying arguments and plead - not His justice, but His mercy and grace.

5 " Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" The spirit in man that lusteth to envy is a 'dead' spirit. It is destined for the long grave. But the Holy Spirit that comes to live in the heart of the Elect of God is forever and eternally ALIVE! That spirit which we have inherited from Adam is dead in trespasses and sin; but the gift of God is life eternal! AMEN. Though we are all deserving of severe judgment, the grace of God excels the condemnation that is our just deserts. 6 "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." The Pharisees were too proud to come to Christ for mercy, therefore, they received it not. You will call that Jesus was always compassionate and kind to the sinner, but He was harsh and direct to the Pharisees. Pride destroys the soul. It led to the fall of Satan from Heaven, and it is a sin hated by God. The lusts of our hearts are like enemy soldiers who have breached our lines of defense. They weaken and destroy our souls. " *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*" (1 Peter 2:11) What is our weapon against these lusts that destroy us? It is the Holy Spirit of God! "*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*" (Gal 5:16-18)

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." The devil is a formidable enemy. No man can stand against him; but God is greater than Satan. "*He who is in you is stronger than he who is in the world.*" If we enlist our souls in the care and command of God, we have that greater power to wage war against the devil on our behalf. When I was a young boy, I always held my father's hand a little tighter when I felt threatened. Where God is, no danger can approach. If we remain right by His side, and hold His hand in ours, we will be safe regardless the demonstrations of the enemy at our front. Without resorting to that saving Grace of God, our hands are filthy, our hearts are black, and our minds have no certain course. Our false joys will become overt mourning, and laughter will be followed by tears of remorse if we repent not.

10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Humility is an acknowledgement of our inability to save ourselves. If we humble ourselves before God, he will place our feet on high ground; but, if we lift ourselves up in pride before Him, He will relegate us to that lowest place where the fires burn continually. 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." God's Word is sufficient to judge - not ours. We must not be tale-bearers or propagators of malicious gossip - especially in the church. How sad must the Father be to see His children spewing hate about one another!

12 "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" James is not referring here to righteous judgment, but judgment based upon our own impressions and values. If God says murder is a sin, we may know

that any who murders is a sinner. That is not OUR judgment, but God's. "***Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.***" (John 7:24) It is the law of God that judges and not the law of man or of ourselves.

There is an answer to all of the wars the soul is party to: submission unto God! "***When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.***" (Prov 16:7) Perhaps America, too, might reflect on her global wars and decide if these are wars of righteousness or of lust? Our beloved land has become a by-word and a hated nation by many in the world who have lost respect for her. She is the major purveyor of pornography throughout the world, and a vessel for the spreading of every kind of reprobate sin such as abortion and homosexuality, drugs and alcohol. Listen to the remnant of your heart, America, and return to the Rock of your Salvation.