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WHY QUARRELLING AND FIGHTING IS USELESS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 29
JAMES 3:17-4:3

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JAMES 3:17-4:3 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 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. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

JAMES 3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This verse begins with a conjunction of contrast. In our last study we saw the instability and futility of strife and confusion, and now we see the stability of the mature believer. The word for "wisdom" is "sophia" and it really means Bible doctrine in the soul. The next two words "that is" are not found in the original so drop them out. The words "from above" are from "anothen" and refers to maximum doctrinal intake. The next word "is" is the present, active, indicative of "eimi" and should be translated "keeps on being." The word "pure" is "agnos" and it really is a word that describes the character of God. The word "peaceable" is from "eirenikos" and means inner benefits. The word "gentle" means reasonable. "Easy to be entreated" really means "Teachable." "Full of mercy" really means "being full of grace in action." "Good fruit" means "The production of divine good." "Without partiality" means not being a phony. "Without hypocrisy" means "without sham or pretense." So this verse is a picture of the super-grace believer. Get a correct translation of verse 17--

"But the truth of God's Word in the soul which is from above keeps on being pure, brings inner benefits, is reasonable, teachable, full of grace in action, produces divine good, is not phony and is without sham or pretense."

JAMES 3:18 "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." The term "fruit of righteousness" really means "harvest." What is the harvest of the life that is described in verse 17? What is the harvest of the edification complex in the soul? This will be answered in the next chapter. This verse goes on to say "is sown" and this is a present, passive, indicative of "speiro" and it refers to the taking in of doctrine into the soul every day. "In peace" means a relaxed mental attitude. The word for peace is "eirene" and means that there is no more beneficial thing in the world for the Christian than the intake of Bible doctrine every day. Next we have "Them that make peace" and the word for "make" is a present, active, participle of "poieo." It means this--take in Bible doctrine every day and thereby manufacture for yourself inner peace and stability.

Now in James chapter 4 the subject is the super-grace life. It is divided in this way--

1. Hindrances to super-grace. Verses 1-5
2. The principles of super-grace. Verses 6-10
3. The production of super-grace. Verses 11-17

Let us read again verses 1-3 of chapter 4.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 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. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

These three verses are badly translated, but we will try to straighten them out in your thinking. Many liberals will use these first two verses to promote peace movements and the welfare state. But you remember this--Until Christ comes again, there will be wars and rumors of wars and there will be poverty everywhere in the world. People will be stepped on and will be abused and there is no such thing as all people being equal in the world. This will all happen when Christ come back to this earth in his second advent.

Let us look now at the hindrances to super grace.

JAMES 4:1 "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" The hindrance to super grace is reversionism. The words "from whence" come from "Pothen" and it should be translated "from what source." There is no verb here so drop out the word "come." The word "wars" is the nominative plural of "polemos" and it is a classical greek word for people fighting, quarrelling, living in discord and uproar. "En humon" means "among you" so you see he is not talking about military conflict. He is talking about fighting and quarrelling among believers. These are wars that go on inside the minds and hearts of believers. So "polemos" really means inner personal conflicts. It means conflicts among believers. Next we have "and fightings" and this word is "kai pothen machai" and means "there is among you also individual conflicts." So this phrase says, "What is the source of conflict and quarrels among you?" This is a source question. Why do people get into fights and bitter quarrels in the church? Why do people have intense personal conflicts? So you see, this isn't talking about war in the nation, but conflicts among believers. The words "come they" are not in the original. The words "not hence" is an adverb "ouk enthouthen" and should be translated "Is not the source of your lusts?" Now the world is not lust here, for that word is "epithumia" and that is not the word used here. The word used here is "ek hedone" and it means "a frantic search for happiness through pleasure."

"That war in your members" is from the word "strateuo" and means struggle or contending. "En melos" means in the inner parts of the soul. So look what this verse really says--

"What is the source of conflicts and what is the source of personal quarrels among you believers? Why do you fight? Is not the source out from your frantic search for happiness through pleasure contending in the inner parts of your soul?"

So here we have a picture of "Mr. Big Mouth" who is always expressing what he thinks and disregards the truth of Bible doctrine in the soul which comes from the daily intake of the Word of God. Scar tissue is built in his soul from conflict and quarrelling and from a frantic search for happiness. Many a Baptist Church has been divided because people got into conflict and had no doctrine in their souls to guide them. The frantic search for happiness and the subsequent blackout of the soul lead them to warfare in the soul. So this verse is a picture of inner soul conflict. This is a soul war. This is a soul conflict.

In verse 2 we will now see the principle.

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." Now we have the actual word for lust and the word is "epithumeo." It means "power lust, approbation lust, lust of the old sin nature, sex lust, materialism lust." So it says, "You keep on lusting." This is spoken of a believer who is in reversionism. Then it says, "You have not" and this is from the present, active, indicative of "ouk echo." You may get some temporary satisfaction from the lust gratification, but it doesn't last. "YOU NEVER HAVE ANYTHING PERMANENT THAT COMES TO YOU FROM LUST." Lust leads to frustration in the soul. So God looks at the lusting one and says, "You have not." Next we have "Ye kill" and the word is "phoneuo" and it means homicide. It means murder. This is a believer in reversionism, and remember, under the control of the old sin nature, a believer can murder (remember, David did). James is talking about believers in this verse. The punishment from God will be great, but remember, a believer can do anything an unbeliever can do, when he is under the control of the old sin nature. Next we have "and desire to have" and this is a present, active, indicative of "teloo" but it doesn't mean "to desire." It means "to be jealous." Jealousy and murder are twins always. Then it says "but you cannot obtain" and the word is "ouk dunamai epi tugchano" and it means able to attain or acquire. So this phrase says, "You murder and are jealous and are not able to acquire." Murder and jealousy never give you anything.

Get 7 points on this verse

1. This verse, up to this point, has described the frustration of the reversionist. He really goes after happiness but he never attains it this way. You grabbed for happiness but once you got it, it wasn't happiness at all. The mirage turned out to be hot sand.
2. Anything we acquire through lust, or killing, or jealousy never makes us happy once we get it.
3. If you have to lust for it, or kill for it, or be jealous for it, then once you get it, you find that happiness has evaded you.
4. No matter how hard you try or to what length you go, whatever you attain through lust or murder or jealousy is not worth having.
5. Reversionism may express itself in lust, or murder or jealousy but the thing it brings is always misery instead of happiness.
6. Through killing or lust or jealousy one may attain money or fame or sex, but no happiness ever comes in this way.
7. You cannot recover from reversionism and rebuild the edification complex in the soul and reach super grace as long as you seek happiness in any of these reversionistic ways.

The passage then goes on to say, "Ye fight and war." "Fight" is a present, middle, indicative of "machomai" and refers to conflict between two people. "War" is a present, active, indicative of "polemeo" and means a quarrell that involves many people. No one ever benefits when you have personal fights or quarrels that involve groups.

Summary

1. Reversionism always produces quarrels and factions and antagonism.
2. These kind of fights cause people to set themselves up as an authority on the subject.
3. These self-appointed people of authority often quote Scripture to prove their point. In reversionism they take Scripture out of context or even mis-quote Scripture just to carry their point.
4. Jealousy and murder and bitter conflict is a sign of reversionism and all kinds of inner breakdown.
5. Jealousy causes the mixed up member to mis-quote Scripture to carry his point, while all the time he is miserable, mixed up and confused.

"Yet ye have not." The word "Yet" is not in the original. This verse has been talking about the reversionist, but now without any warning, we switch to the super grace principle. The reversionist asks and receives not. But it is not worth having even if he were to get it. But the super grace believer asks and what he gets is valuable. The "you" here is plural and it says, "You do not have because you do not ask."

Under reversionism you use murder, jealousy, and hatred and as a result you don't have anything. Under super grace you don't have because you don't ask God for it.

So all of a sudden the reversionist we have been talking about in these verses gets hit with a super grace missile.

Now look at a corrected translation of these two verses--

"What is the source of conflict and what is the source of fightings among you as believers? Is not the source out from the frantic search for happiness through pleasures contending in the parts of your soul? You lust, and do not have; you murder and are jealous but you are not able to acquire. You fight and quarrel, but under super grace, you do not have because you do not ask."

Summary

1. Under reversionism the believer will lust, murder and be jealous but never acquire the thing he is looking for.
2. He can fight or quarrel to gain authority, but he will never have it. Whatever he gets is not true authority.
3. He can lust for one of the opposite sex, but his goal is never attained that way.

4. One can be jealous and never acquire. Male or female, it makes no difference. This principle applies to all.
5. Believers can fight for authority and fame and never attain it.
6. But recovery through the learning of doctrine, through the erection of an edification complex and through entrance into super grace brings a phenomenal change. You get everything you ever wanted and then some. And that's not all. If you don't get it, it is because you don't ask for it. God has deposited it in the bank for you and all you have to do is go there and ask for it.
7. Under super grace the believer doesn't have it because he doesn't ask for it.
8. Under reversionism one can lust and fight and quarrel and even kill, but he will never attain his goal. But if you do get anything that way, you still have nothing. (You can even get the White House that way and you still have nothing.) But when under super grace, you ask for something, it is amazing what you get.

JAMES 4:3 "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Prayer is used as the illustration, but this is not primarily a passage on prayer. This is a passage on reversionism. This passage says this--Some will even distort the principle of prayer in order to try to gain something from God. If you make your lust and your jealousy and your hatred the object of your prayers, then you will get nothing.

"Ye ask" is a present, active, indicative of "aiteo." Ye keep on asking (You reversionists) and ye receive nothing. This is "lambano" plus the negative. "Ye keep on asking and ye keep on receiving nothing."

Now the reason--"Because" from "deoti" which is going to give the exact explanation. "Ye ask" and this is now a present, middle, indicative and the middle voice lets us know that the asking was on the basis of selfishness. It means you asked to get something to benefit yourself. Next we have "Ye ask amiss" and the word is "kakos" and it means wickedly, you ask for an evil reason. Then we have "that ye may consume" and this is from the word "dapanoo" and it means to squander, to waste. Here we have the word "hedone" again translated "lusts" and it means your own selfish pleasures.

So it is a losing game any way you play it, if you have lust and jealousy and hatred as the motive. SELFISHNESS ALWAYS TURNS BITTER IN YOUR MOUTH.