

John 1:9)

b. God will not tolerate any competition.

- 1) In verse 5 James is not quoting a scripture but giving a general statement based on principles of scripture. The facts that God will not tolerate any rival and that he demands complete devotion are found in many Old Testament passages (e.g., Ex 34:14).
- 2) Our God is a jealous God. If we follow the lustful practices of the world, the Holy Spirit who indwells us becomes very envious and rightly so. We belong to Him (1Co 6:19-20). He wants us to be satisfied with what He gives us.
- 3) Thankfully, *God gives more grace* (v.6). Grace is God's divine help. His divine help is abundantly available to meet our needs. We do not need to lust like the world.
- 4) However, we must not forget what God said (Pr 3:34).
 - a) *He resists the proud*. This literally means that He sets Himself against the proud – all who think their selfish way is better than God's way.
 - b) *He gives grace to the humble* – all who lower themselves to obey God's will.

Conclusion: Remember, selfish lust comes in many forms. It may be lust for position, power, rights, personal desires, sexual pleasure, etc. Each of us needs to examine carefully the reasons James gives for conquering selfish lusts. **Lusts cause conflict. Lusts do not satisfy. Lusts destroy spirituality.** Selfish lusts are my enemy and yours. If selfish lusts have been controlling you, it is time to submit to God's grace. Accept what God has given you and stop longing for more. Only a fool would want God to be his enemy and to have God work against him.

If you have never repented of your sin and trusted Christ to save you, you are still part of the world that is against God. Your sin stands between you and God. You must ask God to cleanse your sin and save your soul before you can possibly get victory over selfish lusts. If you will admit your sinful condition, believe that Christ died and rose again to pay for your sin, turn from your sin and ask Christ to apply his payment to your life, you can become a true Christian.

Song: Cleanse Me – 166

Selfish Lusts

13 November 2016 AM – James 4:1-6 – Jas16 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Read text. Many homes are a war zone. The battles fought behind closed doors (and sometimes in front of the children) are ignited by what James calls “Lusts”. These are selfish desires or pleasing self. Selfish lusts cause wars over unneeded purchases, extravagant spending, debts, undiscussed decisions, in-laws, putting children ahead of spouse, child discipline, meal complaints, late coming to meals, family pets, wrong priorities, needless activities, unforgiving hearts, unkind words, unfulfilled needs, selfish expectations, etc. Selfish lusts cause similar wars in some churches.

Transition: Here in James chapter four, James points out **three reasons** that we must conquer selfish lusts.

1. Selfish Lusts Cause Conflict (v.1)

a. Conflicts are symptoms of a root problem.

- 1) The *wars and fightings* that James speaks of here are **not** national battles with enemy countries. They are strife and contention, quarrelling and disputes among Christians.
 - a) This section is a continuation of chapter three where James scolds the Christians for bitter envy and strife and lack of heavenly wisdom.
 - b) Here James takes his admonition a step further.
- 2) Strife and contention ought not to exist in homes or in churches but often they do. They wage *war* in our relationships.
- 3) When a couple comes to the end of their tether and seek counsel for their marital tensions, they often see the problem as “*We don't get along,*” or “*We are incompatible*” or “*We always fight.*” These are not the problem. They are just symptoms of the problem.

b. Selfish lusts are the root that produces conflicts.

- 1) James identifies the root problem as “*lusts.*” Lust is a selfish desire. It is a desire to fulfil my pleasures.
- 2) Selfish lusts are at the **root** of conflicts. *Let me illustrate,* Dan and Cindy are having a fight. Dan squeezed the

toothpaste in the middle and that irritated Cindy who wants it rolled from the end. They both know it is a minor issue, but neither is willing to give in. Wars over little things increase until their marriage is in danger. What was the cause? **Selfishness is at the root.** They each want what will please self. Similar problems happen in churches.

2. Selfish Lusts Do Not Satisfy (v.2-3)

a. Lusts for pleasure will never fulfil you.

- 1) James pointed out, *“Ye lust and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.”* **No** lustful desire will satisfy. The greed for money does not satisfy. Pornography never satisfies. Relationships outside marriage never satisfy. Power and authority do not satisfy. Wanting to get one’s way does not satisfy.
- 2) Satan is a liar. He tells us that we would be happier if we could fulfil our selfish lusts. Instead selfish lusts lead to heartache and guilt. If you have been seeking fulfilment in selfish lust, you will never reach your goal.

b. God will not fulfil your lusts

- 1) One reason we don’t get what we want is because we don’t ask God for it (v.2).
 - a) Perhaps you don’t dare ask God for your desire because deep down inside you know it is a selfish lust. That is a good indication that you need to ask God to change your selfish desires.
 - b) God is the only one who can truly satisfy our longings. **Lust never will!**
- 2) Another reason we don’t receive when we do pray is because we ask amiss [with bad motives] (v.3). God knows our motives. He knows if our request is to please Him or to please our selfish lusts. **Let’s go back to Dan and Cindy.** Dan is praying that Cindy will be a submissive wife. Why does Dan pray that? Is it because he wants her to obey and honour the Lord or so he will be happy?
- 3) Charles Spurgeon in his devotional Morning and Evening said, **“We know that we sometimes ask, and do not**

receive, because we ask amiss. If we ask for that which is not promised—if we run counter to the spirit which the Lord would have us cultivate—if we ask contrary to his will, or to the decrees of his providence—if we ask merely for the gratification of our own ease, and without an eye to his glory, we must not expect that we shall receive.”

- 4) On the other hand, if you desire a wholesome thing and your motive is to glorify God, then ask God for it. God promises to answer prayers that are within His will. *“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.”* (1 John 5:14-15) Here is where we often go wrong. We don’t spend time in prayer to find God’s will. Once you know something is God’s will, then ask until you get it. James says, *“we have not because we ask not.”* God will supply our needs.

3. Selfish Lusts Destroy Spirituality

a. When we selfishly lust, we befriend the world.

- 1) Thomas Constable wrote, **“The world urges us to love ourselves, to put our pleasures before God’s pleasures.”**
- 2) Spiritually Christians are married to Christ. When we place selfish lusts ahead of glorifying God, we have cheated on God. Lust becomes an idol to replace God.
 - a) James calls those who do this *“adulterers and adulteresses.”* Why? It is because they have been unfaithful to the Lord who deserves loyalty.
 - b) He adds, *“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.”* Note the word *“will.”* If a Christian *“wills”* or chooses deliberately to befriend the selfish lustful attitude of the world, he becomes God’s enemy. That does not mean he lost his salvation. It means he has lost his fellowship until he repents and forsakes his sin. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1