

What Causes Quarrels and Fights Among You?

Intro

- A. Some of the most ridiculous things have led to war causing thousands of deaths

The War of the Oaken Bucket (Italy—1325-37)

- a. This ridiculous war started over a stolen bucket. When a group of soldiers from the city of Modena in northern Italy invaded nearby Bologna to steal a brown oak bucket, thousands of citizens were killed. Bologna became angry and went to war with Modena to take back their bucket and restore their pride. The two cities fought for 12 years and thousands of lives were lost. Modena won the war; the people of Bologna never got their bucket back.

The Pig War (Austria-Hungary vs. Serbia—1906-09)

- b. We know that pigs can make a big mess, but in this case they caused a war. Pigs were not allowed to be sold by Serbia to any country except Austria-Hungary. Serbia wanted to become less dependent on goods from Austria-Hungary and started trading their pigs for French goods. As a result, Austria-Hungary got angry with Serbia and decided to wipe that country off the map—leading to WWI.

The Soccer War (El Salvador vs. Honduras—July 14-30, 1969)

- c. If these soccer fans had practiced good sportsmanship, this war may never have begun. Tensions from a soccer match between the national teams of El Salvador and Honduras, aggravated by the economic inequality between the two countries, escalated into fighting. Salvadoran immigrants were then expelled from Honduras and the countries went to war. Some 2,000 people were killed in 16 days. The Organization of American States intervened to end the fighting.

- B. WWI was called by many the “War to End All Wars” yet this war—was but the first major conflict of what was to be the bloodiest century in the history of mankind.
- a. WWI: 15-25 million dead
 - b. Russian Civil War & Communist Purges: 35-40 million dead
 - c. WWII: 40-72 million dead
 - d. Korean War: 2.5-3.5 million dead
 - e. Vietnam War: 2.5-5 million dead
 - f. Afghan Civil War: 1.5-2 million dead
 - g. Congo Wars: 3.8-5.4 million dead

- C. Estimates are that **160 million people died in wars during the 20th century**
- D. Sorta flies in the face of those who claim that mankind is reaching new heights of civilization through the process of evolution.
- E. Despite “Evolutionary Progress”, diplomacy, the U.N., and even nuclear “deterrence”, war continues to be a fact of life.
 - a. And not just wars between nations.
 - b. Gang wars, trade wars, drug wars, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, and even family feuds (Hatfields and McCoys)
 - c. At worst, these result in hundreds and thousands of deaths. At best, they destroy friendships, divide families, ruin businesses, and split churches
 - i. Hurtful words (whether real or perceived) have driven a wedge between the best of friends and brothers in Christ.
 - ii. Men and women who, at one time, are crazy about each other and can’t live without each other reach a point where they can’t stand each other and choose to divorce.
 - iii. Christian business partners start a company based on Christian principles of honesty and integrity descend into a bitter war over control of the profits and end up using the courts to destroy each other and ruin the reputation of the company.
 - iv. Churches that are intended as beacons of light to the lost and sinful world end up arguing and dividing over how money is spent—sometimes over such trivial matters as the color of the carpet.
- F. The question before us is “WHY?” What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?
- G. There’s a popular notion (influenced by the 17th century philosopher, John Locke) that children are born pure and innocent—blank slates—and that they have to be taught to hate.
 - a. **Video Clip** from South Pacific (Mandy Patinkin “My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die”)
- H. It’s quaint and seems intuitive but it’s as wrong as screen doors on a battleship.
- I. THE CAUSE

- a. 4:1: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”
- b. Your passions are at war within you
 - i. Passions = *hedonon*—where we get the word “hedonism”—the belief that pleasure is the most important pursuit of humanity.
 - ii. The attitude of unbridled natural desire, of a greedy lust to possess, which is oriented to the flesh in the unregenerated man.
 - iii. Carries the idea of lust or lechery
 - iv. Eph. 4:17-19: “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to **sensuality** so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a **continual lust for more.**” (it feels good. It makes me happy. It must be right.)
 - v. Col. 3:5-6: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your **earthly nature**: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.”
- c. Clear from the scriptures that this is the NATURAL state of mankind. It is not an acquired characteristic.
 - i. Eph. 2:1-3: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were **by nature** (*by birth, by origin, by GENERATION*) objects of wrath.”
 - ii. That’s why the process of becoming a follower of Christ is called “regeneration” or being “born again”. It requires a NEW NATURE.
- d. But even after we are given a NEW nature, we continue to struggle with the vestiges of our OLD nature. Replacement of our OLD nature is a life-long process.
- e. Where does this war occur?
 - i. “within you”—literally “as soldiers in your bodily members”

- ii. Continues unchecked in the unbeliever (the soldiers are an occupying force)
- iii. In the believer, it is a war between competing forces. (The believer has been “invaded” by the Spirit—the liberating army—who now fights with us to drive out the occupiers)
- iv. Continues until we receive glorified bodies
- v. Can be controlled and progressively weakened by the Spirit in believers—BUT IT NEVER GOES AWAY IN THIS LIFE
- vi. James could have a dual meaning
 - 1. Doesn’t use the word “soma” but rather “melos”
 - 2. Perhaps he is confirming that the “less sanctified” members of the body (the church) are more prone to war with each other
 - 3. Struggles in the church is a part of church
 - a. Paul and Barnabas contended over John Mark
 - b. In Corinth, believers were suing each other
 - c. In Galatians, Paul admonishes believers to stop “biting and devouring” one another
 - d. In Philippians, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to get along with one another
 - e. James addresses in this epistle:
 - i. Class warfare
 - ii. Wars of words
 - iii. Partiality
 - iv. Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition

II. THE EFFECT

- a. “You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”
- b. Three MAJOR effects of unbridled passions:
 - i. Conflict
 - ii. Scheming instead of asking, and

iii. “Me-centered” prayer

c. The FIRST: Conflict (we’ve already covered this in v. 1)

i. James uses a common Hebrew literary device —parallelism— making a point by using two similar phrases.

ii. Ex: Is. 60:2: “For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;□but the LORD will arise upon you,□ and his glory will be seen upon you.”

iii. Mt. 11:30: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

iv. James communicates the effects of unbridled lust in a similar parallelism:

1. You desire and do not have, so you murder

2. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel

v. “Murder”?

1. It’s what CAN happen and what DOES happen (as we have all experienced)

2. Better seen as hyperbole for hatred

a. Mt. 5:21-22: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

b. 1 Jn. 3:15: “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

vi. Hatred. Fights. Quarrels—All the effects of unbridled lust

d. The SECOND: Scheming instead of asking

i. “You do not have, because you do not ask.”

ii. The whole course of a person’s life who is driven by lust is **scheming** to get what he/she desires

1. James will cover this more in 4:13ff

2. From the insidious: cheating, lying, defrauding, and stealing

3. To the noble: investing, studying, planning, and negotiating
 4. All are empty and powerless without acknowledging that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...” (1:17)
- iii. As long as we allow our lives to be governed by unbridled desire, REAL SATISFACTION (which consists of true peace, full contentment, and solid joy) will always be beyond our reach.
 - iv. Our primary need, therefore, is to desire the RIGHT things—the things that God will give his children when we acknowledge him and when we ask him for them.
 - v. But I DO ask...”God make me rich. God heal my loved one. God give me a good job. God help me find just the right car.”
- e. Brings us to the THIRD effect: “Me-centered” prayer
- i. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”
 - ii. This is the person who sees prayer as a way to get goodies. BIG on the “S” in ACTS
 - iii. Illustration: The popularity of the “Prayer of Jabez”
 1. 1 Chron. 4:10: *“Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.”*
 2. Immature, self-centered Christians see that prayer (and book) as a sure-fire way to get stuff
 3. In reality, that prayer was a means toward God receiving glory through the people of Judah being blessed
 - iv. These prayers are marked by unbiblical priorities—These things become the most important:
 1. Priority One: To stay alive and comfortable.
 - a. Prayers usually center on receiving healing and wholeness
 - b. Does God want to heal them?
 - c. We rarely mention God’s glory.
 - i. Ex: Who complains when the boss says “take the rest of the day off” but when God takes someone home “early” we think of it as unfair
 2. Priority Two: Safety and security
 3. Priority Three: Style over substance

4. Priority Four: Prayer as last resort (I've done all I can do, now I need to call in the big guns)
 - ii. Instead, our priority should be lined up with God's priority—that he receive glory in all things...that in all things HE is made famous.
 - iii. 1 John 5:14: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything **according to his will** he hears us." (addressing this in more detail next week)

OUTRO

- A. What is the ROOT CAUSE of wars and quarrels among us?
 - a. Our hedonistic desires
- B. What are the results in addition to conflict?
 - a. Scheming instead of asking
 - b. And asking with "me-centered" prayers
- C. The solution is found in vv. 7-10 (which we will cover in upcoming weeks)
 - a. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."