



## James 4:2-3 Murder, Covetousness, and Selfish Prayers

August 30, 2015

### Text: James 4:2-3

*James 4:2-3 KJV* *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.*

### **Murder in the Church!**

1. First, let us reestablish that James is talking to Christians
2. So then...murder? The cause seems to be “desiring and not having,” better known as **jealousy** and **envy**.
3. If we look at murder here figuratively, we realize that Scripture equates hatred with “murder” metaphorically:
  - a. *Matthew 5:21-22 ESV* *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ (22) 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 John 3:15 ESV* *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*
4. We also realize that in Scripture, both jealousy and envy can be the cause of literal “killing.” Last week we saw this example with Cain and Abel.
  - a. James also said, *“Jas 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and **every** vile practice.”* (emphasis mine)
  - b. Therefore, it is hard to rule out that James was actually warning believers not to physically harm one another! Like adultery, or lying or any other sin, Christians are **capable** of murder too.
5. Sadly, there is a very heartbreaking way in which this “murder” rebuke is relevant today:
  - a. **Abortion**
  - b. In the Didache, a very early first century summary of doctrine used to train and catechize the churches, it states:

*And this is the second commandment of the teaching. 2 Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not corrupt boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not deal in magic, thou shalt do no sorcery, thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born...*

- c. Apparently, offering children to the demon Molech (Lev 18:21) has been going on for thousands of years.

### **Covetousness in the Church!**

1. James is rebuking an “ungodly” response to wanting or not wanting something. He isn’t alone...
  - **Jesus** - *Luke 12:15 ESV* *And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*
  - **Paul** - *Ephesians 5:3 ESV* *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*
  - **The Writer of Hebrews** - *Hebrews 13:5 ESV* *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

- **Peter** - 2 Peter 2:14-15 ESV *They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! (15) Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,*
- **John** - 1 John 2:16 ESV *For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world.*
- **Jude** - Jude 1:11 ESV *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.*

2. **Here is the lesson:** Realize that we are all susceptible to ungodly desire and ungodly **responses** from those desires. Before you fight and quarrel, ask, "Am I desiring what God wants? Am I responding biblically?"

### **Selfish Prayers in the Church!**

*James 4:2c-3 ESV You do not have, because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

1. Note that James identifies two issues: 1) Not asking, and 2) Asking wrongly.
2. Given our context, the hearer's refusal to ask the Lord in prayer seems to be, again, grounded in pride. Friends, it is hard to bow one's head, open one's heart to Jesus, and pray **selflessly**. Sometimes, pride says, "Don't pray at all! Just do or get what you want!"
3. Selfish, **man**-centered praying is the issue. What can we learn about prayer?
  - First, when our passions are warring within, it can be hard to pray properly.
  - Second, God isn't hearing some pride-filled foolishness.
  - Third, we must learn to pray, in faith, according to His will! *"1 John 5:14 ESV And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us."*
  - Fourth, this by necessity means we must learn the **grace** of **humility**. We cannot pray "according to HIS will" when we are so busy wanting what WE want.

### **Final thoughts:**

I'm so glad God "gives grace to the humble." That again, is the key. In the **grace** of Christ, let us walk **humbly** in the church and amongst one another. So much good comes from that right there. ☺ May Christ imbue us with His power to do just that!

Amen.