

FREE FROM STRIFE

(Jas. 4:1-12)

Introduction:

1. Even though the passage read does not contain the word “strife” the idea is clearly there.
2. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines strife as *conflict, struggle between opposed persons or things*. It defines conflict as *a state of opposition or hostilities; a fight or struggle; the clashing of opposed principles*. Sure sounds like “wars and fights” to me?
3. But God would have His people free from strife and yet not.??!! Let us consider strife from the perspective of the world God made, the word God revealed, and the work God gave.

Discussion:

I. The World.

- A. Our world is a boiling cauldron of strife. As we read in Job, “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7).
- B. Nations fight against nations (over stuff or ideology); people of the same nation fight with one another (over stuff or ideology). There is even strife in the most precious relationships, like marriage (over stuff or ideology) and between parents and children (over stuff or ideology). The most painful strife is that that occurs between brethren in the Lord’s church (over stuff or ideology).
- C. The root of most of this “trouble” or “strife” is self, our old foe that we spoke about a few weeks back. And this world and all the ages before tend to promote SELF at the expense of others. I heard a speaker at PTP say that the two biggest troubles in America are narcissism and nihilism.
- D. We know, from our study about being free from self that this elevation of self comes after a dethroning (usurping) of God. Nature abhors a vacuum and when God is not number 1, we will usually fill that spot with self.

II. The Word.

- A. Rom. 1:18-32 (esp. v29) = rejection of God produces strife (NKJV, ASV, ESV, RV, NIV) or quarreling (ISV) or debate (KJV).
- B. Jas. 4:1-12 = fights in the brotherhood (in the very building) stem from selfish ambitions (v3, cp. Gal. 5:20) and the wrong relationship with God (v4, cp. 1 John 2:15-17). Notice what naturally follows these two evils: speaking evil of brethren (v11); on top of the murders/fights/wars (v2).
- C. Jesus delivers the cure (Matt. 22:36-40; 7:12; John 13:34, 35).
- D. Jesus delivers a curve ball (Matt. 10:17, 18, 32-39; John 15:18, 19). How are we to understand this? Consider the answers given by Jesus in John 14:27 and 16:33.

III. The Work.

- A. The right relationship with our God.
 1. God is God and there is no other (Is. 44, 45).
 2. We are God’s children, His children, His servants. We submit to Him in all things (Jas. 4:7-10) and remain loyal to Him in all things (Rev. 2:10).
- B. The right relationship with our fellow man.
 1. In our marriages (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7, esp. v7 = honor, cp. 1 Pet. 1:19 = precious).
 2. With our parents and children (Eph. 6:1-4).
 3. With the world (Eph. 5:1-17; Matt. 22:36-40; 7:12; 1 Pet. 3:15).
- C. The right relationship with our brethren (Rom. 12 says it all).

Conclusion:

1. Consider the words of Paul in Eph. 6:10ff. We will have strife in our life but it is spiritual warfare we are engaged in. But our God has prepared us for the fight, have we prepared ourselves?
2. In Christ we have no strife with God, and no willing strife with any man. But, because of sin strife exists and we will face it. How will we face it is the question?
3. Invitation.

MORE ON “FREE FROM STRIFE”

1. Some other verses to consider:

Prov. 17:1 = Better to have less and peace than more and strife.

Prov. 22:10 = If you put away those who scorn or mock and strife will be put away too.

Prov. 26:21 = As charcoal and wood fuel fire, so too a contentious man fuels strife.

Prov. 30:33 = As pressing milk and the nose produces curds and blood, so too wrath brooded upon produces strife (cp. Eph. 4:26; 1 Pet. 5:7).

Is. 58:3, 4 = The fasts of Israel were rejected because they continued in their lusts (v3) and their exploitation of others (v3), and because they were fighting (having strife) amongst themselves (v4).

2 Tim. 2:23 = Foolish and ignorant arguing produces strife (note v25; 3:1-11; 2:14-18; 4:4).

Titus 3:9 = Avoid foolish disputes and strife (ASV; KJV/NKJV say contentions) because they are useless (note vv 8-11).

2. Note 1 Thess. 2:13.

If we believe (have faith in, trust, obey) then the word of God works effectively in our lives.

We can surmise from this...

If we don't believe (have faith in, trust, obey) then the word of God WON'T work effectively in our lives.

Compare these concepts:

- ▶ If I am not losing weight, then I am not taking in less calories than I burn.
- ▶ If my life is filled with strife, then I am not believing (having faith in, trusting, obeying) God's word.

BE FREE FROM STRIFE!!