

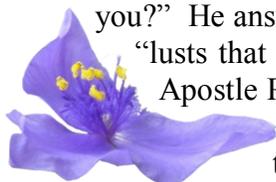


Strife or Peace

And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle... And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Genesis 13:7-8

Let there be no strife! I love those words. They represent the heart of our God for His people. Although they were spoken here by Abraham, they are repeated throughout the scriptures. The Apostle Paul said, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory," when he wrote to the church at Philippi. In Rome, he declared, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day...not in strife and envying." These words from the scripture could not be more definitive. God desires that we live in peace, without the contention, quarrels, or disputes that arise from the carnal nature of man.

Strife is a work of the flesh. This is clear when the writings of James ask the question, "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" He answers that they come from the "lusts that war in your members." The Apostle Paul confirms this truth to the church at Corinth. He states that immature or carnal



Christians, controlled by sinful desires, yield to strife. Christians can act like men and women who do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The word "fightings" in James 4:1 means to brawl, battle, or strive. In other words, it suggests we might "duke it out." Personally, I don't know too many people involved in fist fights to protect their desires, but it is certainly included in the context of war, struggle, and lust unveiled by James. Lust is a strong desire or longing. This word can be used positively, but most often it indicates a desire for that which is forbidden by God.

It is an honor for a man to cease from strife... *Proverbs 20:3*

Now note the words of James, "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." One of the keys to understanding this verse is the phrase "desire to have." The desire to have causes lots of strife. Ungodly strife usually blossoms when some man or some woman tries to bring their desire to pass using some method that brings destruction. It might be the destruction of a relationship, the destruction of financial stability, the destruction of property, or other things. But it is definitely the destruction of peace.



How are we going to bring our desires to pass? As a Christian, can we “fight it out?” Do we resort to hatred, anger, contention, and gossip? Will that work for us? No, No, No. James says we do not have because we ask “amiss.” Certainly, a desire orchestrated by lust, clothed in selfishness, commanded by pride, and led by bitterness is amiss.

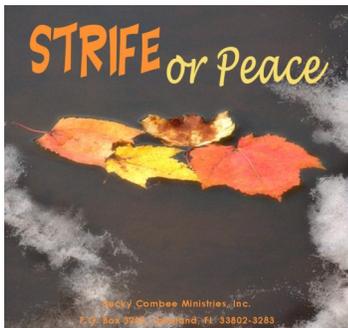
Our great God wants to meet our needs and grant our desires. In Mark 11:24 He promises to give to us if we believe we receive our desire when we pray. This is God’s way. It differs dramatically from strife, dissension, and struggle which cause anger and wrath. Anger promotes discord and separates friends. It says “I will have my way” even if I have to fight for it. It loudly declares its own desire, raises its voice and makes excuses for bad behavior. It says, “You know me. That’s just how I am!”

Every personality must be subjected to the Word of the living God and to the Spirit of God. It is our submission to God’s Word and His Spirit that provides the power to change us. And it is the magnificence of forgiveness that rescues us and cleanses us when we recognize we have been wrong, striving for our way instead of trusting God to provide our need and desire.

Faith in God is the way to bring our desire to pass. We don’t have to shout. We don’t need to pout. We, His children, simply trust Him. “Trusting as the moments fly, Trusting as the days go by.”¹ These are the words from a poem by Edgar Page Stites written in 1876. Mr. Stites was right, so right. Father we trust you to meet our need!



¹ “Trusting Jesus” by Edgar P. Stites; “Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions” by Kenneth W. Osbeck



The above article is an excerpt from the series “Strife or Peace”. To order your own copy of this entire message, send \$24.00 to P.O. Box 3283, Lakeland, FL 33802-3283. Price includes postage.

The Companions of Strife

Hatred

Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. Proverbs 10:12

Wrath

A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. Proverbs 15:18

Froward

A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. Proverbs 16:28

Sin

He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction. Proverbs 17:19

Scorn

Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease. Proverbs 22:10

Gossip

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. Proverbs 26:20

Contention

As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. Proverbs 26:21

Pride

He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. Proverbs 28:25

Anger

An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression. Proverbs 29:22