

'FAITH THAT WORKS'
(Living by Faith is the Key to God's Will)
Summer Studies in James

The Door

(from The Inspirational Study Bible / 'Walking in the Light' by Neil Anderson)

'In order to know God's will, there must be a willingness to do it. Imagine a door in the path ahead of us. God's will is on the other side of that door. We crave to know what it is. But will God show us what's on the other side of that door? No. Why not? Because we have to resolve an issue on this side of the door first. If He truly is Lord to us, He has every right to determine what's on the other side of the door. If we do not afford Him that right, then we are not acknowledging Him as Lord.

Why do we want to know what's on the other side of the door? Isn't it really because we want to reserve the right to determine whether or not we will go through it? Some boldly walk halfway through, but keep their foot in the door just in case they don't like what they see and want to go back. It's going to be awfully hard to continue walking with God if your foot is stuck in the door. Jesus said, ***"No one putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God"*** (Luke 9:62).

One man probably spoke for many when he said, *"I'm so used to running my own life. I'm not sure I even can or want to trust some one else. Besides, God would probably haul me off to mission field I can't stand."* What we need to realize is that if we did give our heart to the Lord, and God did call us to that mission field, by the time we got there we wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Do you believe that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect for you? That's the heart of the issue."

'War & Peace'

(The Epic Story of Spiritual Warfare within the Heart)
James 4:1-10

Leo Tolstoy wrote one of the longest pieces of classic literature (almost 1300 pages in paperback!) when he wrote the historical drama *"War & Peace"*. Tolstoy's novel described the French invasion of Russia and Napoleonic era with such dramatic excellence that it's likely to be forever classified as a great literary masterpiece.

The New Testament epistle of James is also a spiritual masterpiece that teaches God's way to end inner war and establish biblical peace despite the conflict on two fronts – our restless human flesh in which we live and this restless secular world in which we live and move and have our being. Chapter 3 of his letter describes the factors war against our souls both inwardly and outwardly:

- 1) the uncontrollable tongue that stirs up strife and
- 2) the mind that is misled with humanistic thinking rather than wisdom from above.

Chapter 4 teaches the necessity of a good successful prayer life for victory in the war against strife, discontent and lust. Separation from the unbelieving world and humiliation within the heart, open the way for God's grace to restore and keep the peace within believers and without. The Holy Spirit's story of war and peace takes only about 130 words (not 1300 pages) to tell explain what happens when a believer is invaded by worldly influences, loses his or her peace and struggles to restore peace with God through full surrender to His will. Until there is full surrender a wayward believer is like a traitor who has defected to hostile enemy forces. Thanks be to God that we have a Savior Who grants amnesty to such defectors who see the error of their way and humbly return when they come to their senses by withdrawing from worldly influences and 'drawing near unto Him'.

‘This Means ‘WAR!’
(A Look Inside A Hostile Heart)
James 4:1-10

The Proud Heart
(A selfish, worldly pulse)

*“Where do **wars and fights** come from among you? Do they not come from **your desires for pleasure that war in your members**? You **lust** and do not have. You **murder and covet** and cannot obtain. **You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.**”* Vs. 1-2

- Why is ‘prayerlessness’ the number one sign of a hostile heart?

*You ask and do not receive, because **you ask amiss**, that you may **spend it on your pleasures.**”* Vs.3

- How can you tell when you are ‘asking amiss’?

*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that **friendship with the world is enmity with God?** Whoever therefore wants to be **a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**”* Vs. 4-5

- Isn’t James’ opinion (Holy Spirit’s too) a little harsh on worldly Christians?
(Why or why not?) Why doesn’t a carnal Christian see it this seriously?

*Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, **“The Spirit Who dwells in us yearns jealously”**? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: **‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’**”* Vs. 6

- The first Old Testament reference is Genesis 6:5. This verse describes general humanity just before the great flood. Why does the Lord use that verse here?
- The second Old Testament reference is from several OT books. It is also quoted in *1 Peter 5:5*. Why is this verse so important to understanding what God is doing with our hearts and lives?

The Humble Heart
(A selfless, godly pulse)

*“Therefore **submit to God. Resist the devil** and he will flee from you. **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**”* Vs. 7-8a

- Discuss what ‘submit to God’ means for a believer who is rebellious.
- What is the key to getting the devil ‘off your back’?
- Specifically, what does ‘drawing near to God’ entail?

***Cleanse your hands**, you sinners; and **purify your hearts**, you double-minded.* Vs. 8b

- In establishing your heart and life again, why does outer discipline precede the inner?

***Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**”* Vs. 9-10

- Discuss real spiritual repentance (see *2 Corinthians 7:10-11*). Why is true repentance absolutely essential to a healthy heart spiritually?
- How does this passage help you pray differently?