

Lesson 8

James 4

Peacemakers and the Will of God

Memory verse: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:20-21 NIV)

Have you ever heard of the “War of the Whiskers” or the “War of the Oaken Bucket”? How about the “War of Jenkins’ Ear”? These were actual wars fought between nations, and you can read about them in most history books.

War is a fact of life, in spite of treaties, world peace organizations, and the threat of atomic bombs. Not only are there wars between nations, but there are wars of one kind or another on almost every level of life - even “gas wars” among filling station operators! James discussed this important theme of war in this chapter, and he explained that there are wars going on in the world and how these wars could be stopped.

James began chapter 4 talking about war with God, and he ended it talking about the will of God. But the two themes are related: when a believer is out of the will of God, he becomes a troublemaker and not a peacemaker.

Lot moved into Sodom and brought trouble to his family. David committed adultery and brought trouble to his family and his kingdom. Jonah disobeyed God and almost sent a shipload of heathen sailors into a watery grave. In each case, there was a wrong attitude toward the will of God.

That God would have a plan for each of our lives is an obvious truth. He is a God of wisdom and knows what ought to happen and when it should occur. And, as a God of love, He must desire the very best for His children. Too many Christians look on the will of God as bitter medicine they must take, instead of seeing it as the gracious evidence of the love of God.

“I would give my life to the Lord, but I’m afraid,” a perplexed teenager told a pastor at a church youth conference.

“What are you afraid of?” the pastor asked.

“I’m afraid God will ask me to do something dangerous!”

“The dangerous life is not in the will of God,” the pastor replied, “but out of the will of God. The safest place in the world is right where God wants you.”

The pastor was going through a difficult time in his own ministry some years ago, questioning the will of God. While on vacation, he was reading the book of Psalms, asking God to give him some assurance and encouragement. Psalm 33:11 was the answer to that prayer: “But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.”

“The will of God comes from the heart of God,” the pastor said to himself. “His will is the expression of His love, so I don’t have to be afraid!” It was a turning point in his life to discover the blessing of loving and living the will of God.

In the later part of this chapter, James pointed out our attitudes toward the will of God. Of course, only one of them is the correct one, the one that every Christian ought to cultivate.

Things to learn: 1) Peacemaker or Troublemaker 2) Resolving conflicts within us

3) Understanding the Will of God

Discussion Questions:

1) How can we use verses 1 to 12 to explain why there are more troublemakers than there are peacemakers within the Christian community?

2) How can we turn from the enemies which cause conflicts within us so that we would enjoy peace with God? (apply verses 7 to 10).

3) Discuss your understanding of the Will of God as found in verses 13 to 17.