

I did check the obvious sources for historical evidence, and I seem to have confirmed what I imagined. That is our **earth has never seen a day of peace since the fall of man** in the Garden of Eden. God, the Creator, made everything with the intention of peace and prosperity, but because of that grave error at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, things are very different. He created us with “free will” and we chose then, and continue to choose even now, disobedience and strife. Every single day, God’s children have committed some form of strife. From our individual perspective, this may not be evident. For example, I personally can go days without getting upset at my kids, or criticizing my wife, or complaining about colleagues at work. I experience a few days of my “good behavior” and can feel righteous, but God sees the collective behavior of all of us and must feel sad. I know I would; when I see my kids fighting with each other, as rare as that is, my heart aches. God’s children are in continuous strife; we have been all day, every day, for thousands of years.

So, what is strife? A modern definition is a contentious, often violent argument or conflict. I found one translation from the Greek that called it “**an affection for dispute.**” Surely not every case, but I bet most incidents of strife involve pride – that hidden, ubiquitous sin that lurks in all of us.

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5)

Strife is one of those things that has absolutely zero redeeming qualities. Nothing good ever comes from it. In fact, practicing it will prevent you from entering into the Kingdom.

*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things** will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)*

Please understand, we are human, and God is Merciful. This admonition from Paul in his letter to the Galatians is not saying that we cannot get angry. Notice the word “practice” above? Living a life that makes those deeds a habit would disqualify one’s inheritance.

David, out of his love for and devotion to God, wanted to build a house for Him. But, God instructed David to wait and let his son, Solomon, build it. That story is in both 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. And here is what Solomon has to say about it:

*"You know that David my father was unable to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. "But now the LORD my **God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune.** (1 Kings 5:3-4)*

The temple could not be built until there was peace on all sides. David could not build the temple because of the violence and strife around him. **Conflict and quarrel also prevent us from building our House**, that is, a dwelling place for God. He will live in both our physical and spiritual bodies, when we have peace on all sides.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Clearly, we should not seek strife, and we hopefully work at not creating it. We can run the other way and in our minds dwell only on the things that are true, honorable, righteous, pure, lovely, reputable, excellent, and praiseworthy. But what happens when it finds us? Where does strife come from? What can we do about it?

***Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.** (Proverbs 10:12)*

Some men in the time of Messiah were exhibiting hatred toward an adulteress, or maybe toward the sin of adultery; they were ready to unleash some strife in the form of a stoning, to punish her for infidelity. **Their hatred stirred up strife.** Along comes Messiah, full of and exuding love, and says those often-quoted words:

But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7)

When strife finds us, we need to exude love. Love comes from God and is infinite in supply. If it is not flowing out of us, the issue is not a lack of love, it is that **we are restricting its flow.** Open the valve.

Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel. (Proverbs 20:3)

According to this scripture, I feel that I have honor. I mean, I do a pretty good job at keeping away from physical strife. There have been very few times in my life that I have engaged in violent strife- **Externally.** Inside my head, however, I am often that proverbial fool! I have had so many quarrels and suffered from so much strife inside my own imagination. I have verbally fought with so many people whom I know and love and likely just as many whom I've never met. I have had imaginary arguments and given imaginary lessons, lectures, and sermons to folks in all walks of life, from street people to world leaders. This too, I believe, is strife. The dialogs that I have inside my head always have me in the right (pride.) I don't think I have ever learned a valuable lesson or affected positive change by engaging in one of these invisible conversations. And most of them were full of, if not certainly ended in, strife. Is that a good use of my mental resource?

*But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But **the wisdom from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (James 3:14-17)*

This passage ends with the word "hypocrisy." Having strife in your heart, or in your mind, may lead to external, physical strife, but not necessarily. If you are able to contain the strife and not "let it out," you may be better off than if you got into a fight, but **you are still not clean** – you are still exhibiting, and harboring, hatred. "Hatred stirs up strife." This is the hypocrisy James is referring to. Seek the Wisdom from above.

*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, **because you ask with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)*

The purpose and goal of our walk here is to make ourselves ready. Strife counters that goal, but **Love draws us toward it.** We will do ourselves good to recognize that strife can infiltrate our minds and hearts. We need to reflect on our own thoughts and motives and dwell on only those good things listed in Philippians 4:8, **creating peace on all sides.**

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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