"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"

BIG IDEA . . . Part 10: How Arguments Start and Stop (Jam. 4:1-10)

INTRO: Review: Christians should live distinct lives. God is not only concerned with where we are going (destination), but also with our journey (how we live). This is James' plea, whether it be in how we handle trials, temptations, God's Word, do works that prove faith, treat people impartially, control tongue, ask God for wisdom, and now vv. 1-10 in how we deal with arguments, disagreements, and conflicts. All unbecoming of believers.

Raise hand if in the last week you found yourself in argument (conflict, "discussion," disagreement) with someone (spouse, kids, parent, co-worker, etc.). How end? Still "discussing"? End positively and helpful or negatively and damaging? Who'd like to live with fewer arguments, less conflict, etc., especially those that don't end well? ILLUS—Couples argue 19 days/month! Think of "that" person you argue with and you'll get more from this teaching. One liners . . .

JAMES 4:1-10 shows us how arguments are started and stopped. CONTEXT – Ch. 3 describes power of the tongue (vv. 1-12) and wisdom (vv. 13-18). Unfortunate chapter break, as 4:1-12 describes the outcome of false, worldly, unspiritual wisdom (3:16, 18).

AUDIENCE? "among you" (v. 1) – Our passage is sandwiched between 3:1 "my brothers" and 4:11-12 "brothers." Writing to Christians in the church who were arguing with one another.

I. HOW ARGUMENTS ARE *STARTED* (4:1-5) – Cause

A. A Question (v. 1a) – "quarrels and fights" carry thought of conflict and arguments. Relevant today: CNN, FOX; Listen to Talk Radio; Social Media, Congress.

B. Answers with rhetorical question (v. 1b "… your passions are at war within you") – "Passions" (flesh) are desires for what we want. One word – selfishness! The opposite of wisdom is not foolishness but selfishness. Constant war between what I desire, other's desire, or God's desire. When I don't get my way, I get frustrated and argument results between me and other person or between me and God. All too common then and continues today (1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:15; Phil. 4:2). We argue to get our way in three basic desires (legitimate until in the flesh):

1. The desire to *HAVE* (v. 2) – POSSESSIONS (security)
2. The desire to *FEEL* (v. 3) – PLEASURE (What makes me feel good?)
3. The desire to *BE* #1, to impress, to have power, to be somebody. This desire is based upon PRIDE. "Me first," "My way" – and we'll argue, fight to get, and refuse to compromise. "Pride leads to arguments" (Pro. 13:10).

C. Effects/Results when my desire to have, feel, or be is unmet? Two-fold (vv. 2-5):

1. *Impacts our connection with God (vv. 2b-3a).* When we get selfish and proud, we become prayerless (or pray with wrong motives—v. 3b).
2. *Invites hostility and jealousy from God (vv. 4-5).* Basic sin is selfishness and pride. Makes Christians no different than a godless, me-first, pleasure-seeking person of the world. God's Spirit is jealous for us to pursue God's way. World handles arguments and conflicts by pushing, fighting, shouting, abusing, demanding, etc. We shift from pleasing God and wanting the best for others to fighting for ourselves (always a loser). Win argument, but lose relationship. Must avoid "friendship with the world" (v. 4). No! Acquaintance? Yes, for influence (salt, light, witness, . . .). NT warnings about worldliness (Jam. 4:4; 1:27; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 11:32 - invite God's discipline! A life of worldliness leaves you: Incomplete, Unsatisfied (vv. 2-3) and Incompatible with our relationship with God (v. 5). Three enemies work together against us: flesh (v. 1), world (v. 4), devil (v. 6).

II. HOW ARGUMENTS ARE *STOPPED* (4:6-10) – Cure

A. *Humble Attitude* (v. 6) – Attitude brings God's grace into play. His grace empowers us to change – die to self, bury pride, check my way. Ask, "Is what I'm saying or doing selfish or selfless?"

B. Specific *Practical Actions* (vv. 7-10)

1. Submit to God (v. 7a) – crucify your desires (Gal. 5:16ff).
2. Resist the devil (v. 7b) – He is at work in our desires
3. Draw near to God (v. 8a) – Pray again
4. Practice forgiveness (vv. 8b-9) – Seek & give it
5. Trust God to exalt you (v. 10) –

CONC: Go back to "that person" I asked you to think about at the beginning. How can you avoid (most) arguments with them and others? I've got work to do. How about you?

Say Phil. 2:3-5 together . . .