

## **Bitter Jealousy and Selfish Ambition**

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Taylor Houser / Devotional

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Happy Friday and good morning to you all. Today I would like us to look at a passage from the Epistle of James. While James isn't one of the longest books of the New Testament canon, it is rich in practical theology. He writes strongly but plainly, encouraging his brothers and sisters in Christ to live according to Christ's will. I find myself drawn back to James time and time again to be refreshed by his instruction. And while reading it again, I came upon this verse. [James 3:16](#), "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."

When I read it, I was struck with melancholy—perhaps the weight and reality of the verse had never landed before then. James describes something we see every single day in just about every single facet of society. People hurt, abuse, malign, and destroy other people while vying for their own selfish ambitions, desires, and envy. No one person and no position is immune to this, it can happen to students in a class, to coworkers at their job, or even, sadly, congregants in a church. And of course this doesn't just happen locally, but nationally and globally even. How many people does it seem are motivated by that jealousy and selfish ambition in, say, the business world? The political world? It is no wonder things seem to have astray everywhere we look. People are living for themselves first and foremost. We should feel a pang in our hearts when we see our fellow creatures err so greatly.

But alas, what can we do? It is admittedly unlikely that we can personally convince those in privileged positions to change their ways, but we should be constant in pray about it. We should be diligent in praying for their hearts to softened by the Holy Spirit, for them to live according to the Word. God can, and does, act where we are otherwise unable to. And we should live by example as best as we can. It is all too easy to fall in line with how the rest of society acts, but we're explicitly called by Jesus to live different, holy, lives. We should live with a servant's heart and place others' needs before our own as often as we can. As you go about your day today, think of where you're at in life. Are you serving others by what you do? Has envy crept in without you noticing? Can you think of anyone who has put *your* needs above their own? Consider acknowledging their service and let them know you appreciate what they do for you.

Lord God, mighty Father, we ask you to help us to live for others in emulation of your Son who lived and died for us all. Help us to elevated the needs of those around us above our own. Let us be a people of self-sacrifice and a people with true servant's hearts. We ask that send your Holy Spirit onto us and to all people to help us live in accordance with your will. We pray that love and peace reign in our lands once more.