

## Lead-in

Today we continue a series in the book of James called a faith that works. I believe that faith in Jesus Christ is more than theological ascent. Faith in Messiah is deeper than religious proclamation. Hope in Jesus of Nazareth impacts your life in the pew and in the street. Simply put, faith in Jesus works because every moment with Jesus, He is working within you an eternal weight of glory! Faith in Messiah works until the end and works out in your life today!

If you could snap your fingers and cease stress and difficulty in your life right now, would you exercise that power? What is the source of your greatest conflict in life today? **In our society you can see stress fractures that show something is amiss.**

John Stott described western society (our society) this way: **A promise is not enough; we need a contract. Doors are not enough; we have to lock and bolt them. The payment of fares is not enough; we have to be issued tickets, which are punched, inspected, and collected. Law and order are not enough; we need the police to enforce them. We cannot trust each other. We need protection from one another. It is a sorry state of affairs "** These are symptoms of a place longing for peace in the midst of difficulty! I don't know about you, but I could use a little peace in my life. Today's message from the living Word is simply:

### **The Humble Man Wins the War- James 4:1-6, 10 (page #1073)**

***The Internal Battle (4:1)*** Out of no where James, the brother of Jesus, launches into battle language. What is the source of wars (4:1), battles (4:1), wage war (4:1) within or among your members (4:1). The Word uses the language of war to wake us up to the reality of a cosmic battle. **Wake up, there is a war going on!** *Sadly, the world around us has hardened our senses, numbed our horror, to spiritual battles.* James chooses the vocabulary of war not because there is no other way of saying it, but because there was no other way of expressing the horror! You are in a battle! **At this moment, some of you are ready to charge hell with a super soaker!**

What is the source of this war? Satan? Demonic activity? Terrorism? COVID-19? The source is more dangerous than all of these put together. **Don't they come from** implies that he expects a positive answer, the **quarrels come from your heart!**

Here James is writing to the church, it's a reminder that Christians are not exempt from internal wars. I believe that most battles, possibly all battles in your life, are disguised forms of **your** fall nature and evil inclinations. James uses a word **HEDONE** from which we derive our English hedonist.

A hedonist is a person who pursues intense pleasure and enjoyment above everything. A hedonist says and lives, "eat, drink, be merry" for tomorrow I die! 4 Maccabees 1:25, written around the time of James and the early church describes passion this way, "**in pleasure there exists a malevolent tendency, which is the most complex of all the emotions.**"

Here is the internal war that we all face, at the end of the day every one of us is **selfish and pleasure seeking**. We all have desires, strong unhealthy cravings to secure something not our own. And this incessant need for more is the most complex of all emotion. The Humble man recognizes that *We are all hedonists at heart.*

I believe that the desire for pleasure is a God given desire. It's an eternal GPS that will not leave you content to eat drink and die. Jesus wants so much more for your life. **The internal war for passion is the cosmic longing for Jesus.** It's not about sex, or climbing the corporate ladder, or having the picture perfect life.

Not only is God the supreme source of satisfaction for the human soul, but God himself is glorified by our being satisfied in him. Therefore, our pursuit of joy in him is essential.

**Christian Hedonism claims that the Christian life should be the pursuit of maximum joy in God — joy both in quality and quantity.—John Piper** Do you enjoy Jesus? ***Joy to the World! Joy to my soul the Lord has come!***

**You are often empty because are you asking properly.** Frustration, anxiety, and difficulty, are heavenly mercies that should cause us to run to our Father! I love the reminder from James, **often my soul is restless because I am not asking Jesus to give me what I need.** You see, not anyone can come into the presence of a king unannounced. **Only a young child has the audacity to wake the King up at 2:00 am and ask for a glass of water. Oh that we would have a childlike faith! Are you asking God for what you need?**

Are you asking Father what you want or what you need? Some are frustrated because they have not asked. Some are **more** frustrated because they asked and didn't receive anything. You know why? A source of unanswered prayer is that we ask wrongly because when we pray

asking for selfish gain God does not honor those requests. God will not be manipulated as a vending machine for our self-gratification.

All this movement in the Scripture reminds us that public problems have private cause. I am the problem! But, the humble man wins the war.

**The External Battle (4:4)** *The war within you is a symptom of the war above you.* James breaks off his analysis of an internal war and now preaches repentance. When you have sinful passions in your life, you are having a war of heart but you are also battling an eternally holy God. **You must connect the dots between sin and hatred toward the Lord.** In both Testaments, the concept of **adultery** is applied only to Jews, never gentiles, and refers to those who have a covenantal relationship with Yahweh. James is speaking to those who know the Covenant Maker.

Brother, **friendship with the world is hostility toward God, this is war!** As my children used to say, **you can only have one best friend. Years ago when they were angry they would exclaim, “you are not my best friend!”** This is literally what James is saying. You can't have two best friends, **you love Jesus above all or you love everything else above Him.**

**Friendship in antiquity was taken far more seriously than in today's western world, as a lifelong pact between people with shared valued and loyalties-Friendship was life.** Friendship means to identify with its standards and priorities.

The **world** in which James refers is the whole system of humanity as organized without God. **You can't love Jesus and order your life around priorities that are anti-God.** This is why Jesus commands us to put **Him first, have no idols, watch your mouth, rest/worship regularly, give generously.** **All these priorities say, I need you!**

Dear friend, you cannot deceive yourself into thinking that you can live in intimate fellowship with Jesus when you the set of your heart is towards the world. Sin makes you an irreconcilable enemy of the cross. **The battle within you is a symbol of the battle above you!**

**Stop fighting and find peace! (4:5-6)** One scholar said that 4:5 one of the most difficult verses in all of the New Testament. However, I cannot conceive of a more glorious passage because James' point is clear: **God's people are indwelled by God's Spirit and there is no way in which the living presence of that Spirit is compatible with those sinful yearning and promptings of self-interest.**

**God's Word tells us that Yahweh is tirelessly on our side.** He never falters in respect to our needs. When you are in your worst day of self-indulgent internal battle, **He gives greater grace.** The Spirit within you is jealous for the glory of the Father. God's grace is completely adequate to meet the requirements imposed upon you by His jealousy. Stop fighting and find peace and know this joy!

The Holy Spirit within you is beacon that is constantly and consistently beeping and longing for the glory of the Father. It is like the my phone app on your iPhone. When you lose your phone you hit that app and it beeps until you get to it. Praise be to God, that with the Spirit you will never be lost again and is constantly beeping for heaven.

How do we stop fighting? How do we find peace? James tells us. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

**Christ sends none away empty but only those who are full of themselves. – Donald Barnhouse**

Humility does not say, "I am worthless." Humility says, "He is infinitely more worth than me." Humility proclaims don't look at me, look to Jesus! **This is our victory cry.**

**Response- He gives what? To who?**

**Sin** When you humbly surrender to Jesus, everything changes. Peace comes into your life and the **Spirit now fights with you** the battle for your heart, your passions, and your self-centeredness. And when you humbly receive his grace your life is changed. **What internal battle are you fighting alone that the HS is waging war against?**

***Gratitude-** Those who have been trained to spot the grace of God in their life are the most grateful. Gratitude fuels grace which fuels gratitude and leads to a bonfire of praise.*

**Salvation.** **Romans 5:10** For if, while we were *enemies*, we were *reconciled to God* through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

What is the source of your greatest conflict today?

Because of Jesus, you no longer have to enemy of the cross, but a friend of Yahweh. The battle will never be won unless you say I fight, I desire, Father, it is my passions! Will you do that today?

**James 4:6** But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says: **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**



## Notes

Entitlement fuels contempt

Verse 1 speaks of fighting among you and verse 4 speaks of enmity with God (Motyer, 140).

James uses the language of war to wake us to the reality of our sinful condition and need for grace. We need reinforcement if we are to ever win the battle.

Sadly the world around has hardened our sense even in respect of war (Motyer, 141).

James chooses the vocabulary of war not because there is no other way of saying it, but because there is no other way of expressing the horror of it (Motyer, 141).

**James 4:1** What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? **2** You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war.

These conflicts are metaphorical and within the Christian community (NGTC, 156). Christians are not exempt from internal wars.

The community conflicts come not from a passion for truth or godly wisdom, but from 'your pleasures' or 'your desires' (NIGTC, 156).

Most battles in your life are disguised forms of your fallen nature, or your evil inclinations.

The body is itself neutral, but it is often controlled by sin. This is precisely what Paul argues in Romans 6-8. Sin has to be conquered by Christ before a person can do what he wants with his body. Thus the fight is within the body of the individual Christian (NIGTC, 157).

### **Don't they come?**

The word for not (ouk) implies that he expects a positive answer: the quarrels do come from our passions (ECNT, 187).

## **Passions**

Is the source of the English word hedonism, but in James' day implied implied an intense pleasure or enjoyment (ECNT, 187).

**4 Macc. 1:25** In pleasure there exists even a malevolent tendency, which is the most complex of all the emotions.

### **Desire**

Seems here to imply a strong and unhealthy craving to secure something not currently one's own (ECNT, 188).

Desire/envy describes how envy led Simeon to seize and attempt to murder his brother Joseph. Speaking at the end of his life, Simeon warns his children that "envy dominates the whole of man's mind... keeps prodding him to destroy the one whom he envies" Testimony of Simeon 3:2-3 (Moo, 183).

You do not have because you do not ask. **3** You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

### **Ask!**

Some don't have because they never ask.

Only a son can wake the King up at 2:00 am and ask for a glass of water.

You may often need to persevere in prayer in order to receive (ECNT, 189).

Doubt is trusting in one's own machinations or worldly intrigues rather than in God (NIGTC, 169).

### **Wrong Motives**

What makes the prayer evil is that it simply serves lust (NIGTC, 160).

The point is that the good gift is not desired for sharing with others or godly ends, but simply to gratify desire. Thus the prayer will not be heard, for the motives are totally selfish and worldly (NIGTC, 160).

Some would immediately question James and say, "we have asked!" in this verse he gives another reason for unanswered prayer. Asking "wrongly." James makes it clear that believers ought not to be asking for selfish gain and that God does not honor those requests (ECNT, 189).

For this person God is here manipulated as a kind of vending machine precisely for the purpose of self-gratification (ECNT, 189).

The whole movement of James' thought, therefore from 3:13 to 4:3 is to reveal that public problems have private causes (Motyer, 146).

**James 4:4** You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God.

### **Adulterous**

James has broken off analysis and is not preaching repentance (NIGTC, 160).

In both testaments the concept of adultery is applied only to Jews, never gentiles, for only those who have had or claim to have a covenant relationship with Yahweh can be included in such a condemnation (NIGTC, 161).

### **Friendship**

Friendship in antiquity was taken far more seriously than in today's Western world, as a lifelong pact between people with shared values and loyalties (ECNT, 190).

Friendship means to identify with its standards and priorities.

### **Enmity**

Friendship and enmity are irreconcilable

You can not deceive yourself into thinking that we can live in intimate fellowship with him when the set of our hearts is towards the world (Motyer, 147).

### **World**

The world is not the created order or the earth, but the whole system of humanity as organized without God (NIGTC, 161).

**5 Or do you think it's without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit he made to dwell in us envies intensely?**

3 main translations suggested:

1. The spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely

2. The spirit he causes to live in us longs jealously
3. God jealously longs for the spirit he made to live in us

James 4:5 is one of the most difficult verses in the NT (Moo, 188).

The phrase reminds us that God has a claim on us by virtue of his work in our lives (Moo, 190).

Although the grammar is unclear, James' point is not ambiguous: God's people are indwelt by God's Spirit and there is no way in which the living presence of that Spirit is compatible with those sinful yearning and promptings of self-interest (Motyer, 150).

**James 4:6** But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says:

**God resists the proud,  
but gives grace to the humble.**

God is a jealous creator. Even in the situation when one seeks the world, yet in that situation God does not reject the person, but gives a great gift, grace (NIGTC, 164).

What comfort there is in this verse! It tells us that God is tirelessly on our side. He never falters in respect to our needs (Motyer, 150).

### **Grace**

James here is reminding us that God's grace is completely adequate to meet the requirements imposed on us by His jealousy (Moo, 191).

God's grace demands response: the response of humility (Moo, 191).

### **Humble**

Christ sends none away empty but those who are full of themselves. –Donald Barnhouse

**10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

True repentance will not be without results; God will give grace to the humble (NIGTC, 168).

## Illustrations

Christian Hedonism is the conviction that God's ultimate goal in the world (his glory) and our deepest desire (to be happy) are one and the same, because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. Not only is God the supreme source of satisfaction for the human soul, but God himself is glorified by our being satisfied in him. Therefore, our pursuit of joy in him is essential.

Christian Hedonism claims that the Christian life should be the pursuit of maximum joy in God — joy both in quality and quantity. Fullness of joy and joy forevermore (Psalm 16:11) are found only in him. —John Piper

Dr. John R. W. Stott in one of his books makes this comment on civilized society: "Many of the happenings of civilized society would not exist if it were not for human sin. A promise is not enough; we need a contract. Doors are not enough; we have to lock and bolt them. The payment of fares is not enough; we have to be issued tickets, which are punched, inspected, and collected. Law and order are not enough; we need the police to enforce them. We cannot trust each other. We need protection from one another. It is a sorry state of affairs "