

Winning the War of the Soul: The Path to Peace

Part 2

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[0:00] Father, we come to you today, and what a truth that song declares, that your grace, that is greater than all of our sin, can be had right now.

It's available to us because of Christ, because he is not. He is risen. He is alive. He's ever making intercession for us, believers in Christ, those that have turned from sin and trusted in Christ, can now approach the throne of grace.

And Lord, we receive that grace. And even today, Lord, we need that grace. Every day, every hour, we need you. And in this moment, as we gather to worship this morning, our prayer is that your Holy Spirit will just minister to our souls today.

Not just to our outer life, not just to our mind, not just to our emotion, but God, that you would minister to our soul today, using the medicine of your word, and applying it by the power of your Holy Spirit.

May you do the work in us that only you can do. And Father, if there is anyone here today that doesn't know Christ, my prayer is that they would see Jesus Christ in all his glory today, the lover of our soul, and that they, seeing their sin, would turn from sin and throw themselves at the mercy of the cross, and that they would come to Christ, receive him as king of their life, and be absolutely radically, through and through, changed and transformed in his presence.

[1:44] And I pray, God, that that would be true for some this morning, that we'll, even in our invitation time, we'll contemplate the reality of who Christ is, and as you reveal yourself to them, that they will be changed right here in this room today.

And we believe that you're able to do that, because so many in this room have already been changed. And so, God, I pray that today you would just speak to our hearts, more than anything else that we need, we need to hear from you.

So may your word be carried into the deepest part of our hearts this morning, by your Holy Spirit, and minister to us as we need. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Amen. You may be seated now. Amen. Amen. Amen. So we stay on for a long time sometimes. You need rest for your soul. So sit down, by all means.

And I'm grateful for Brent. You know, I've been doing a welcome like he does. He's always so energetic. It gets us stirred up, and sometimes just reminds us of a joke or two, you know.

[2:51] And as somebody said during our greeting time, somebody said, you know, Brent mentioned that we don't want people to stay guests for long, and if he keeps up his jokes, we won't have them long.

That's what they said. I didn't say that. I did not say that. So I just thought I'd share that. But it did make me think, you know, why can a T-Rex not clap its hands?

Because they're dead. So, anyway, keep that one for later. Turn to your Bibles.

James chapter 4. We're continuing in James chapter 4. Trying to go verse by verse. Sometimes we're going word by word. We're crawling along at points. But we're going to make it through.

I'm actually surprised at how far along in the epistle we are. How many of you are surprised? Right? I mean, I spent like a couple of years in 1 Corinthians, and so people are like, oh, praise the Lord, a new fresh book, you know.

[3:52] There's other books in the Bible, believe it or not. But today is the cliffhanger. It's the continuation of last week. And even today, will

I get through it?

I don't know. I'm going to try. And because we have the Lord's Supper today also. And so I don't want to drag too long and us be in the Lord's Supper and feel rushed in that time.

So at an appropriate time, we'll cut it off wherever we're at, and we'll just move forward. But what a great, encouraging word this has been so far as we talk about finding the path to peace for the war of our soul.

Because really, this is what I really think the overarching message of James is, as he's talking about living faith and what living faith looks like, as people respond to the wisdom of God that's revealed to us through His Word.

The wisdom of God is what we have in His Word. And as we make application and listen to the Word of God, I really think we can measure the success of our spiritual living.

[5:09] As we look at our obedience and compare it to what God's Word says, we see how we measure up. There's a lot of ways to measure ourselves. I think sometimes we get it wrong. There's a story of a little boy coming to his dad, and he said, Dad, I just measured myself, and I am 7'2".

And the dad, of course, is like, Okay, yeah. Son, you know you're not 7'2". No, dad. I measured myself, and I am 7'2".

And the dad says, Okay. So he's out of curiosity. Show me. Let me see. You measure yourself. And he says, No, dad.

You've got to believe me. I'm 7'2". I'm 7 rulers tall. And two inches. And he said, Let me see the ruler.

And he hands his dad the ruler, and it's a six-inch ruler. You are always taller when you use the wrong gauge.

[6:13] And James is really kind of identifying this for us as we measure ourselves looking at real living faith. We measure ourselves according to God's word.

And God's wisdom that has been revealed is the only identifier that we have about what real faith is. We want to understand the gospel.

We only understand that through the scriptures. Somebody says, Well, I don't want to study the Bible. I just want to know Jesus. Okay. I understand what you're saying in that maybe you want to have a relationship with Jesus.

But the reality is you don't know anything about Jesus apart from his word. His word is given to us so that we can understand who he is and to ensure that we're worshipping the right Jesus.

It's not just about your feelings. We live in an age of psychological, I mean, gosh, we're just overwhelmed by psychological truths.

[7:23] I've never heard people describe, you can have little kids describe psychological terms today like narcissism, right? And teenagers throwing, well, he's a narcissist, right?

Words like that. I mean, these technological terms in psychology. And, well, I'm suffering from depression as if identifying and diagnosing a problem within myself and using it in modern psychological terms.

And kids can use these terms freely today and not know their Bible at all. It's amazing how much they learn, right? James is dealing with the proud.

People who talk the talk. The people that don't walk the walk. People who think more highly of their opinion or the opinion of the world more than they think of the opinion of God.

More than they think of God's word as being the source book for the study of the soul. Remember, psychology is just coming from the Greek word psuche, which means soul.

[8:41] Psychology is the study of the soul. So it's a modern approach apart from the Bible to study the soul. But if you want to understand the soul, you need to go to the maker of the soul, the author of the soul, and see what he says about the soul.

You want peace in your life? You're not going to find that through modern psychology. Unless that modern psychology is submitting itself to the word of God as the authority.

And if you submit yourself to the authority of God's word, then you can start understanding the soul and how your soul works. James is just unpeeling the layers of your life so that you can take care of some of these layers of your life to get down to the core issues where the battle of your life is. And that is in your soul. He started this chapter out. What causes quarrels among you and fights? Is it not this? Your passions that are at war within you.

Peter said the passions war against your soul. And so this whole idea of conflict in your life and a lack of peace is what's being addressed here.

[9:54] How are you going to find peace in the relationships you have? Or in your approach to living in the world and the worldly values that are around you.

So the relationships among you where the conflict is. Or the values around you where you're in conflict. And what James does is peels those things back and says, yeah, it is that.

But there's way more. If you'll look behind this, it's actually the passions that were at war within you. And it's actually, as he peels that back, it's actually at its heart a hostility between you and God that is created with your adulterous heart.

Your heart is adulterous. And this is the picture. James is peeling off the layers because your pride cannot coexist with humility.

And your pride is showing itself because pride is something that would say in you, I've got this. And humility would say, God, please take this.

[11:05] Pride will say, I can figure this out. Humility says, God, what have you said? Pride says, I've got a plan. And humility says, I've got to pray.

It's a completely different view on your circumstances and on your life. And this is the battle that's warring in your soul.

It's pride that keeps you from God. And it's humility that enables you to come into his presence, which is what we're going to see really today.

J.I. Packer said it very clearly. He said, regeneration has made our hearts a battlefield.

Regeneration, you being born again in Christ Jesus.

I used a different quote last week from R.C. Sproul. He said, I'm tired of those preachers that say everything's going to come together. And when I became a believer, that's when the battle really started. That's what he said.

[12:05] And J.I. Packer is saying something very similar. He said, man, regeneration has made my heart a battlefield. It is a war between the spirit and the flesh.

And it's taking place within me. It's a hostility between my flesh and God. James is unpacking this for us in a very practical way.

And he nails it here. Now the danger is, okay, let me just say. You think, well, James, you started this message last week. So you already had it pretty much ready to go. So there should be a short message, right?

No, I had another week to think about it. But it's so small, right? So now I've got to weed this out and weed that out. And I've got to pack it back in. As I'm looking at this, man, my prayer really is, as I look at this, Lord, help me to adequately communicate the beautiful thing that I see here.

Because as I'm looking at this passage, I really see one of the most beautiful realities in all of Scripture. As our adulterous heart is sinful, we recognize that.

[13:12] All of us feel that. We're torn with the world so much. And the passions of my flesh, they get in the way of serving God all the time. And I want to serve God.

How do I come to a place of peace in my life where I'm really right with God and serving Him? And my heart just gets drawn into this adulterous situation all the time where the world and its values just draw me in.

And the things of God grow strangely dim, right? And I just get attracted by the things of the world or the power of the world. They're alluring things of the world.

And I come to this passage, and my adulterous heart is just reeling from the sin and feeling the reality of that adulterous behavior in my heart.

And the beautiful thing is that transition where He says, But there is grace. But there is more grace. I'm adulterous, but with God, there's more grace.

[14:14] And this is where He begins. So let's stand. We're going to read our passage today before I get ahead of myself. We're going to read this and just be reminded. Verse 6 is where we were last week.

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the scripture says He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us.

And then verse 6, transition. But He gives more grace. Therefore, God, therefore it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

[15:34] Father, may you bless your word as you have spoken. May you give us the hope that is in Christ that there is more grace with you, more that overwhelms our sin.

Our sin is not so great that you can't overcome it. Your grace is so great that you can overcome any sin, any amount of sin, any duration of sin, any extent that it's played in our heart.

You can overwhelm that with your grace. And you love us in spite of our adultery, in spite of our straying from you and the devotion that you deserve. And you offer to us more.

And so, God, I pray today that we would get a taste of your love for us that overwhelms every adulterous impulse in our being.

And I just pray that you would help us to see you for who you are. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. God is opposed to the proud.

[16:36] He gives grace to the humble. When he uses the word opposed there, it is in the original language antitasso. It means to be against something, to set an army in array against another force, to arrange in battle armor, to line oneself up against.

In other words, it is a vivid word that James is using to describe this picture of the infantry lined up on the battlefield, like in a Revolutionary War kind of scene, where you would see their perfect formation out on the field.

And then to the side you might see the cavalry on one side and the pikemen here and some kind of archers in another spot and artillery in another.

And in this setting, maybe not archery in the Revolutionary War, but you get the picture, okay? It's this battlefield array. It's an arrangement of an army before.

And then in the distance, you can see kind of the wagons carrying the supplies or a train that's just a car after car of equipment and supplies to supply that army.

[17:58] And in that, this is the word that he's using to say, God opposes the proud. So it's not just like me against you or me against someone else.

When my heart is adulterous and prideful, it's God who is arrayed against me. Can you get a picture of why you have no peace, right?

So that's the vivid picture that he gives of the situation. Why is there conflict among you and your relationships and your values in the world around you and how you're trying to navigate that?

It's coming down to this battle that's in your heart. And when you allow this conflict to exist in your heart, and you're allowing it to exist in your heart, then you are not letting go of that.

This is a pride issue. You're not humbling yourselves before God. You're allowing your pride to hold on, and you're not taking a position. And so what you've got to realize is that the reason there's no peace is because God has arrayed himself against you.

[19:12] Now that ought to scare you, right? I mean, for me, I'm horrified by the thought that actually God might be against me in the things that I'm doing in my life.

You see all these bumper stickers, all these hip, cool, cutting-edge churches, you know? And the big ad says, God's not mad at you. Maybe he is.

Right? If I'm living in willful sin, and I'm not repentant, and I'm even passively holding on to things that are sinful in my heart, then the scripture says God has already, he opposes the proud.

And he's talking to brothers in Christ. So he's not just talking about unbelievers here. So this idea of, God's not mad at you. You can be okay. Just forget about it. You've got to overcome the psychological effects of guilt.

And just get that behind you. Put that behind you. Don't deal with that. Just come to Christ.

Everything's forgotten. And just move forward. You might be careful. Because modern psychology might have therapeutically induced you to think about things in a way that the Bible does not.

[20:28] Somebody said it recently. When you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and you don't obey his word, you are living exactly like the devil. He believes Jesus is the Son of God.

He does not obey God's word. There's no difference and no distinction between that kind of life and living like the devil. There's a difference here. We're in a state of hostility.

Pride has enabled a problem. It's the core of the problem. And the peace that you're looking for in your life, the path to peace, is not just external, but it is one at the soul level.

Pride wins no wars with God. How do you find peace for your soul? The answer, James gives, humility. This is how you find peace with God.

This is how you find peace then in your relationship and with these values around you. It's humility.

So last week as we divided this text up, we made mention of a couple of things.

[21:34] We typically will follow those key verbs through the text, and it gives you the division of the text. What's he talking about? And then you answer that looking at the verbs, main verbs that he uses.

He's saying this about it. He's saying this about it. He's saying this about it. And so usually that's a pretty reliable division in the text. But here there's so many imperatives and so many verbs.

You're going, wait a second. What's he saying? And then you have to realize that there's some main verbs that he's using. And then some of these others are kind of nested underneath them. And then it brings some structure to the passage.

Because the reality is he's giving you an indicative that's followed by imperatives. There is a reality that he's stating. God gives more grace.

He gives, he opposes the proud. He gives grace to the humble. And then he says, here's what you do. So here's the indicative. Here's the way it is. And here are the commands.

[22:33] Here's what you do as a result of that. And as he goes through, he gives some main verbs. Submit, resist, draw near, humble yourself.

These are all in an imperative form. Which means in the original language, lots of forms that could be used. But you translate it based on the form. And so this form is an imperative.

Meaning he's giving instructions on what you're to do. It's a command. God is gracious. Therefore, do this. So what do you do? And we talked about submission.

Submit yourself to God. Line yourself up under. To get back in line. To get in order. And to stand rightly in your place with the Lord.

So let's just take a pause there for a minute. And let's just say a word of prayer right now. Okay? Let's just say a word of prayer for our brother here.

[23:30] He's struggling a little bit this morning. But pray with me. Father, we love you. We praise you. God, you are gracious. And I just want to pray for my brother right now.

Lord, that you would just be with him. That you would just give him strength and peace of mind.

Pray, Lord. That you would give us wisdom and have help and have encourage him.

Right now. I pray, Father. That you would just bring healing to his body. That you would just give strength. And that you would just clear up anything that's going on with him.

Right now. Pray for peace for him. And for all the family involved right here. But, Lord, that you just bless as only you can. That you give wisdom and strength as only you can.

We love you, Lord. And we know that you have his best in your mind and in your heart. So, God, just be with him. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[24:32] Amen. We'll continue to pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen.