

Peace for Our Troubled Soul

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[0:00] Father, we come to you this morning and we just praise you. As we come here just singing these praises to you, we're just reminded that all I have, all we have, is in you.

We've got nothing else. And as we gather in this place today, our minds are just flooded with all the things from the week, maybe the things that are coming up this week, maybe the things of our jobs or the things in our family, struggles that nobody else knows about in our heart, mind, whatever it is. Lord, we know that all of these things are things that you can deal with, things that you can handle.

As we come here this morning, we just pray that you just help us to lay those things at your feet, that as we lay those things at the foot of the cross and allow you to carry the burden for us.

You said it so clearly. Come, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My burden is light. I pray that as you take those things off our shoulders this morning, as you give us strength, that you fill us up with your Holy Spirit, that you send us out into this week with strength renewed, with our eyes wide open to the spiritual victory we have in Christ, and that you would use us greatly in this week ahead for your glory, for your grace.

We love you and we praise you. It's in Christ's name we pray. Seated. I want you to turn in your Bibles to James chapter 4. James chapter 4.

[1:51] Today we're looking at the war of the soul, or the wisdom that leads to total peace in God. I think it's a great, great passage for us this morning as we come to this section in the epistle of James.

He's been dealing with so many topics for us and so many things that I think are important for us to hear. On this Labor Day weekend, I know some people are out, some people are back. We're seeing some people that have been traveling back in, and things settle down and schedule summer officially behind us.

I'm wearing my last spring colors today, you know, as we come into this fall. And I will say, Brent, somebody did mention to say that, I thought of you for the spring colors, but somebody did anonymously say that, even as it's been reported by Matt, that some are parking in the driveway, they brought it to my attention that you would be considered among the elderly in that, so it's okay. Let's get your hand here. Warm, warm, warm. Warm, warm. And Jessica Campbell didn't say that, so I don't know if it's out there.

It's just out there. Okay. James chapter 4. And I love what somebody said, because this dealing with conflict in every phase of your life, in every area of your life, but somebody said it this way.

[3:25] They said, they said, to dwell above with the saints I love, that will all be glory. But to dwell below with the saints I know, brother, that's another story.

And Brent says amen to that right now, as I share these things. The conflict that we see everywhere in our life is being addressed in this passage.

You think of, just like the political spectrum in America today, I mean, the context of people in the churches that James is dealing with have a common factor, and it is that their lives are just overrun with conflict.

Overrun with it. It's in every part of their life, in every area of their life, from external to internal. And the reminder, I think, for us this morning, especially as we look at this passage and just think through this idea of conflict, because it's always, it's always going to be a part of life, but the thing to remember is that there's never going to be a person this side of heaven that doesn't deal with it in some way or another.

There's never going to be a church this side of heaven that doesn't have conflict within it. There's never going to be a nation this side of eternity that there is not some form of conflict that you live among.

[4:56] But deeper than all of that, I think what this passage gets to is the relationship between all of that conflict and the conflict of your soul and how it relates to every part of your life.

The deepest places, the constant wrestling that goes on in your soul. How are you going to find peace in the war of your soul? This is what's bleeding out into every area of your life.

Are you going to find joy in your life? This has been the theme. Remember from the beginning of the epistle of James, it's like, how are you going to find joy in your suffering? How are you going to find endurance in your pain?

How are you going to find peace in your conflict? will you respond in genuine faith? Will you live out a life of genuine faith that affects your heart, mind, soul, and strength as you walk in the wisdom of God?

That's the picture. And so now the focus is coming into the conflict of the soul. Are you going to find peace in all your conflict? Are you going to live in a state of peace?

[6:08] And maybe for some of you, you are surprised because you thought as you became a believer in Christ that it was all just going to be easy.

Can I get an amen? Correct. You thought it was going to be easy. And your life's not at peace. And the deal is I may not be at peace in every place in my life, but I can't have peace in every place in my life.

Maybe you believe that coming to Christ was going to solve all your problems and that you're not going to be sick and you're not going to face difficulty and you're not going to face trials of various kinds. And James corrects all that.

And maybe you're a believer and you think that if everyone's a Christian around you, you're just going to naturally get along with everybody. And you are mistaken. James corrects all of that.

Maybe your depression and your anxiety are just going to disappear and it's going to go away.

James corrects all of that. Maybe you think that this little band of best friends that we have together are always going to be in perfect harmony and James corrects all of that.

[7:24] But you also may think that there's no power to overcome in all of these areas and James corrects all of that. We have Christ.

I have Christ living inside of me. I have Christ at work among me. I have Christ at work in my heart. I have Christ at work in my life. I have Christ before me and Christ behind me.

I've got Christ moving through providence in my life. The hand of God moving me down the road, bringing circumstances into my life, answering prayer, changing things, being at work.

I'm just telling you I've got everything that pertains to life and godliness and I can overcome in every area. That's the message of James. He is working in a teaching format here that's called a diatribe and it's really just kind of a rhetorical technique of teachers especially in this time period but still used today asking the hypothetical questions and posing objections in that and then immediately answering those and here he's giving just a lesson on the cause and the cure of conflict.

That's really the outline for chapter 4 but within that I think it just gives us a purpose of the information that he gives.

[8:52] It's inspiration that leads to transformation. We should hear this as followers of Jesus and be changed by this. It gives us direction. It gives us marching orders.

It should help us to apply this truth to our heart so that every area of our life is affected by it so that Jesus can be seen whether we're talking about the struggles internally in my life or the struggles externally, the struggles among me and even my struggle with God in my own soul.

So you notice in this passage which we haven't read let's stand we're going to read chapter 4 beginning in verse 1 James chapter 4 beginning in verse 1 He says this What causes quarrels?

What causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and you do not have so you murder you covet and you cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel.

Do you not have you do not have because you do not ask you ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend on your passions you adulterous people?

[10:21] 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 that he gives more grace.

Therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourself 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 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. He will exalt you.

[11:20] Father may you just bless the reading of your word as we draw near to you today. I pray that in response to your word we'll just humble ourselves before you and that you could change us in your presence.

May you speak to us today may you just change us. We love you. We praise you. It's all in Christ's name we pray. The Lord has spoken.

You get the picture here of conflict. And really he uses so many different forms of this word and so many related words you just start tracing down through.

The two main words that he uses especially in the opening question of this diatribe of what is it that causes conflict. Conflict is the theme. But then he shows all the realms of conflict that are in your life.

What causes quarrels? What causes fights among you? When he uses the word quarrels that's a word that typically is used of armed conflict.

[12:33] War. Like actual warfare. So there's armed conflict where people are shooting at each other bombing each other. Now these days it's more drone warfare where they've got drones that are flying over dropping bombs and watching the enemy and all of this drone activity.

But it's an armed conflict. It's here used in a figurative sense. They're not actually armed and fighting each other. Although from time to time that happens in a church.

Amen? In church history. We see examples throughout church history of the church coming to such disagreement that there is actually armed conflict between people in the church.

People die. Horrels. And then he uses a different word. That was the word *polemos* in the Greek which is where we get polemic. It's fighting.

But there here uses a second word for fights which just means a more simple a simplified kind of battle between two people.

[13:36] Typically without weapons. In fact usually using this word it's describing warfare without weapons. It's strife. It's disputes.

It's typically wars of words. And so in this you're getting the spectrum of all kinds of conflict just like he talked about all kinds of trials in the beginning.

Various kinds. And when he's using that kind of phrasing he's trying to voice it in a way that's just all encompassing. Where is all of the strife and conflict, all of it in your life, where is it coming from?

Nate T. Robertson gives the picture of this word *polemos* meaning a chronic state of campaign, a state of war.

So James is giving us all kinds of conflict, this state of war, whether it's little battles, whether it's big battles, and it carries the idea, he says, of lasting resentment connected with it.

[14:44] And all of us can relate conflict in some way. And so now what he's doing with this big picture of all kinds of conflict in all kinds of areas of your life, he gives us kind of a progression of conflict that moves from the external, where you see it most visibly, to the internal, where you don't usually pay attention.

it's the conflict around me and the conflict above me. Internal, external, around me, above me.

These are the phrases that you can trace through the passage to show these different circles of conflict in your life. How are you going to find peace in all of this?

peace? And the answer, of course, as he's been giving, it comes in the wisdom of God in the person of Christ. Christ is the answer for the conflict of every area of my life, of every situation in my

life, of all of the strife, of all of the conflict.

If I want peace, I need to know the prince of peace. If I want to be blessed, then I've got to come to the prince of peace, and then blessed it is the peacemakers, because they know the prince of peace.

[16:04] It's going to be the characteristic of my life. Not that I'm always in a place of peace, but I can have peace no matter what the circumstance is. And I look around and the families represented in this room, and I know there's all kinds of areas like that in your life.

All kinds of areas. Dealing with marriage, dealing with singleness, dealing with kids, dealing with aging parents, dealing with sickness, dealing with troubles, health situations, dealing with jobs. I'm just thinking of those things as I'm looking around at your faces in the room. Dealing with grandkids, all kinds of stuff, and the conflicts that go on. All of this comes down to Jesus.

How are you going to find peace? He starts in the first area, it's the quarrels among you. If you're taking notes, you just might mark this one off as the first area.

It's the most obvious, it's where you see things the most, because that's where you get into conflict with other people in the church, he's addressing those in the assembly, and it happens in church quite frequently, I'm afraid.

[17:21] Has there ever been a church, has there ever been a church you've been involved in that have some kind of conflict at one time or another? James begins by addressing the visible, the external conflicts among us, what causes quarrels and fights, look at what he says, among you, among you, the things that are going on between you, in the church, and so that could be between the church family or within that sphere, even in the marital relationships or friendship relationships, everything within that sphere.

He's given the scope of all kinds of conflict, and now he's narrowing it down into these relationships among you, which means all kinds of things among you. And this is for believers as he starts this, but even as you go down to verse 5, he's talking about people in whom the spirit of God dwells.

Does conflict happen even among people in whom the spirit of God dwells? Well, yeah. Believers, indwelling spirit.

In verse 11, he calls them brothers, brothers, you that are brothers in Christ, implying brothers and sisters, but together, siblings in Christ, you together.

Can you have conflict among siblings? Any of you raising kids? Give me an amen on that, right? I mean, there's always conflict.

[18:57] You're always breaking it up. You know, I'm going to separate you two. My mom at one time made me and my brothers wear a large t-shirt together. You know, it didn't help.

We still fought. We fought in the shirt, you know? I mean, it was amazing. Outward conflicts that are actually related to the inner conflicts, conflicts, but they are in their own category.

Symptoms of what's going on in the heart of people. But it starts here. Isn't it funny how we get into conflicts and sometimes we don't even know why after the fact?

Yeah, I mean, in a marital conflict that happens a lot. You're fighting, fighting, fighting, and then you're like, what started this? How did we even get into this? What was the trigger for all this?

You can't even remember, right? I mean, it's just madness. It's just the way we are. We're just bent toward conflict. Our sin nature just runs right into it. And it's something you see even in rivalries between teams.

[20:05] College football has started back, amen, to the glory of God, right? We love football season. But it's funny to see. I heard about this rivalry between Indiana and Purdue.

And I wasn't familiar with it. Those aren't schools that I typically pay attention to. But the article talking about this was kind of intriguing because it talked about the trophy for this rivalry.

It's called the Old Oaken Bucket. Anybody ever heard of that? I never heard of it. I didn't know what it was about. Schools I don't pay attention to. It's not OU. It's not Florida State.

There's a few schools that I grew up around like those teams. But it's really intriguing because this thing that they do, this trophy of the gold, this Old Oaken Bucket, is one that they have been doing.

Next year will be the 100th anniversary of this football rivalry between Indiana and Purdue. And so whoever wins gets the bucket. They take it back to their school and they get to hold the Oaken Bucket.

[21:09] Right? And you're like, an Oaken Bucket? Well, in history, this is actually referenced to the Battle of Zappolino in Italy. And so as the story goes, back in 1325, it was on the anniversary that they started this, and so they named it after this battle.

And this battle was in northern Italy, and it's between these two city-states. 32,000 troops gather together, they fight this bloody, gruesome war, and in the end of it, like thousands of people die, and after some time, they forgot what started the whole battle.

And what it came down to, years later, they remembered that it was started because a couple of soldiers from one city-state snuck into the other city-state, stole the Oaken Bucket from their well, took it back to their city, and this started this feud between these two cities that cost thousands and thousands of lives over a bucket.

And to this day, this Oaken Bucket is in the cathedral in Modena, the cathedral, Torre della Gerlandina, it is, this Oaken Bucket is up in the cathedral.

They still haven't given up the fight over a bucket. Right? Isn't it funny how we get into conflicts, we don't even know why. It's so natural for us in all of the spheres of relationships that we're in.

[22:44] And James is saying, this is everywhere in your life. All of your relationships are going to be this way. Your marriage is going to have conflict. You're going to have to learn to work through conflict.

Your relationship between parents and children is going to have conflict. You're going to need to learn to deal with the conflict. In the church, you are going to have conflict. And the only hope for you to have peace in your home, with your kids, with your families, in your relationship, in your church, is to have the Prince of Peace be the ruler of your heart.

It is a heart issue. All of our conflict comes down to heart issues. And it's in every New Testament church. You look at all through the New Testament, all these letters are emerging because of conflict.

And it's a response to what's going on in the church. First Corinthians three. Paul writes this church. He's like, you guys are still in the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

How are you going to get out of a human way except to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide you to change your character, to affect your inner man in such a way that it affects those relationships?

[24:09] Second Corinthians, he writes them again and it hasn't gone away. He said, for I fear that perhaps, second Corinthians 12, 20, for I fear that perhaps when I came, when I come, I may find you not as I wish, but that you may find me not as you wish, that perhaps there may still be some quarreling and jealousy and anger and hostility and slander and gossip.

And conceit and disorder among you. And when he says disorder, this isn't talking about like chaos or confusion. Disorder here means like insurrection, uprising.

Disorder. The Galatian church, no different. He said, if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. It's going to affect the whole church if you don't learn to rely on the Lord for the strength to deal with conflict and all these fears.

Titus chapter three reminds Titus, a young pastor. Guess what? Pastor, do you think all these people are going to get along in your church? Boy, are you mistaken.

And he says to Titus in chapter three, verse nine, so as for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, is self-condemned.

[25:33] it's characteristic of every church, all of our relationships. It's something that we have to deal with and Christ is the only answer.

Jesus said in Matthew 12, 25, every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

Not going to stand. So how are you going to find peace in this? Well, Christ, the prince of peace has to be the center. You're, you've been commanded as a believer in Christ Jesus to look for ways to make peace.

As Paul told the Philippians in Philippians two, verse three, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourself.

Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but to the interest of others. How are you going to do that? He says, have this mind in you among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality a thing to be grasped.

[26:39] You've got to take the mind of Christ, the prince of peace. That's how you make peace in relationships, in the church and in your marriage. You've got to look for ways to make peace in the power of Christ.

You've got to pursue peace according to Romans 14. He said to them, so let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Am I looking for peace?

Am I pursuing peace? Because I've got Christ in my heart. Am I going to fight for peace? And here's probably the most interesting phrase in scripture.

This is to talk about an irony. Hebrews 12, 14. The author of Hebrews says, strive for peace with everyone. Isn't that an interesting phrase?

Fight for peace. You're going to be fighting. Just don't fight with each other. Fight for each other. You're to fight for the peace of your marriage.

[27:38] You're to fight for the peace of your friendships. You're to fight for the peace of the body. The assemblies that you're in. Brothers, you who are filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Those who have the Holy Spirit living inside of them. You are to pursue God in such a way that it affects the relationships of the church. The Prince of Peace has to reign in this place.

And that's why, as a body of believers, we have a church covenant. When we become a member, we're saying, I'm covenanting together to do something. I want to worship the Lord.

This isn't like something that we found in scripture that says, you guys need to covenant together. No, but it's characteristics of what we should be as a church. And we're saying, if I'm going to be a part of the body of Christ, I'm going to committed to this.

I'm going to do this for the Lord, for the glory of God. And we say it this way. Our church covenant says, we will work and pray for the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

[28:40] We will walk together in brotherly love as becomes the members of a Christian church exercising and affectionate care and watchfulness over each other.

What beauty, right? That's just the sum of what God's called us to be in the power of the Holy Spirit because of Christ in me. I can affect my relationships.

Be changed. Now, this is progressive. It starts in the conflict among you, and then he brings it down to the conflict within you because that conflict is not unrelated to the conflict of your heart.

Notice what he says. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this? That your passions are at war within you?

So among you, you can underline that. Within you, you can underline that. And here he's given scope and progression. It is a fight among you, but it has a whole lot to do with the fight within you.

[29:58] And all of you, and all of us. It shifts to these internal things. It's the ultimate cause. Is it not this? And he's identifying this, this root cause.

Is it not your pleasures? When he says, is it not? This is a rhetorical phrase that he's using to say, that's, that's expecting the hearer to say, is it not this?

And the hearer is going to go, amen. Is it not this? And you're going to hear it go, come on preacher. Amen. Is it not?

Of course it is. That's, that's how this phrase works. And he says, is it not this? The conflicts that you're seeing externally among you. Is it not this? The passions within you, the pleasures within you.

And you say, well, that's somebody else. That's not me. Right? Wrong. That's you. It's me.

Pleasures at work. And that word there is, is the word hedone, which is where we get hedonism.

[31:07] It's, it's the ultimate goal of pleasure. That's how our culture lives. Ultimate goal is pleasure. What's good. What makes me feel better. What, what's pleasurable. What's enjoyable. Anything else I don't want to be a part of. Oh, I never go to funerals. I never go to funerals because I don't like being sad because this is part of our hedonistic culture.

It's difficult to go to those things when, although the scripture says it is good to go to the house of mirth. It's something in Solomon's wisdom. Solomon says, you know what? There's actually something good about going to those moments. Pleasure isn't the goal of your life. The glory of God is the goal of your life.

If the glory of you is the goal of your life, then pleasure is the ultimate thing. And hedonism is the answer. You are to pursue pleasure and what, what makes you feel good about everything.

[32:06] Is it not your pleasures? And what does he say? They're at war within you. They're, they're waging war inside of you right now.

Your pleasures are combating each other. Sometimes evil pleasures combating each other, but sometimes evil pleasures against good, against what's right, against what God calls you to against the good things that God wants you to do.

And the pleasures are warring against those ultimately good things. Is it not this? J.I. Packer is a great Bible teacher from time past.

And somebody was commenting on it, on what he said about this. And I thought, man, that, I just want to share the excerpt. He said, it said, Dr. J.I. Packer, well-known author and teacher, was sitting with friends in a restaurant looking at the dessert menu.

So when a theologian looks at a dessert menu, this is what goes on, right? The item that caught his eye was the description of chocolate, chocolate cake.

[33:13] Layers of fudge and decadence, it said. A must for chocolate lovers, it said. How Packer asks, does a word like, how Packer asks, does a word like decadence go on a dessert menu?

Surely it belongs in the word of sociology, morality, philosophy, theology, and history, rather than on cake and fudge. Yes, yet it is easy to see why the menu writer brought it in.

He wants his patrons to know that the taste of this chocolate cake will set them ecstatically indulging with no thought of long-term consequences. The theology of chocolate cake.

No thought of long-term consequences like bulging bellies, clothing that no longer fits, shortness of breath, etc. Irresponsibility about consequences, Packer concluded, is certainly the mark of decadence.

Dr. Packer's menu writer is encouraging those of us who are chocoholics to see our self-indulgence as right and proper on the ground that sweetness, however sinful, should never be passed up.

[34:24] This, says Packer, is the playboy philosophy applied to the taste buds. It is the philosophy of this world which says that pleasure-seeking is the only wise way self-indulgence is a must.

All of our energy is to be given to the worship of the three gods of pleasure, profit, and power. The theological look. That chocolate cake. Right? This is what James is saying.

It's at war within you. Your pleasures, your passions are in constant battle within you to do what's not good for you, what's not right for you. And yet it's decadence, no thought of consequences that draws you in, that tempts you.

And it's waging war. It is the word here, strategomai, which is to make strategy. It's a strategy against you. So that your passions are at war and fighting you against what's good.

And you're overlooking it, only looking at the external conflicts in your life. Your marriage, your friendships, your church, your work relationships, etc. And not realizing that the strategy of Satan is the attack on your heart.

[35:34] The battle was lost in your heart. It happens when you think maybe that's somebody else, but it's you.

It happens when your needs go unmet. And you perceive that your needs have been unmet. Notice what he says. You desire and you do not have.

My needs aren't being met here. It happens in a marriage relationship. It happens in friendships. It happens in church relationships. It's everywhere. But it's this perception internally that you sense your needs not being met.

And this is where the battle is going on. And you don't realize it. James is saying it's not just among you. It's within you. It's a progression. Look at those outside things. You do need to deal with them. But just know that the root of this and the heart of this is in your heart. Your desires are unmet. Your desires are unchecked.

[36:38] He said you covet and you cannot have. You're coveting things that aren't yours. You're coveting somebody else's wife. You're coveting somebody else's car, their house, their life, their status, their relationships with people.

Whatever it is, you're coveting all kinds of things. And that needs not met. But this is a passion that's unchecked, not just unmet. Those passions have to be checked.

And the end of this is frustration for you. Hostility. That's what James is saying. You want peace in your life?

You've got to realize that this conflict in your life is not just in your relationships. It's in your heart. You end up reactionary. You're fighting, he said. You're quarreling. You're spending on your pleasures.

Your life is really, at the heart of it, a very self-centered thing that you're maintaining if you're not careful and if Christ is not reigning on your heart. If you're reigning on your heart, then it's all about you.

[37:44] It's all about your needs. It's all about needs unmet and unchecked. It's like the man that was stranded on the desert island. And people came after years of him being there.

They finally found him. And he took people on a tour to show them the island and how he lived and everything. And when they came, they were amazed because of all the buildings that he built on this island by itself.

And as they go, he showed them one place. They're like, well, what's this place? And he said, well, that's the home where I live. That's the one I started with. I built that house. I lived there. I slept there.

A lot of memories in that place. Well, what's this building? He said, well, that was the barn that I built. And that's where I stored everything. I started storing fruit and vegetables and wood and all kinds of things.

I stored things there. It was a good way to keep those things over time. A lot of great memories there. What about this place? Well, that was my work shed. It was a place where I did all the work and all the labor, staying out of the hot sun.

[38:44] And I would work in there all day long until sundown. Oh, man, what great memories in there. He said, well, what's this place? He said, well, that was the church I built.

Church. I built a church. And that's where I worshiped. Every Sunday I'd go in there, I'd worship. But every morning I'd have a chapel in there, praying to God that one day I'd be rescued, just watching God just do miracle after miracle to provide for me.

It was so awesome. Man, that's great. Well, what's this building? He said, that's another church. Another church. Man, you must be a religious man.

You built two churches to worship the Lord. He said, no. He said, actually, the first church that made me mad, and I left. It's a joke, guys.

He left. He's the only one on the island. I've got to explain the joke. It's not funny. I mean, at heart, you may be thinking that the problem is somebody else, when really the actuality is you might be the problem.

[39:51] If all your relationships keep crumbling, and all your relationships end in disaster, and one right after the other, and you're like, all these people, the whole world's out to get me. The whole world's messed up. Everybody else is a jerk, and I'm not.

Maybe it's you. We say somebody's just a kid at heart, and it's so true of all of us, but we're in a different way.

We're all childish at heart. It's what we see in our kids. We have to teach our kids, train our kids to do what's right.

We've got to train our soul to do what's right. This idea of free-range parenting today is madness. I'm just going to let my kids run and figure it out and do what's right.

You ever do free-range chickens? You know what happens to chickens? They get eaten. They get eaten by me, or they get eaten by somebody else, but they're going to get eaten.

[40:51] The dog's going to get them. The coyote's going to get them. The fox is going to get them. Somebody's going to get them. You can free-range your kids all you want, but the reality is somebody's going to eat those kids. And the same is true of your soul.

James is saying this is the internal issue for you that you're submitting your soul to God. Your heart has to be constantly brought into the presence of God, which is the ultimate conflict that he gets to here.

It's the conflict with God. Your soul is looking for its needs to be met everywhere except in Christ. Only Christ ultimately meets all your needs.

Only Christ. Your spouse is never going to do that for you ultimately. Never. Your kids are never going to be that for you.

Your job is never going to be that for you. Your relationships in the church are never going to be that for you. Only Christ is going to be that for you. And if Christ reigns in your heart, and as you submit your heart to him, he's going to affect your heart.

[42:02] He's going to affect your anxieties. He's going to affect the issues of your internal man and the external relationships among you. That's the beauty of it.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these things will be added to you. Christ must reign in my heart.

This may be a two-part message. Colossians 3. Paul said it so clearly, which would summarize this whole section.

He said, Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

And in that, notice how he said that, to which you personally, internally, you were called into one body, internally and among you.

[43:11] And you are in this to let the peace of Christ rule, not just in the body, but in your heart. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, which means, Jesus needs to be the referee.

He's the referee of my heart. Let him rule like a judge in an athletic game. This picture is of Jesus on the line and saying, It's out.

It's in. It's good. It's not good. It's a good serve. It's not a good serve. It's a point. It's not a point. Jesus rules.

And you and I are to let him rule in our hearts, so that the issues and affairs of our heart don't get so tangled in the warfare that's going on, so that I look at that warfare in my heart and say, My desires either are going to be pleasing Jesus, or I'm going to be pleasing myself.

Which is it, Lord? Rule. Make the call. Is this just about me? Is this just about my needs not being met?

[44:24] Is this just about my needs being unchecked? Or am I going to die to self and live like Christ?

C.S. Lewis said, To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.

This is hard, he said. It is perhaps not so hard to forgive a single great injury, but to forgive the incessant provocations of daily life.

To keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son. How can we do it?

Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words, when we say it in our prayers each night, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

[45:39] or as Augustine said, it's difficult to be in conflict with others when you're sincerely praying for them.

It's an external and it's an internal. I'll stop with that. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning and there are so often conflicts in our life that are just let run wild.

Conflicts unresolved, needs unchecked, needs not being met in you. The response is to pray and to seek you, and yet, even in that, Lord, we fail because we're just praying for things to spend on our pleasure.

Our heart is the problem. This morning, Lord, as we come before you, our prayer is that you would reign. That you'd reign in us.

That you'd rule in our hearts and that you, sitting on the judgment seat of our heart, that you would, that we would come to you in submission. And even as, as the author says here, that we'd draw near to God.

[47:11] That we'd humble ourselves. Grieve over our sin. Allow you to come in and change us and make us new. And apart from that supernatural work, we'll live in a state of war.

Our soul will never be at peace until it's at peace with you. So we come here this morning, Lord, and in this invitation time, I just want to allow enough time for us to do business with you.

We need you. There are marriages in this room. It needs you.

It needs you so desperately, God. They need you. They need you to break in and clear the clouds that Satan has brought in that relationship and bring healing and unity like they've never known.

They need you today. And unless you are on the throne of each heart, it won't happen. And so, God, I'm praying today that there would be breakthrough in hearts.

[48:31] Reconciliation. Reconciliation. There are people that are friends in this room who probably don't speak to each other. Things have crept in.

Maybe seen differences. Don't know how to reconcile them. Let it fester. Needs weren't met. Needs weren't checked.

There's war. And Lord, I know it's a war of the heart. We pray today that there would be peace. We pray that there would be reconciliation.

As much as it depends on us to be at peace with all men, you said, Lord, help us. God, if you don't help, we can't do it. There are people that have been estranged from us for years.

Parents. we haven't talked to years. Kids. We haven't talked to. Lord, as much as depends on us, let us be at peace with all men.

[49:44] May Christ rule in our hearts. Let the battle be won here, Lord. There are people struggling this morning, separated from you, God, because of sin in their life.

They need peace. That means turning from sin and surrendering to you. God, I just pray that battle within the heart would be won.

I pray, Lord, that right now, right here at the foot of Jesus, they dump those things out and say, God, forgive me. I've been separated from you.

I've been harboring this, my heart, this bitterness, this anger, this rage, this lust, this whatever it is. God, I'm pouring it at your feet today and I'm asking to be reconciled to you.

I want peace. I want peace in every part of my life. Let it start on the throne of my heart right now. Let me be right.

[50:48] God, I just pray that as you do that that you would just bring renewal and bring a spirit among us of peace that just is contagious, that we would just sense your presence among us, that there are no hindrances, that there's nothing stopping us from growing together side by side for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we would move forward in growth and integrity and strength in relationships that are just beautiful to the glory of Jesus.

And it's in His name we pray. Amen. Amen.