

Struggle Against the World

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[0 : 00] That was a great song to sing right before this sermon. We're going to continue with James today. Our scripture for this morning is James 4, verses 1-10.

So if you want to turn there, that would be a good thing to do. James 4, 1-13. It says 15 up there, or 13, whatever that is. I actually thought I was going through a lot longer piece, and I'm going, as I'm writing this thing, I'm going, I'm never going to get to the end of this passage.

We're just going to have to skip something. And then when I got it all finished, I put it away, and I thought, I may need to rewrite that. I think I went too far. And then I looked it up, and sure enough, I hit it right on the nail, right head.

So that's actually 10, not 13. I didn't change the slide. All right, it's a continuation of what Mark preached last week, and we're going to pick up with some of the questions that he brought up last week, and then we're going to bring it forward.

And it doesn't stop there. Next week and the week after that, I mean, it goes through chapter 4 into chapter 5, the very same discussion, just different aspects of the same thing. Today's section deals directly with that stuff, and is the motivation for some of the problems we have as Christians.

[1 : 15] So let's read it, and then we'll start discussing it. So starting in verse 1. Where do conflicts and where do quarrels among you come from? That's a good question, isn't it?

Is it not from this, your passions that battle inside you? You desire and you do not have. You murder and envy and cannot obtain. You quarrel and fight.

You do not have because you do not ask. And you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions. Adulterers.

By the way, that word is actually adulterers, says female. Probably referring to the church. Like Israel was a bride. But adulterers.

Do you not know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? So whoever decides to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy. Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says the spirit that God caused to live within us has an envious yearning?

[2 : 18] But he gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. So submit yourself to God. But 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 make your hearts pure, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and weep.

Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into despair. Humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you. Now James had asked earlier when Mark was preaching the question back up in verse 13.

Well, 12-13 there. Who is wise? Next slide, by the way. Mark and I are trying to figure this one out. Who is wise and understanding among you?

That's a good question. Who is wise and understanding among you? Don't look at me. And the answer comes in the next statement, next slide.

[3 : 14] And it says, By his good conduct, he should show his works done in the gentleness that wisdom brings. You want to know who's wise? Look at the works of the people who are doing them and see, are they gentle?

Is it the kind of thing that wisdom from God would bring? That's the question. And then James asked the question, in a slide, and so it's like this, Where do conflicts and where do quarrels among you come from?

It's really sort of an extension of the same question we had first. There's two questions in this, and both of them are the same idea, part of the same idea. James is concerned with Christian conduct.

How do we behave? How do we live amongst, and particularly he's concerned about, how we live amongst our Christian brethren in the body.

He's telling us that we reveal our relationship to God, whether it's close and strong, by our outward relationships with other believers.

[4 : 26] Are they caring and loving, or are they envious and gossipy and snippy? Now think about that. That's pretty strong.

Next slide. John, by the way, I appreciated Mark doing this. He went to John. Well, it turns out that John has a lot to say about this very same topic. In 1 John 3, it says, by this children, by this children of God and the children of the devil are revealed.

Opposites. Children of God, children of the devil. Revealed. Well, how are they revealed? Everyone who does not practice righteousness, the one who does not love his fellow Christian, is not of God. Well, he gave us the negative part, didn't he? He says, if you don't practice righteousness, you're not of God. Well, he tells us, you notice, he pauses there, he says, does not practice righteousness, dash, sort of an insert, how does he define righteousness?

Or the practice of righteousness? The one who does not love his fellow Christians is unrighteous. You get that? Our love of our fellow believers shows forth our righteousness.

[5 : 43] Unrighteousness. If we don't love one another, then we're showing forth our unrighteousness. And also, Jesus said, you can tell by the fruit who the father is, right?

At one point, someone was challenged, he says, you know, those that practice unrighteousness, their father is the father of lies, which is Satan. Those that practice righteousness are children of God, and he's their father.

It's the same idea here. Later on, John says this, therefore, do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians.

How do you know you've crossed from death to life? How many of you have ever asked that? Am I really saved? I've asked that question. I'm 76 years old. I still ask that question sometimes.

How can you know? John says it's real easy. We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. Everyone who hates this fellow Christian is a murderer.

[6 : 52] Did James not say the same thing? You murder, you envy and murder and don't get? Here John says, everyone who hates this fellow Christian is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

We have come to know love by this, that Jesus laid down his life for us, thus we ought to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians. But whoever has the world's possession and sees his fellow Christian in need and shuts off his compassion against them, how can the love of God reside in such a person?

And again, John tells us what it is to lay down your life. Now, I think it could literally be that. It is a possibility that in some places that happens. Someone has to be, put their lives in danger so that others can live.

Because of faith. But here he says, you lay down your lives for your fellow Christians. How? By sharing your worldly possessions when you see somebody, one of your brothers and sisters in Christ, in need.

That's quite a different output. Look at the next one. It says, little children, let us love, not love with word and with tongue, but in deed and truth.

[8 : 18] See, John and James agree. It's our behavior, especially our behavior toward one another, that shows forth our relationship with God. both connect behavior, possessions, and love to show our spiritual situation.

In fact, that's exactly what James is doing when he says in, next slide, in that passage where do conflicts and where do quarrels among you come from?

They're the natural result of our spiritual condition. They're the natural result. of our spiritual condition. They show forth where we stand in our relationship with the Lord and our relationship to the world.

And that's our problem. It's our natural condition. The unsaved, the unregenerated man, the person who lives, that's the natural person?

You're unsaved and you're unregenerated. What do you live for? Yourself. What do you pursue? Things for yourself. Who's, it brings me back to that, we were reading, I was reading something that

was talking about Babel.

[9 : 40] What did the people when they gathered at Babel, what did they want to do? They wanted to build a tower. Why? To reach the heavens. Why? To make a name for themselves.

To make a name for themselves. See, they wanted to exalt themselves up and take the place of God. We do the same thing. We build our own little empires.

Our own little towers, if you want to say that. Why? So that people will look at us and say, look at him. Look at her. Make a name for themselves.

I'm well respected in the community. Look at me. Look what I've done. Yeah, you all need to give me adulation. Boy, because I'm so good. Look at me. That's what we want.

However you want to do it. Work, or academics, or art, performance, charity, good works, I mean, you name it. That's often, that's what the regenerated, the unsafe person in particular does.

[10 : 41] Unfortunately, that's what Christians do too sometimes, according to James, for sure. See, that person and us and our natural condition live in harmony with the world, not with God.

They're the ones, and we are the ones then in that case that are pursuing worldly goals and worldly things and live in contradiction to Christ. Christ. We are to die to this world and be made alive in Christ to the next.

Or another way of saying this, we seek a new city, Mount Zion, according to Hebrews, the city of the living God. That's what we should be seeking, and that's not here. We're supposed to forsake the city of this world, which Revelation calls Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of detestable things on the earth.

Now, I just see it now. The travel brochure. I have two. You go to the travel agent. I'd like to go visit a really nice city. Okay, well, I got two choices. The city of God, Mount Zion, but you'll have to wait a long time maybe or die to get there, but you know, it is the ultimate destination.

Now, if you're in a hurry, you can go to this one, Babylon the Great. Only problem is it's the home of prostitutes and every detestable thing you can think of. Ooh, that sounds like fun. And that's the one we choose too often.

[12 : 17] We have presented our bodies as living sacrifice, Romans 12. And we have escaped the rebellion in the sin of this world.

We are to reside in Christ in the city of God. Therefore, we have to appeal this, must heed the appeal, excuse me, of Scripture, like Paul wrote in 12.1.

Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may test and approve what the will of God, that what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.

Do not be conformed to this, by the way, that's a passive statement. That is not a command in the original Greek. That's a passive. Don't let yourself be conformed is what he's really saying.

You know what that means? It happens naturally. It just happens. It isn't necessarily a conscious decision. It just happens.

[13 : 23] I'll give you just a couple examples. Maybe it'll, I'd like to have a truck. Every time I go buy a truck, I go, a while back it was even worse. Every time I went buy a truck, they got a truck, why don't I have a truck?

Even that old man has a truck. It may be a clunker, but he has a truck, I don't have a truck. It is. I don't need a fancy truck.

I just need a truck. Where was my heart? I was in Babylon the Great seeking a despicable thing that I don't need a truck. My wife will tell me very pointedly, I don't need a truck.

Amen. Amen. But you have a motorcycle. I do have a motorcycle and she has made a bet. She said, if you get rid of the motorcycle, you can have a truck.

Guess we're still parking in my garage. You know, why do I want a truck? Well, it's just something that plays in my mind and it just sort of happens and it happens all the time.

[14 : 27] It's not something that I actually thought out and said, you know, prayerfully, God would like to have me have a truck because I'm going to need a truck. If you ask that question, what are you going to use it for?

Well, I'll haul things. Yahoo. When was the last time you hauled anything, right? I'd just like to have a truck. That's, the natural man in me wants a vehicle that looks manly, I guess.

I don't know. It's passive. We go shopping and we see something and go, ooh, I need that. Do you really need it? Well, James says, you desire it.

It's a passion, but the word passion there is really desire. You desire it. And so, you know, and then John would tell you that, and we're going to get to that verse, but he's going to tell you that the things you see and the things you, you know, those things start to play on you until you give in to them.

So we're not supposed to be conformed to this present world. Well, how do we know if we are so conformed? By our conduct and by our pursuits. And I would also say, given what we've heard from James and John, by our lack of love for our brothers and sisters in Christ as displayed by how we meet or don't meet their needs when they have them.

[15 : 49] Let's go back to James. Next slide. He says in verse 1, Is it not from this your passions or desires that battle inside you?

You desire and do not have. You murder and envy and cannot obtain. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly so you can spend it on your passions or your desires.

That all boils down to self-centeredness. The source of our conflict is that we're seeking not God's kingdom but we're seeking to make a name for ourselves.

Building our own kingdom. Pursuing our own desires and our own passions. Living in the flesh by the flesh. Open to and accepting the values of this world which is Satan's kingdom and is perishing. It's passing away. Everything you value in this world that isn't God's is gone in a flash one day.

Think about that.

[17 : 04] And James strongly warns us adulterers do you not know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God?

when you accept the values of the world and you pursue the goals of the world and you look for the possessions of the world to make you have a better life just for your own sake you're pursuing the world.

You've made friends with the world. Why? You have to. That's the only way you go to a bank they're not going to loan you money to go be friends with God. But you say you know I really want to be a friend with the world and I just need you to give me money so I can and you fill in the blank you know go sign right here we'll be glad to get it to you.

Friendship with the world is enmity toward God. And every time you compromise whether it be passively or actively you are making yourself an enemy of God.

John says it this way do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him because all that is in the world and here they are the desire of the flesh same word his passions and James the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions is not from the Father but from the world and the world is passing away with all its desires but the person who does the will of God remains forever.

[18 : 53] Do you get it? Because we're all by birth children of Adam which makes us children of the fall we have a sin nature one that's exploited and tempted by Satan who is the ruler of this world but that same sin nature that old man that flesh has died when we came to Christ in faith and found new life we are born again by the Spirit from above and behold all things are new all the old has passed away yet the old sin nature still lures us still sort of hangs in there follows us like a ghost you know it hangs it's right there always there and it lures us into passively accepting the ways of the world the goals and the pursuits of the world of the very world that's passing away and when we set our heart or our minds or our efforts into seeking riches or comforts of this world without even giving it much thought as to where our hearts are being led we are like sheep following that which the perishing seek and doing what the unredeemed do valuing the rotten and fading things of this life now Jesus said that the wealth of this world is what?

Corrupting things that rot and decay he says seek treasure that doesn't rot or decay that's kept for you by the way in the new city that we're all going to the new Jerusalem Mount Zion well here's the problem often we go like this we think that all is well with us in our relationship with God there hasn't been any big disasters in our lives there hasn't been any big issues that we haven't been able to deal with there hasn't been any big catastrophes everything seems to be going well and we say it is well with my soul now the question is it well with your soul because you're out of trouble and not having difficulties or is it well with your soul because you've drawn nigh to the throne of God that's a good question and all too often I know in my experience I feel well with my soul when everything's going okay whether I'm close or far away from the

Lord it has little to do with it I can look around and go wow everything's going great now what I should be saying is watch out because you're about to step in but hey we don't do that do we we say I've have faith I've accepted Christ but our lives scream otherwise our love is for the desires of our hearts but what do we really value in our hearts that's a good question is it Christ or selfish desires things things that are perishing in temporary positions influence comfort money treasures of this dying world rather than setting our eyes on the heavenly sitting and running the good race how can we determine where our hearts are James says the best way to do that is to look at how you treat your fellow Christians your brother and sisters in the faith next slide James says this therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble submit to God but resist the devil and he will flee from you you know he's about the third person that said that in one form or another Peter says that John says that James says that must be true draw near to God and he will draw near to you cleanse your hands you sinner and make your hearts pure you double minded this is the second time he's used that word double minded the first time was back when in the first part of the book grieve mourn weep turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into despair humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you it's too much here do you notice how do you get near God does he draw near you or do you draw near him what's James say you draw near him and he will draw near you in other words he's waiting for you to come up you've got to take the first step you've got to draw go to the throne and say here I am he says

I've been waiting for you what's kept you see it's our pride our self centeredness our pursuit of self fulfillment that leads us away into the world we're double minded we try to be you know where double minded comes from it's a picture of the god Janus what do we know about Janus two sides he had two faces one facing this way one facing this way he could see coming and going forward and back unfortunately we humans can only see one direction so our head is either turned this way or it's turned this way it works spiritually too you know as Christians we're supposed to be looking what at Christ we're supposed to be looking at Christ but we can't look at the Christ if we're looking at the world and the world says come this way I got this and I got I got a truck for you you can have it and I'm going but I want to look at Christ but that truck sure is neat you see the problem we're double minded we're double minded here's the good news but God gives grace to the humble in fact earlier

[25 : 07] James said God's grace is greater talking about all the trouble we have trying to live the life and we sin and we fall apart and we look the wrong way and we pursue the wrong things but God's grace is greater how do you encounter that grace well some of that grace you encounter every day so far he's kept me from buying a truck probably through a faithful wife God's grace is greater often I don't describe grace to her but hey that's that's true we don't even know the things we avoid because God's grace is greater but he also says God grace is for the humble and he tells you you should humble yourself clean your hands confess your sins make your hearts pure purify take out the stuff that doesn't belong there the pursuit of the say Lord

I don't really need that stuff help my heart turn from that and let me focus on where you're leading me and what you have for me to do and to be now James is given to some really strong words memory called us murderers and all that stuff he says here grieve mourn and weep that's a sign of repentance you should be so aggrieved by your behavior when you turn away from Christ try to turn to the world and live that way you should just go oh my goodness how could I have done that do I not know who God is do I not know what he has done for me I should be grieving and mourning that I turn from the only source of life and fulfillment for what things that are passing away humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you draw near him and draw near you seek God with all your heart with all your strength and with all your mind and he will draw near you have you ever wanted to know what he said what's the greatest commandment seek the

Lord your God with all your heart with all your strength with all your mind that's what it means it means you get down and you draw near him and you forsake everything in this world why because this world is perishing there is not a single thing in this world you're going to take with you you're not even taking your body you're going to take your soul God's going to give you a new body I don't know how it's going to work but he's going to give you a new house too now I mean King James said it's a mansion I don't think it's going to be a mansion I'm settling for a log cabin on the hillside but hey it could be a hut I don't care as long as I'm there I want my toes in the soil of the new earth seek first the kingdom of God and all you need will be added to you you notice that seek the kingdom of God and all that you need will be added to you if it's not added to you do you need it no

well

God hadn't given me a truck I haven't got a knock on the door yet and he said I have a truck out here you want it so I don't guess I need it your life will be truly rich and truly satisfying with the fullness of God's provision and grace now James is going to go on and tell us how to avoid acting as those who belong to the world he's going to use more strong words in verses 11 through 17 that's yours right the next two verses that's right then after that you're going to get chapter 5 he's going to say don't speak against one another don't judge one another don't get caught up in the world's business and profit motive don't become arrogant don't become boastful don't rely on riches or money they're all hard words you know I think James is one of the least read books why because if we actually read it honestly it'd be the most convicting book we could read about our conduct but the words were written to warn us and to encourage us to turn and seek God first knowing that everything of real value is found only in him his kingdom will endure this world is passing away let's pray

Lord we don't like to talk about this because we don't like to examine our hearts and really examine our desires and where they're coming from I know you give us desires some of them are for things I know and you haven't forbidden us to have things there's nothing wrong with possessions as long as they don't rule us help us Lord to before you with the power of your spirit working in us to discern the truth about our desires and our passions that we wouldn't allow them to interfere with our coming near you and seeking the kingdom the heavenly city the new earth fellowship with our believers the church Lord help us to allow you to examine us and to lay bare our lives and then to accept the results of that examination and allow you to change things we thank you

[30 : 40] Lord for your goodness to us we thank you for the grace that we don't even perceive sometimes we love you Lord even though we sometimes forget that you are worthy in Jesus name amen amen amen amen Thank you.