

Resolving Conflict By Unmasking Our Desires

Epistle of James
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 4. The fourth chapter of James. We are going to be focusing in particularly on verse 4 this morning of the fourth chapter.

We've seen that in the large context of James, this epistle, that in particular the last couple of chapters, he's really been dealing with the issue of conflict in the body of Christ and his concern is pastoral concern. James writes as a pastor to largely Jewish believers for whom he feels a particular burden as the leader of the church in Jerusalem, to shepherd them, and he writes concerning the fact that there are conflicts. Chapter 3, verses 1 to 12, he dealt with the sin of the tongue and the danger that the tongue can bring to our relationships, the great damage that we can do with our words. Then in verses 13 to 18 of chapter 3, he dealt with the importance of our attitudes; that not only do we need to watch our tongue, we need to watch our attitudes and the attitudes that we have can bring great damage and do great harm to others. Then in chapter 4, he gets even deeper into the issue. He goes from the tongue, to the attitude, now to the heart and the desires of the heart, and showing us that conflict, truly the origin of our conflicts is our heart, not the circumstances around us, not the people in our lives. That's not why we get angry and have outbursts. We hurt others, we do damage because of the sin in our own hearts, and he's concerned to show us that and to help us to deal with that. We saw last week, the title of our message last week, not today, last week, was "Resolving Conflict By Waging War"; that what we have to do to resolve conflict is realize we have to wage war on our own hearts. We've got to stop warring with others and we do that easily and naturally according to our old nature, let's stop doing that and the only way you can stop doing that is by waging war on your own heart.

Well, today we're going to look at the next part of what James does as he helps us and the title of the message this morning is "Resolving Conflict By Unmasking Our Desires." Resolving conflict by unmasking our desires, you might say our inordinate desires. He wants us to see them for what they really are, to take the mask off. Our problem is we tend to minimize our sin, something endemic and just indigenous to fallen humanity. We have a low view of sin. We don't think that sin is that big a deal and the world system says that. It justifies sin continually, you know, so we are surrounded by messages that are continually telling us our sin is not that big a deal. Our own pride minimizes our sin,

blames others. And the devil himself is wanting to lie to us continually to minimize our sin.

So we find it very easy to have a low view of sin and James wants us to have a much higher view of sin and he wants us to see it for what it really is, the desires that we have that are inordinate. Remember we talked about our problem isn't so much that, it's not just that we desire the wrong things. It is that, that is part of our problem. It's certainly part of our problem as redeemed believers, those who have been born again and bought with the blood of Christ, we still have this old nature and part of our problem is that we desire things we shouldn't desire and we need to kill those desires. But we saw last time that it's not just desires for bad things, that's not only our problem, that's part of our problem, but another large part of our problem is not just that we desire bad things, we desire good things too much. We want good things more than we should. We want them so much that we want them more than we want to be pleasing to God, than we want God himself.

So those are inordinate desires, is the idea. It's a desire that is out of order and out of balance. This is one of our great problems. We can want good things too much. You can want wonderful things too much. You know, I want my spouse to be faithful. I want my children to love the Lord. I want, and you could put behind that many noble things and there's nothing wrong with desiring them, but the problem is when it becomes a demand or an inordinate desire; when you're looking to that and you're trusting in that reality. If your spouse's faithfulness is what you're banking your hope on, that is not appropriate and James is going to unmask that and show it for what it is. We tend to, "It's reasonable for me to want that." It's reasonable to desire that, it's not reasonable to worship that and that's what James wants to show us. To raise our view of sin so that we'll hate it more. This is kind of, this verse is really motivating us to see it for what it is so that we'll take up arms in the battle against these desires.

In his book, "The Mortification of Sin," John Owen said this, he said, "For the Christian, we must kill sin." He said, "Kill sin or sin will be killing you." Whenever you're not killing sin, sin is killing you. Whenever you're not putting to death the desires, inordinate desires, inappropriate desires, when you're not putting them to death, they are trying to put you to death. That's what we talked about last time. You have to declare war. We're at war. If you're a Christian, you are at war. If you've been born again, you are at war. The war is within you. You can't take a siesta. "I'd just like to take some time off. I don't want to have this battle anymore." I understand that. I feel the same way but there is no opportunity for stopping, for laying down your arms. We have to fight. Kill sin or sin will be killing you.

Let's look at James 4. We're going to focus on verse 4 but I'm going to read verses 1 to 10 just to see it in its context, and I'm going to read in place of "quarrels," I'm reading the New American Standard Bible, I'm going to read "wars and battles." As I said, that's a way to translate these words in verses 1 and 2.

1 What is the source of wars and battles among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not

have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you battle and you make war. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that you might now cause your word to become alive in our minds and in our hearts, that it might search us, that it might divide to joint and marrow, soul and spirit, it might be the discerner of the thoughts and intentions of our hearts that you might lead us to more full repentance and more joyful faith in a glorious Savior. We pray in his name. Amen.

Resolving conflict by unmasking our desires. James is concerned that we tend to be complacent with our sin. We tend to be apathetic at times. We say things like, "Yes, I realize I have an anger problem. Pray for me." That's appropriate to ask for prayer but we can take that far too lightly. Or, "I have a problem with sexual lust but doesn't every man?" We just cast it off. You know, it's not a big deal or it's not as big a deal as it needs to be and James has a way of speaking so forthrightly and so clearly. Again, it's like he takes out the 2 x 4 and he just hits us upside the head to wake us up out of our stupor because we do tend to minimize our sin.

We can blow up in anger and then say, "Will you please forgive me?" and then be a little frustrated with our spouse or the person we blew up, because they're not so quickly forthcoming in forgiveness. "Hey, you're supposed to forgive me. Let me show you in the Bible where it says this." Well, they are supposed to forgive us. Yes, but so often what's happened is we really haven't come to understand the magnitude of our sin. We haven't even really dealt with, "What's going on inside of me? What did I just do?"

James wants us to see it more clearly. He wants us to take the mask off of our inordinate desires, and what we're going to see, two things he tells us in verse 4, two ways that we should see these desires. We talked about last week, I shared the story of Ken Sande in his book, "The Peacemaker." Remember when he's driving his kids to church and he's had a tough week at home, the kids have been, you know, just kind of one of those times where they are always arguing, always arguing, and he comes home and they're that way

Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, and then finally on Sunday morning, they're driving to church and they're arguing over who is going to be in the front seat and he loses it. And we can see that and we think, "Well, it was certainly wrong for you to yell at your children." We would agree if we had been there, "Hey, Ken, lighten up. I know that they've been bad but you don't need to be yelling like that." But the real answer to getting to the problem is not just to look at the outward expression, the fruit that comes out. It's ugly, yes. The issue is to get to the root and see the ugliness of the root.

James wants to unearth the root causes and show them for what they are. He's talking about these desires and we saw that Ken Sande was sharing that his desire, he wanted comfort, he wanted peace and quiet. Those were reasonable things to desire. He wasn't desiring something bad. Peace and quiet, there's nothing bad about that. It's good. I mean, God is a God of order, not confusion. Peace, harmony, shalom, an important word in the Old Testament. So it's good to want that, it's good to desire, but when it becomes a demand so that you punish people who aren't giving you what you desire, you realize that it's gone from being a desire to being a sinful inordinate desire that you're actually trusting in, you're looking to, to give satisfaction to your soul. And the way the Bible describes that is you are, this first point is, you're committing spiritual adultery.

Unmortified desires, when we're not killing those desires at the heart, we're committing spiritual adultery. That's what James says. That's our first point, to unmask these desires that are in our hearts that cause us to manifest sin in different areas. He says, "You need to see it for what it is, it is spiritual adultery. You adulteresses," he says. He doesn't say it in the third person, does he? I mean, isn't it softer to say, "You know, when you don't deal with your desires, that is spiritual adultery." We're talking about something over here. "Look at that, that's spiritual adultery." But he says, "You are spiritual adulterers." Do you see the force of that? He says that to all of us. We have to, ourselves, own we are adulterers when we are allowing our desires to control us.

He puts his hand right on our hearts and says, just like Nathan said to David, remember when Nathan rebuked David? David had committed those amazing astonishing sins for a man after God's own heart. Remember he lusted after Bathsheba? She was a married woman. He called her. He had his servant go and bring her to the palace. Had relations with her. He gets word she's pregnant. To cover his sin, he calls one of his most loyal, her husband was one of his most loyal soldiers, Uriah, he calls him home from battle, "I want you to have a personal leave." He's trying to get him to have relations with his wife so that his sin will be covered. You remember what happens. Uriah is such a noble man, he will not sleep inside his own house because he will not enjoy the benefits of his marriage while his brothers are fighting for David. He won't have relations with her. He wants to get back to the fight. Such a loyal man. So how does David reward that? He has Uriah killed. He orders that the troops draw back from around him and leave him exposed and he's just overwhelmed and he's killed, and then David takes her as his wife.

All this happens and David is not really convicted. I'm sure he had some level of conviction. "You know, I feel bad about this. I shouldn't do this. You know, I have an anger problem. I have a lust problem. Yeah, I'm working on it." Nathan comes to him and

he tells that story, remember the story he tells is basically about a man who had one sheep, that they loved this lamb, it was a pet to the family, slept in their bed. I can't imagine wanting to do that, but they loved this little lamb, the only sheep they had, dear to the family. And there's a man next door who has a big flock of sheep. The man next door has a guest come and he wants to prepare a meal for the guest. He doesn't take one of his enormous flock of sheep, he goes next door and steals the little lamb that belongs to the neighbor, kills it, and serves it to his guest. Nathan says, "What should be done to a man who would do that?" Nathan the prophet speaking to David. David says, "He should surely die. For someone to do that, he should surely die." Nathan says, "You are the man." David was cut to his heart. He had done exactly that. He had a number of wives and he took the wife of a man, a loyal soldier, for himself and even killed that man. But praise God, God is a God of mercy and grace. Psalm 51 is an expression of his broken heart. He didn't turn away from the Lord after he was convicted, he repented and came back and found forgiveness.

But our tendency is we can be so blind. I mean, for David to have to have someone do that, he was that numbed by his sin. When we have patterns of sin in our lives, we become hardened at some level, and it can become a hardening that shows that a person is not truly a believer. This is what Ephesians 3:12 and 13 is talking about when he says, "Encourage one another while it is still called today lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." In the next verse he talks about falling away from the living God, so that someone is professing faith but they continue in sin and continue in sin, they become hardened. Their conscience becomes seared and they demonstrate that their faith is not real. This over time continuing in sin.

Well, there's a danger, though, that sin always hardens. That's part of what it does and so when we allow, true believers allow habitual sin in their lives, it has a hardening, a numbing effect and you forget what you're doing. We minimize it and James knows that and he says, "Listen, whatever your sin is, you think you say you want," let's go back to that, "you want your wife to be faithful to you." That's a reasonable thing. A man who has had his wife be unfaithful to him and he wants his wife to be faithful to him. Well, that's something that's reasonable to desire but if you want it so much that you're willing to spy on them and to hound them all the time and not to show love to them as a husband should to his wife and care for her as you should for your wife, and you're constantly thinking about it, you're not serving others, you're worshiping an idol. You are so wanting to protect yourself from being violated by adultery that you are continually committing adultery against God.

That's what James is saying. You can want things, good things, so much that you are actually adulterating yourself before the Lord. This is what we do when we give in to sin. Sin is always a measure of spiritual adultery. We owe our allegiance to the one who has bought us, our husband Jesus Christ. All of our affection belongs to him and we're giving it somewhere else.

Now he says, "You adulteresses," and he says, "friendship," another key word here is the word "friendship or friend." It occurs twice in verse 4, "You adulteresses, do you not

know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." He's saying that when our desires are ruling us, we are actively pursuing friendship with the world.

The word for "friend" here is the word *philia* and *philos*, both from the root verb, *phileo*, which is one of the Greek words for "I love," and it means "a deep love." It's not agape love but it's a deep love. It's rooted in just delighting in the other person. So he's saying that being a friend, someone who delights in the world, to delight in the things of the world is to make yourself an enemy of God. To delight in the world, to love the world, is adultery. To love the things of this world is adultery. To value anything above God is adultery. It's idolatry.

It's interesting, another important concept is seen in the word that he uses in verse 4, "whoever wishes to be a friend of the world." The second clause there, "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." This word for "wish" or "will" is a word which speaks of volition. You want to. You wish to. You will to. You decide to. But there are two main words in the New Testament which are used to speak of, can be translated, "I will," or "I wish," or "I want," like this, this particular word that speak of volition. This is a word which has more of almost a passive element to it. It does picture volition but it's more of an acquiescing. Not as much of an active choice as the other word that could have been used and it wasn't used here. "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world," it's a passive voice verb and it pictures someone being acted upon and sort of yielding.

How does this happen? He's telling us how it happens that friendship with the world happens to a believer. How is it that our desires control us? We acquiesce. We yield to the world. "The world" here pictures the world system. This is the way the New Testament speaks of the world, that is, the values, the philosophies, the beliefs that are prevalent in the present age. There are certain things that dominate our present age and when we begin to love some of those things, to befriend some of those things, then we are being spiritual adulterers and that's what leads to our living for our desires. We're valuing this world.

But the idea of the word "whoever wishes," acquiescing, the idea is there is this pressure. You see, we live in a world that is continually pressuring us to accept its values. We're surrounded by them. We're immersed in them. We're like the fish who doesn't know what it means to be wet because he's immersed in water. We're immersed in this world system. The things that it values are everywhere around us and we can find these things. If we're not careful, if we're not mortifying our desires, if we're not actively fighting against them, we will yield naturally to them. There's an inevitability about it.

This is why we must, as I said John Owens says, you must kill sin or sin will be killing you. To not be killing it is to be being killed. It's like you're trying to drive a car. Remember, some of you will remember manual transmission cars. I think there are a few around now, right? Aren't there some? Do you have one? So I had one when I was driving. My first car was a Volkswagen Beetle, 1973 Super Beetle, beige. Anyway, I

loved the car. It was really cool to me back then. It would run and run and run. I didn't have to take care of it much. It didn't need oil. I mean, it had oil. Anyway, never mind.

But one of the things about driving a manual transmission car when you first learn to drive is remember how terrifying it is to find yourself stopped at a red light on a hill and there is somebody right behind you. So when that light turns green, before they honk and people behind them start honking, you want to get going and you want to make sure that you don't die or roll backwards because when you take your foot off the brake in a manual transmission car, you start rolling backwards and you have to engage the clutch and give it gas so that you can engage the gear and get moving. Well, the point is, if you're not going forward, you're going backwards. That's the Christian life. If we're not actively going forward, if we're not engaging the motor, we are coasting backwards. You're not sitting...you have no parking brake. You have to put the car in gear.

We see this a number of places. One example would be Romans 12:2. Romans 12:2 says, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Paul is saying there, and actually the two main verbs, conformed and transformed, are both Greek present tense verbs in Romans 12:2. They speak of continuous action so the idea is really stop being conformed to this world. It's constantly trying, continually trying to press you into its mold. The world is continually doing that. He says, "Stop being conformed." How? "By actively being transformed." The picture is if you're not actively being transformed, how are you actually transformed, you're transformed by the renewing of your mind. The word of God, hearing it and doing it, hearing it, believing it, doing it, that's the way we're transformed. So if you're not being transformed by the renewing of your mind, you are being conformed. The world system is conforming us. Its values constantly pressing in on us.

So when you look at verse 4, "whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God," this idea is you wish, you acquiesce, you yield. It is certainly volitional. You're going along with it. You have to choose to do it. You're not being forced to but it's this pressure that you're yielding to, you're giving in to, and when you do that, you actively, and this next verb is even stronger, makes himself an enemy of God, you constitute yourself. You place yourself. You set yourself down. You yield to the world and you become, you make yourself actively an enemy of God. I mean, you're actually made, still in the passive voice, but you're placed in the role of being an enemy of God. But it's this external pressure and this is why the Scripture is so clear that we need to be fighting sin, killing it.

So we know that we say we want peace and comfort and we find ourselves, that's one of the idols I struggle with, I want things to be easy. Any struggle with that? I really want things to be easy. I get angry when things aren't easy. Now, there's a certain amount of...and I thought this through the years because one of the things that I've had through my life is when I try to fix something around the house, I've gotten a little better over time, I think, but so often it doesn't work the way I think it's going to. I'm so thankful for YouTube now, though, aren't you? That you can go on YouTube and keep looking until I figure out how to do it. But whether it's fixing a toilet seat or it was dealing with some

broken thing, I'm trying to fix it, often I would make things worse. I spent a lot of energy and make it worse and something in your heart, it just, "This is not right."

Well, part of it is we were created for a perfect world. We were created for Eden where when you tilled the soil, the crops grew perfectly. You didn't get thorns. We were made to work. God made us to work, but he made us to work in a perfect world. So part of that, there is a reasonable and it's okay to desire things to work. It's okay to desire things to be relatively easy. I mean, we can go overboard with that, right? Because some things, you have to work hard for but when you want to work hard, you want to make sure it does work out. That's how I feel, anyway.

Well, when you want that more than you should, you sin, and that's what happens to me. I find myself being angered and having hostility come up because things aren't going my way and I may be unkind, I may sin in being harsh in my tone of voice. I may do what needed to be done but I don't do it with the right attitude. What's going on? Well, you know, this is how I think about it if I'm not thinking about it biblically: things aren't going well, this is a bad day. That's all. Pray for me to have a better day. Well, you can pray, you can ask God for a better day, that's not a problem to do that, that's what we said last week. Remember how desire becomes a demand unless you go from desire to request? As he says, "You have not because you ask not." You need to pray. But often God's not going to make it easier because he's interested in your heart. He's so good and so loving that he's not going to settle for giving you what you want, he's going to give you what you really need and if you and I had the sense, we would want.

He's a good Father. He doesn't give you a snake when you ask for a fish, and our problem is we think we're asking for a fish and we're really asking for a snake. We want everything to go our way, everything to happen just the way I want it to. That's what I need. I think I'm asking for a fish, I'm asking for a snake because I'm asking not to have my heart dealt with and God is loving enough not to give me that snake I'm asking for. He gives me a fish. He gives me bread.

But he wants us to see that what we're doing when we find ourselves saying, "I just need a better day. This has all gone wrong today, maybe tomorrow will be better." No, what's happening is I am being an adulterer. I am worshiping another god. I am doing something as ugly as the Israelites did when they went and worshiped Baal. This is how God sees it, it is spiritual adultery.

Turn with me in the Old Testament to Jeremiah. We're going to look at how the Scripture describes this. Jeremiah 3:6-10. The prophet Jeremiah is ministering to the people of Judah before and during the Babylonian incursions and exile. He begins his ministry before the exile and he's telling what's coming. The reason they're going to be exiled is because they have been adulterers against God.

Look what he says, Jeremiah 3:6, "Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, 'Have you seen what faithless Israel did?'" Israel has been already wiped off by the Assyrians more than 100 years before Jeremiah's ministry begins. And he asked the

people of Judah, remember Judah is the southern kingdom, Israel was the northern kingdom. It's all the people of Israel but remember they changed the names. Israel, northern kingdom, 10 tribes. Judah, the southern kingdom with Jerusalem in it. Israel has been taken away captive by the Assyrians, Judah is here and the Lord through Jeremiah says, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there." He's talking about the high places. They would go up on the high places and worship other gods. Sometimes they would even try to worship Yahweh on the high places but God intended worship to happen only in one place, the temple, and so when they were going up on the high places to offer worship, he says, "You are being like a harlot who's leaving her husband and going out and having relations with other men."

It's not a small thing to God. We might think, "Well, I just wanted to hedge my bets." Like the people, remember, in Elijah's day, they had two opinions. They wanted to worship Yahweh and they wanted to worship Baal. God said, "No, there's none of that." Through Elijah he says, "Choose. Are you going to worship the Lord or are you going to worship Baal? You can't do both."

Verse 7, "I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me,'" talking about Israel, "but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also." The people of Judah saw what happened to Israel and their idolatry and judgment and they didn't learn from it.

Verse 9, "Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land," this is now talking about Judah, "she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,' declares the LORD."

So they're worshipping idols. We look at that and we say, "How could anybody bow down to an idol?" Now this happens, some cultures, and some of you may have grown up in cultures that that's a reality. I've heard people talk about going to India and seeing thousands and thousands of Hindu gods and people having little shrines and they bow down and worship these idols, and for us in the West, it seems ridiculous. How can that be? Well, their culture, it's just the way it's developed. The spiritualism of the culture is something very common and prevalent. In our culture, our idolatry is much more pleasantly packaged. It looks a lot nicer on the outside but you open the package and what you see is the same wickedness that's there. It's exactly the same in God's eyes and that's what James is saying. He's saying, "Listen, when we do this, we're being adulterers. We're acting like a harlot against our God. He's our husband and we're going out and we're giving ourselves away." How awful.

Turn to Ezekiel 16. The prophet Ezekiel ministers after the captivity has started. He kind of overlaps a little bit with Jeremiah but basically comes after Jeremiah. So after they've

been taken captive now, he's explaining why. It resonates a lot with what Jeremiah said, it's even more descriptive.

Verse 15 of Ezekiel 16, the book right after Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel. Speaking to the nation of Judah now in exile, "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing." Now think about that. Here is a person that the world today would say has a sex addiction, that has sex with anybody that comes by. Now, most people, I know in our society it's becoming less and less this way, but even I think probably a majority of people in America, even as adulterated as it's becoming, would still think that's pretty bad. No discretion. Whoever comes. Take all comers. Just have sex with them. He says that's what the people of God were doing spiritually. Spiritually, not physically. It's spiritually, they were giving themselves to every other god.

Verse 16, "You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen. You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you," because everything we have is from him. So they took the gold God had given them, the silver that he had given them, "and made for yourself male images," that is, idols, "that you might play the harlot with them. Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them. Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened," declares the Lord GOD. Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured." Human sacrifice was happening in Judah before the Babylonian captivity. Sacrificing their babies to other gods.

"Were your harlotries so small a matter? You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire. Besides all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood." So he's saying, "You were like this and I loved you."

"Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD), that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square. You built yourself a high place at the top of every street and made your beauty abominable, and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry. You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry. Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct." The Philistines even look down upon you.

"Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea," that's the Babylonians, "yet even with this you were not satisfied." You keep giving yourself to these false gods and they do not satisfy

and God says, "This is idolatry." And when we do that, when we find ourselves having an anger problem that we're not dealing with, having a sinful lust problem that we're not fighting against, what we are doing is we are walking in persistent idolatry just like them. We are being unfaithful to our God. He says to you and me, "You are the man." Spiritual adultery.

He doesn't stop with that, back to James 4. He wants us to see this for what it is and he says next, not only are our desires that are not mortified causing us to commit spiritual adultery, the first point, our desires that are not mortified are causing us to commit spiritual treason. That's our second point. Spiritual treason.

Treason is defined in Webster's as attempting, this word that gets thrown out a lot today, it's like so many things in our culture; words are thrown around with such rapidity and such hyperbole that they've lost their meaning in our culture. But what treason really is is this: attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government of the state to which one owes allegiance. Attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government of the state to which one owes allegiance. And this is something else that's said, another part of that definition: treason is to kill or personally injure the sovereign or his family, the king or the president. To kill or injure him is treason.

James says in chapter 4, verse 4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." There he says it just like he did twice saying friendship with the world, he says twice, enmity and hostility is the same word, an enemy and hostility toward God and enemy is the same root word. Enmity, the King James translates it. It means deep personal hatred; opposition. So that when you yield to the world, the pressures of the world, and you adopt the values of the world, he says you are constituted as a traitor to God. You are working against his rule. You are injuring him. You have in your heart the desire to injure him. We said we don't realize that. We don't intend consciously trying to do that. Well, at some level he says that's what we're doing. This is how God sees it. It's so much uglier than how we see it, isn't it?

When I yield myself to this inordinate desire, I am making myself the enemy of God. I am effectively giving aid and comfort to the enemy of my King. I say I love Jesus, I want to build his kingdom and yet when I yield to sinful desires, I'm giving aid and comfort to his enemy. I am actively taking up arms against his kingdom.

It's interesting, turn to Romans 6 for a moment. The Apostle Paul says much the same thing in Romans 6:12-13. Now, remember we said that we have to actively resist. We've got to be killing sin or sin will be killing us. We see this taught here in Romans 6:12. He says in Romans 6:12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body." You see, the idea is sin wants to reign. Sin is actively trying to reign over you and me. We are to resist its reign. Now if we don't resist its reign, if we don't actively resist its reign, if we don't actively stop being conformed by the world, reigned over by sin, we will be acting as an agent of sin against God.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts," its desires. Verse 13, "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." It's a really vivid word picture in verse 13. He's saying that when a believer sins, when a believer yields to inordinate desire, inappropriate desire, and gives himself to sin, they are actively making a decision to let sin reign, and they're actively making a decision to yield their members to sin to be used by sin.

It's interesting, you may have a footnote. The NAS has a footnote there by the word "instruments" that occurs twice in verse 13, and the footnote says: instruments could be translated weapons. So he says, "Don't go on presenting the members of your body to sin as weapons of unrighteousness." The picture is your life, your house, it's your life, sin comes knocking at the door. It's like a home invasion and wants to come in and wreak havoc on your family and your house. Something that happens a lot now, home invasions.

Well, what Paul says, when you and I, what we have to do for that to happen because Christ is in us, we can't really have a home invasion unless we willingly allow it, spiritually speaking. What we have to do is open the door, "Come on in. Have at it. Here, while you're at it, let me give you some weapons." Imagine a home invasion where a guy comes and he doesn't have a gun. "Hey, you're going to be a lot more convincing if you have a gun. I've got a gun right here. Just take this. It works like this. Take the safety off. Now you can tell us. Take my family, do whatever you want to with us." That's absurd. "Here's a knife in case you need that." Maybe you like knives better than guns. Maybe you're one of those people that think guns kill people and all that and you just want knives. Okay, whatever. But what happens when we sin is we yield our mind and our thoughts, our eyes, our hands, our feet, our bodies, we give them to sin as the instrument. We are actively like enlisting them to the power of sin who is in cooperation with the world and the devil to fight against the kingdom of God.

That's treason. That is incredibly ugly. It's insane. And James says that's what we're doing when we think we have a problem that we're just not dealing with. "I have an issue there. I know it's a problem and I'm not dealing with it. I'm working on it, but I'm really not working on it that hard." James says, "Well, you're just committing spiritual adultery and in an ongoing way committing spiritual treason." "That's all it is. No big deal." That's not what James is saying, is it? You're giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

So think about last week. We talked about the five stages. I gave you five different ways that desire becomes our killing one another. Remember, if we want something and we don't get it, so we end up hurting people, like he said in verse 1 and verse 2. We murder. We speak to people in harsh tones. We say, "You're an idiot. You're a fool." So we're committing murder. How does that happen? Well, it starts with a desire. I desire something and "I desire" is okay. It's reasonable. We all have desires, but the turning point is "I desire" becomes "I demand." That's the second stage. That's where we've lost the battle right there. Thirdly, "I demand" becomes "I submit." I'm submitting myself to

this desire. I'm submitting and James is saying now when you submit yourself to desire, you're submitting yourself to a false god. It's not an impersonal desire, it is a god you're worshiping. "I desire, I demand, I submit, I serve." Now you're going to give yourself in service to them. You're going to yield your members to them and when that happens, the fifth things, "I destroy." You destroy anyone who gets in the way of that idol. That's why Ken Sande was yelling at his children, not because they were really, they were sinning, they needed to be corrected but he was yelling and venting his fury because they weren't giving him his peace and quiet.

"I desire, I demand, I submit, I serve, I destroy." It should be "I desire, I request." That's what we saw last week, that we should turn it, you have not because you ask not. "Lord, I really would like this to work out. I would like this situation that I'm fixing at home to actually work this time." Well, pray and ask and then when it doesn't happen, submit to God. "I'm your servant, Lord. It didn't have to be easy for me. I wanted it to be easy but you didn't want it to be easy. You have a reason for that so I'm going to praise you and I'm going to serve you." I submit. I serve. And I edify. That's the five steps on this side: desire, request, submit, serve and I edify. I build up people around me. I can confront sin with a whole different attitude.

But spiritual treason is what we commit unless we actively fight against it, and we find that we're fighting against God. I want to just say a word about verse 5. We're going to look at it more carefully next week. It's a controversial interpretation of how the words actually fit in the Greek. I'm going to give it to you in a nutshell where I'm coming from with how I interpret it. I think basically what he's saying here is that the Holy Spirit that God has made to dwell in us is jealous, and he is desiring our souls with a desire that leads to a kind of a jealousy. He's jealous and I think James is actually referring back to the Old Testament references to our God is a jealous God. So what he's telling is partly to say, "Listen, your spiritual adultery matters to the Spirit. He lives inside of you and me, and he is not unmoved. He's not as light about your sin and my sin as we are." He is moved with a jealous desire to have all of you because that's how God is. God does not accept rivals. That's why in the Ten Commandments when he says, "You shall not make for yourself an idol," he says, "for I the Lord God am a jealous God. You shall worship me and me only shall you worship." The first commandment. The second commandment, "Don't make an idol. I'm jealous."

Well, he's telling us the Holy Spirit is there jealously and we should be reverent that we have the Holy Spirit in us and we don't want to offend him, but then there's a wonderful ray of hope in it. It's not just to tell us that he's jealous so we'd be afraid. There's an element of that godly fear that we should have, absolutely. He's telling us he's jealous and he will not settle for anything but your entire heart. He yearns for your entire heart to the point of jealousy. He will not let you go. He's fighting. At times he's fighting against you because we've set ourselves up against him, but when he's fighting against you, if you belong to Christ, he's fighting against you for you.

That's how good our God is. He's determined to have all of our hearts and isn't that what we want? We know that's what we want if you belong to Christ. You want him to have all

of your heart and the Spirit is determined to do that. Paul says, "He who began a good work in you will complete it to the day of Christ Jesus. I'm confident of this. He's not going to stop." Now don't presume on that. James is saying, "Listen, stop with the adultery. Stop with the treason. But know that the Spirit that is in you is working at times against you, but when he does that, he's doing it for you and rejoice in that and stop fighting against him and work with him and know that you will have the victory, because greater is he that is in you than he that's in the world."

James wants us to see and to have a radically different view of our sin, that we would hate it the way God hates it. That's where real repentance is going to come from and real change, but the wonder of it is, change is possible. This is a beautiful thing about the Gospel. The world system, they say that somebody has a pornography problem, they just have a sex addiction. And if you're an addict, you know how it goes with the alcoholic too. "My name is Ty and I'm an alcoholic." Right? And I'm not saying that those things have been helpful for some people in some ways but it doesn't really solve the problem. It teaches people to find other idols. Your idol was alcohol, you've got to turn it into something else. You exchange idols. That's what happens with 12 Step programs.

Now that's the best they can do. They don't have Christ. I don't begrudge that to them. I want them to have a better answer, though, and the real answer is when you come to Jesus Christ, if you know the Son, if you have the Son, you will be free indeed. He will set you free. You abide in him and his word abides in you. You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. He sets free and what you were is not what you are. We're still in process, yes, and we're fighting, every day of our life we have to fight and we're going to keep fighting sin and we're going to keep cleaning up and we're going to keep seeing that, you know, it's like the image that Jerry Bridges uses in one of his books, that the sanctification process is like this: you have a room where the lights are really low and you come into it and you can tell it's a mess. This is a Christian who's been saved. Just been saved. And you can tell it's a mess so you start picking up the obvious things. "What is this doing here? This has no place in this house. A wheelbarrow, it's supposed to be outside." You take it and you throw it outside and you take other stuff and you throw it outside and you get things kind of clean, you think. You turn the light up a little more and you see, "Oh, there's some stuff I didn't even see. What is that stuff on the cushion, the seat cushion here? That is nasty." So you clean that up. You turn the light up and you keep turning the light up and you keep turning the light up. What's happening? Progressive sanctification is happening and yet the Christian is still always aware that there's more sin and more to be cleaned up but he's doing it by the power of Christ, the power of the Gospel. A God who accepts you on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done, his blood, his death, his resurrection. You're accepted in the Beloved forever and yet now out of gratitude, I want to offer to God a more holy life. "Help me, Lord."

And James is saying that Spirit that is in you, he sees all of those levels of dirt and he's committed to dealing with them one at a time faithfully throughout all your life so don't resist him. Work with him. Actively work with him. Resist those sinful desires and let God make us like Christ.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we rejoice in the glory of your Gospel, that Jesus is a Savior of sinners. He came into the world to save those who were without God, without hope, those who were in bondage. We all, Lord, are born in a state of bondage. We all, if people knew our hearts, would see the ugliness and the things, many of those things that no one else even knows about except you. We praise you that though you saw us, though we were ungodly, you demonstrated your love for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Not on the basis of what we've done but on the basis of his work, we can be saved. The wrath of God taken away by the blood of his cross. Your anger and judgment completely removed from us and now us made by faith beloved children. But not only does he save us from the penalty of sin, he saves us from the power of sin on a daily basis. The glory of who Jesus is, he continues to purify us. As we look at him, as we love him, as we seek him, as we trust in him, he continues to make us look more and more like himself. Father, the areas that you're dealing with in each heart, we pray that you would help each one to even now turn from idols and turn to Christ. Those who are unbelievers, to turn in a saving way. And those who already are yours, to turn in a more full and complete way. May Christ be exalted. We pray in his name. Amen.