

Reconciling Conflict By Fearing God

Epistle of James
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I ask you to turn with me in your Bibles to James 4. We are continuing to look at this fourth chapter, the first 10 verses of James 4, such a pivotal text in this marvelous letter. The title of the message, before I tell you today's message, I just want to remind you of what we have been talking about, we have been talking about reconciling conflict. That's James's issue he's dealing with, and a couple of weeks ago we titled a message "Reconciling Conflict By Waging War," that is, to reconcile conflict and to not have conflict in our lives, we have to wage war not with each other but with our own hearts. That's what James is concerned about, the lust, the desires in our own hearts are what lead us to have conflict, and the way to not have ungodly conflicts, at least to not be the agent of causing those conflicts, is to wage war with your own heart as a Christian. We have a war within us, this new nature wanting to please God, and the old man, the old sin nature wanting to live for self, and so we have to reconcile conflict by waging war. That's what we talked about a couple of weeks ago.

Then last week we saw that James then turns in verse 4 to reconciling conflict by unmasking our desires, by showing us that these desires that are in our hearts, we need to not only see that they are the source of conflict, we need to see them for what they truly are. These desires, these ungodly desires for ungodly things, or as we also saw, James is not just concerned with desires for wrong things, that is, it's not just that we want the wrong thing, it's that we want the right thing too much. Inordinate desires for good things. This is often the thing that trips us up. Inordinate desires, wanting something good but wanting it so much that we want it more than we want to please God. We want it more than we want the presence of God and the glory of God and this, James says, we have to reconcile conflict by unmasking that kind of desire. A desire for a good thing that is wanted too much, James says is spiritual adultery, in verse 4, and it is spiritual treason. That's what we saw last time, "Resolving Conflict By Unmasking Our Desires," and seeing these things for what they are.

Today the title of this morning's message is "Resolving Conflict By Fearing God." Resolving conflict by fearing God, James 4:5 and 6. Verses 5 and 6 are pivotal in the argument here. James wants us to see how our conflicts come from our hearts, how our conflicts are spiritual adultery and spiritual treason, and how these wicked sins are done right in the presence of God. That's his focus.

We saw last time, we talked about the fact that he's really concerned to deal with our complacency, how we tend to have a low view of sin. We minimize our sin. We explain it away. We don't see it as it really is. This is one of our great problems. This is why we are not waging war on the desires of our hearts because we don't see them for what they really are. We know that they are problems but we just don't think they are that big a deal when you get right down to it. If we did, we would be crucifying them by the power of the cross every moment of every day. We would be doing what John Owen said we need to be doing, remember he said: kill sin or sin will be killing you. Puritan theologian, Owen, John Owen in his book "The Mortification of Sin." That is, you need to mortify your sin or it will be mortifying you. Kill sin or sin will be killing you. We have a low view of sin, we don't see it for what it is, and James is determined to in the strong language and tone, to wake us up. I mean, this passage is very forceful. It's very much an in-your-face kind of just confrontational conversation.

Listen as we read the Scripture and I'll try to bring out the tone of it a little bit because it's clearly there. I'll read verses 1 to 10. We're going to focus in on verses 5 and 6, though, this morning. "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" Let me change that to the words, a few weeks ago I explained wars and battles.

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 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 are so grateful to you for your word. We thank you that it is sufficient to equip us for every good work. Everything that we're going to face in life, you have the answers either explicitly or in principle form in your word. We pray that this morning you would make your word alive in our hearts. Help us to see and understand the glory of our Savior, the glory of your love, the ugliness of our sin, and help us to run to Christ. We pray in his name. Amen.

Reconciling conflict by fearing God. The title I've chosen because I think that the purpose in verse 5, what James is saying and this is one of the more complicated interpretive issues in the entire book of James, is how James 4:5 is to be read, and it's because James 4:5 in the Greek is an exceedingly ambiguous verse which is really unusual because Koine Greek, the language of the New Testament, is much more explicit in many ways than English is. It's much more precise. I mean, you could be much more precise about the action of a verb, the way that it is, you can be much more precise about object and subject of sentences and nouns, and the forms are more precise, but in this particular verse, if you look and compare translations, you see this readily; the ESV, NIV, NASB, King James, they are all wrestling with the Greek of this text. Now, I'm not going to go into all of that because it would take us a long time and it would not be profitable to that level in a sermon to spend that much time, but I do want to highlight for you three key issues in the text before we get into the outline. This is pre-outline stuff. This is still in the introduction, three questions in verse 5 that cause people to need to really address some questions here.

The first thing is, verse 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.'" That's the NASB translation, New American Standard. The first question is, there are three questions that we need to answer, the first question is: what verse is James referencing when he says that the Scripture speaks? It's a formula usually used to introduce a quotation. "The Scripture says," it could be translated. "Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose," and now you have the quote. The issue is that the words that follow are not a clear reference that you can find in the Old Testament in a specific place, specific book, chapter and verse. This is unusual. It's not unique. There are other places in the New Testament where it's not quite precise exactly what verse is being quoted. Most of the time it is. You can find, you know, Paul is quoting Isaiah 9 or something like that, you can find the reference. Usually you'll have it marked in your footnotes if you've got a well footnoted Bible. You can look over and say, "Okay, that's actually from this text." The first question is that this is not a clear reference to a specific verse.

Now, I want to tell you what I think is happening is James is alluding to a teaching in the Old Testament that is obvious and clear, and I think it's actually taught, my interpretation of this is, and again I'm telling you all this so that you can check it out and if you're interested you can read other, you can read a lot on this, commentaries on the internet, whatever, about different interpretations of this verse. But I think I've got the one that I think is right or I wouldn't be telling you, but you check it out as you should, be a good Berean, Acts 17:11, don't just take what's said, see if this is true to the Scriptures. But I think what James is doing is he's summarizing a theme that is prominent in the Old Testament and that is the jealousy of God for his people, and I think he has in mind, actually, Exodus 19 to 34, those 16 chapters, particularly Exodus 20:5, the second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, an image of anything, a likeness of anything in heaven or on earth to worship. You don't make an idol because I, the Lord God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers to the children to the third or fourth generation, those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands who love me. I

am a jealous God." That's the idea. In chapter 34, verse 14, after the incident with the golden calf which we're going to talk about, we're going to go back through a little bit with this but I want to give you this introduction to scope this out. Chapter 34, verse 14, the Lord says, "I am the Lord God, whose name is Jealous." He says, "My name is Jealous." And the idea of jealousy in the Bible when it's applied to God is he will bear no rivals. Who is like the Lord our God? We just heard that beautiful song. Mighty to save or strong to save, I can't remember exactly the wording. Faithful in love, right? His love, who is like the Lord our God? He really loves his people and if he really loves his people, he must be jealous for their love. A God who is not jealous would not really be loving.

This actually confronts one of the modern evangelical quasi-heresies when you take a truth of Scripture and then twist it a little bit, and that is, "God loves me as I am." Strictly speaking, that is true. God loves us not on the basis of anything in ourselves, in spite of our sin. But really a better more biblical statement is, "God loves you not as you are, God loves you in spite of what you are." If you belong to Christ, he loves you in spite of your sin, not because of it, and it's his love that is determined not to leave you as you are. How could he love us and leave us as we are? That's not love. God's love seeks the best for those he loves and the best thing for you and me is that we become more holy. Now, we don't do it to earn salvation, no, we are saved in spite of us because all of what Christ has done. But if you've really come to know him, then he is jealous for your affection, for your heart, and he wants all of it for himself. But even more for you. It's the idolatry that makes us so miserable in our lives, and he loves us enough to jealously seek our whole hearts.

Now, that's the first question was where is the reference? Okay, the second question in this verse is the word "Spirit, He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us." In the Greek, the original language, there was not a differentiation between capital and lowercase letters. They were all written the same so that the question is ambiguous. Is this a capital for us, a capital S or a lowercase s, and you think about the difference of implication. The lowercase would mean the human spirit that he has put within us and it would be a reference to the fact that our human spirit lusts with jealousy but the idea would be that God didn't intend it to be that way, the spirit that he gave us now is corrupted. But I'm going to say that I think this is a capital S, that he is saying that the Spirit that he did put within us, or the Spirit that has taken up residence in us, is jealous. So I'm taking it as a capital S. That's the second question and based on the answer of how you answer these questions, it radically affects.... I mean, ultimately it doesn't dramatically impact the whole teaching of the passage but it does make a difference in the shading of how you're going to interpret this passage.

Finally, the third question is the subject of the verbs, two main verbs in the quotation, or the quotation reference, you know, the allusion to the teaching. That is, "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us," there are two main verbs there. The first is "desires" and the second is "made to dwell" and the question is who is the subject of those two verbs? Who is the one doing the action? The NASB I disagree with. They take it as God the Father jealously desiring the Spirit which God the Father has made to dwell in us. The "He" refers to God.

And here again in the Greek, this is one instance where it's ambiguous and where normally it's much more precise because in Greek, nouns have case. That is, you can know if it's a subject or a direct object just by the form of the word. In English we don't have that. I mean, think about it, the word "Spirit" in English, if it's the Spirit did something, he's a subject, the word is still S-p-i-r-i-t, right? And if something happened, you grieved the Spirit, now the Spirit is the object and it is S-p-i-r-i-t. Well in Greek, most words in the Greek language, they have a different form to tell you whether it's a subject or its the object. The only place we really have this in English is like in our pronouns, he and him. You don't say, "Him did some really good stuff," unless maybe you're a two-year-old or a three-year-old, right? Or, "I did it to he. I did it to him." Him is the objective case where a preposition or as an objective preposition or an objective verb, you use that.

Well, in the Greek in this particular case, the pneuma, the word for Spirit, same form, nominative and accusative, so it's not clear whether the Spirit is the recipient of the actions of the verbs or the one doing the action. I'm just going to tell you, I believe it makes the most sense of the context to take it as the Spirit is the subject of both verbs. That what he's saying and this is, if you want to write this down, you can check it out and think about it more, this is how I would translate the verse. I would start off exactly the same way, "Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose," all of that I'm good with. It's the next part that I would change. If you take the Spirit as a subject, it's the Holy Spirit, then I would say, "Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose," and here is the reference he's making, "that the Spirit," capital S, "that the Spirit who has taken up residence in you desires jealousy or desires to the point of jealousy. Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose that the Spirit who has taken up residence in you desires to the point of jealousy?" He's saying that the Scripture teaches that God desires his people to the point of jealousy and James is saying, "Listen, guys, do you understand that the Spirit of God has taken up residence in you? You are committing spiritual adultery, spiritual treason, when you let your desires control you. You are committing spiritual adultery in the very face of the God who jealously desires all of your heart." It's intensifying the sense of the ugliness of our sin. We're not just committing spiritual adultery, we're committing spiritual adultery right before the face of God. That's what he's saying.

God is jealously interested in all of our affections. His first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." The second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol or graven image and bow down to it for I am a jealous God." He will not bear any rivals. You will not have him as your God and worship Baal too. Jesus says, "If any man would come after me, if any man would be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me. Let him lose his life. Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. I don't bear divided allegiance." This is the God, James says, this is the God who now has come in to take up residence in you.

I think he has in mind the idea that the Scriptures clearly teaches that to be a Christian is to have the Holy Spirit dwell in you. I mean, we're in Christ but the Spirit dwells in us.

Let's do a little bit of a Bible study on this just to see this real clearly. Turn to John 7. James is writing, remember, we think predominantly to Jewish believers but these are Jewish people who have come to faith in Christ and have received the Spirit the other side of Pentecost. Well, John's Gospel, John 7:37, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The Spirit has not yet been given. He's saying, "It's going to be like this when you receive the Holy Spirit. I'm going to make it so that out of your being fulfillment flows even to other people because of the joy that you have." But John clarifies when he said this, "But the Spirit hasn't yet been given." He's talking about a day to come after the cross, after the resurrection, after the ascension. At Pentecost, he sends the Spirit as Joel prophesied and you see in Acts 2, the Spirit then poured out upon the people of God for the first time in all history.

Well, turn over to John 14, while we are in John's Gospel, John 14:16. This is the night before Jesus is crucified, his last hours with his disciples, and he's telling them what he's about to accomplish. He's told them, "I'm going away," and they were really sad. Peter said, "I want to go. Wherever you go, I'm coming." "No, you can't go where I'm going. I'm going to the Father." And here he says in verse 16 of chapter 14, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. The Spirit of truth is coming. I'm going to send the Comforter and he's going to take up residence in you, and by him taking up residence in you, what happens is the whole Trinity comes into our life, into our heart.

Later in that same passage, verse 23, just skip down to verse 23, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.'" We will make our dwelling place with him. The Father and I will come. When the Spirit comes, you have the Father and the Son in you.

Chapter 16, verses 5 to 7, "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." this is John 16:6, "because I have said I'm going, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Now, what's happening is in the plan of salvation when mankind fell in the garden, we lost communion with God and our sins separated us from him and made us unfit to dwell in his presence. Jesus comes as the God-man, fully God but fully man, and he lives a perfect life. He is able to come into the presence of God. For the first time in history at his ascension, humanity, the body of Christ comes into the presence of God. His resurrection and ascension, his exaltation to the Father, that's the first time man has been able to dwell in the presence of God and if he had not gone, the Spirit could not come. He was

reversing history. The fall is reversed. Man is now in the presence of God, therefore, you can now have the Spirit. If he didn't go, you couldn't have the Spirit, but because I'm going, I am taking humanity. As one of the Puritan said, the dust of the earth at the ascension of Christ, the dust of the earth now sits enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on High. He took the dust and he has taken it to God's presence, and because of that, the Spirit now comes and dwells in you. It could not happen until he took the dust of the earth to the right hand of God.

Now that that has happened, this is what is in James's mind, you understand what has happened. You are a follower of Jesus Christ, the Spirit dwells in you, the Spirit of God, the three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit together, one God, three in person, one in essence, all Yahweh, all Jehovah, the Lord, all of whom are jealous. "I, the Lord, am jealous." He says, "Do you realize that when you allow your desires to control you," and think about this, and how we minimize it. I confess I've seen so much in my own heart in the last few weeks. It's painful working through these passages. But you know, I've been complacent about lots of sin in my life. A couple of areas, I'll mention these to you and show you that you can pray for me more. You know, I've mentioned in the past how I struggle in traffic sometimes. I feel like I want to teach everybody how to drive. I'd like to stop, "Could you please stop? Pullover. I want to explain to you how you drive." Like I know everything. And I get angrier than I should. I'm getting better. I've been working on this. It's been an intentional area focus. Stop. Pray. Why am I feeling offended by what this guy just did driving? Because I'm wanting something too much. I could in a godly way recognize, "Hey, that was not a good thing." Maybe even teach my kids, "What this guy did was not good." But my attitude, there is hostility in my heart toward this person if I'm wanting to think they're a fool or something like that. That is wickedness in my heart. I'm wanting something I should not want and I want, even I'm wanting something that may be legitimate too much.

I see this in another area politically. You know, you watch what's happening in the world and you see what sometimes seems to be kind of insanity. You know, they are just destroying our country and I find myself sometimes getting angry about that, so I don't spend a lot of time watching the news or listening to talk radio because I think there's an appropriate level and all that, I'm not saying it's a sin to do that, but you need to watch your heart, because if I find myself getting angry and wishing I could just have five minutes to talk to some guy and just let him have it. Now, if I could do it in a godly way, it would be nice to go and talk to this person and say, "You know, you're really failing in your office. You're not doing what's best for this country, or at least it doesn't appear to me. Can you tell me what your motivation was for what you've been doing?" That would be preferable. Speaking the truth in love is all good. We need to do it, but when I find myself worked up and angry about it, my countenance is down, I'm sitting there thinking, "Wait a minute, I'm wanting something too much." What am I wanting? I'm wanting justice to be done in America not so much for God's kingdom and God's glory as for my comfort and well-being. "You, guy in Washington, you're messing up what I have." Do you see that? And I am evidencing that it's an ungodly or inordinate desire by what's happening in my heart.

Now, we say those things and we can almost chuckle at them because many of you can relate to those things, not all of you maybe, right? And if you can't relate, you have other things. But what James is saying is these really aren't laughing matters. I mean, I'm not saying that we can't ever, there is humor, God is good and he made us to laugh and I know there is a place for it, but in general most of us need to be much more serious about these things than we are, I included, because he's saying this is spiritual adultery. This is me giving myself to be used by sin to work against God's kingdom, spiritual treason, and I am doing it right under the nose of the Spirit of God who lives in me. It's like a person finding an unfaithful spouse in bed with someone else in your bed.

That's what this is and how can we do that? This is the Spirit that has come to dwell in us. 1 Corinthians 6:19 in an admonition to flee sexual immorality, he makes a very important point in verse 19. He says in verse 18, "Flee immorality." Run from it. "Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body." And this is why it's so important, that you are sinning against your body, look, verse 19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" You have the Spirit living inside of you. God placed him in you because of what Christ has done, and you do not belong to yourself, therefore, flee immorality.

The Spirit indwells us and the Spirit that indwells us, James is saying, that Spirit which has taken up residence. It's interesting, that's how I'm translating that word that in the NASB says in verse 5, "made to dwell," because it's an active voice verb. I think it's the Spirit has taken up residence in us. The Spirit which has taken up residence in us, it's an emphatic word, actually, which means to dwell permanently. The Spirit has come to dwell permanently in you, aorist tense, at a point in time he came to dwell in you. That same Spirit that has taken up residence in you desires jealously, or to the point of jealousy. The word "desires" is a strong word, another intensified word. James is pulling out the strongest words available. This word means to yearn intensely. It has a prepositional prefix that intensifies the meaning. To yearn intensely with great earnestness. The Spirit who has taken up residence, permanent residence in you, desires with great intensity your heart to the point of even jealousy. And the word "jealously" actually is a word not only used of God. This is one of the reasons some people take it a different way but I think he's actually making his point emphatically. It's a word which is found in other places to be synonymous with the word for jealousy and the normal word for jealousy in the New Testament. But it pictures the pain felt. This word "jealously" pictures the pain felt at seeing the object of one's affection finding happiness somewhere else. It's not just that you wish it was with you, it's that you are grieved and you are hurting that they are finding happiness somewhere else. This is the Spirit's attitude toward us. This is God's attitude toward us.

So he wants us to understand, the first thing he wants us to see which I just covered, this is actually giving you the first point at the end of the first point, the God who is in you is a jealous God and that's the summation of, I think, what the whole quotation he's getting at. When you go back to Exodus, and I would just summarize it for you, we don't have time to go into it like I'd like to, but if you turn to Exodus 19 and you read through

chapter 34, I would encourage you to read that this week, Exodus 19 through 34. Read those 16 chapters and I'm going to summarize it for you. What you're going to see is this. This is after they've left the land of Egypt. God has delivered them through the mighty plagues upon Egypt, including the plague of the firstborn. He has shown his glory in delivering them. He has then taken them through the Red Sea, destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea to continue to show his faithfulness. They didn't have water so he made water come out of a rock. They didn't have food, so he has begun to feed them manna. He is caring for them in every way and he leads them to Mount Sinai and now he's ready to give his covenant to them, the 10 Commandments.

It begins, Moses meets with him in Exodus 19, and Moses comes back and tells them what the Lord has said, and the people, three times you read in the passage the people say this, "All that the Lord has said we will do." Look for that when you read through Exodus. "All that the Lord has said we will do," three times. They say it at the very beginning, then they say it after they get the 10 Commandments, they are given to them, the 10 Commandments. "All that the Lord has said we will do."

So they reiterate their desire to be faithful and they reiterate that desire after they had gotten the 10 Commandments with the first two commandments, "You will have no other gods before me. You will not make for yourself an idol." "All that the Lord has said we will do. All that the Lord has said we will do." Then after the Lord shows his glory and they see thunder come out of the sky and the cloud of glory covering the mountain, Moses speaks and God thunders an answer. They hear God's voice and it does them, so the Lord quits speaking to them, but still they see his glory and he says, "What I want from you, first of all, is have no other gods before me. Do not make for yourself an idol." All through the rest of the 10 Commandments, and he expands on them. "All that the Lord has said we will do."

Then the Lord says, "Moses, you come up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights." The cloud of glory is there. They haven't seen Moses for 40 days and 40 nights. Somewhere along the way toward the end of the 40 days and 40 nights, they commit idolatry. They make an idol. You're reading this and you think, "This is insane. Have you lost your minds?" And Aaron is complicit in it. "Hey, we don't know what happened to this fellow Moses. You know, we need to be moving on here. Aaron, we need to do something. Make a god for us." "Well, bring all your gold." And so he fashions a golden idol and then they begin to worship the idol. Now, they are worshiping Yahweh in the name of the idol. It's not like he says, "Worship Baal." No, "Worship Yahweh, just use this idol, the golden calf." So they do.

The Lord ends his discussion with Moses and says, "You need to go down. The people are committing an abominable act." He goes down and he finds them, he has the tablets God had written this time with his finger, the 10 Commandments. He throws them. They break, they shatter. He takes the idol. "Aaron, what have you done?" Aaron says, "The people, you know these are obstinate people, and I had them give me gold and I threw it into the fire and this idol came out." Moses takes the idol, grinds it up into powder, puts it into water and makes the people drink it. Then God sends vengeance. They kill 3,000

people as a judgment in that day are killed with the sword. God is a holy God. He does not take rivals and it ends up that section with Exodus 34:14, "I, the Lord, whose name is Jealous."

So God is saying to you and me we need to change the way we see our sinful desires. We need to ask him to give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that we would hate our sin as much as he hates it, not just because of the consequences of it. That's our temptation, isn't it? We hate sin sometimes because it hurts, it's not pleasant, we don't like to feel dirty. No, he's saying, "If you really want to repent, hate it because of how I see it. Hate it before me." That's what James is saying.

Now the second point, this is our last point this morning: the jealous God who is in you is exceedingly gracious. Back to James 4. He has basically said, "You realize that friendship with the world is hostility toward God. It's spiritual adultery. It's making war with God. And do you think that Scripture speaks to no purpose when it says that the Spirit that has taken up residence in you desires to the point of jealousy? Do you think that Scripture doesn't really mean that when it says that he desires that kind of jealousy?" And the idea is to make us have the experience of Isaiah when he saw the glory of God and who God really is, "Woe is me! I'm undone for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the Lord!" When I see God as he is, I see my sin as it is, I am to be undone and this is what James is trying to accomplish in verse 5.

That's what he's been accomplishing, just the hard blows he has been hitting us with. "You adulteresses." But in verse 6, the ray of light. As we are undone he says, "But He gives a greater grace." This God who is jealous and holy and who will not leave the guilty unpunished, he is a God of great grace. This is the wonder of wonders. This is why we say, "Who is like the Lord our God? Who is like the Lord our God who sees things as they really are?" He doesn't pretend and look away from our sin. He sees it, he punishes it. This is the glory of what Christ has done. Jesus Christ saves those who believe not because God winks at sin but because Jesus Christ bore the full wrath of God against sin in himself on the cross. God is holy and just. He must punish evil and he punished it fully in Christ for those who would believe. There remains no more wrath against you if you're in Christ. Jesus said, "It is finished," before he gave up his Spirit to the Father. "I have paid in full the sin debt."

So James says, "Don't despair. He gives greater grace." He is opposed to the proud. The problem with you and me is we tend toward pride and he resists us when we are proud, but he gives grace to the humble. So humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. His grace is for the humble.

Turn with me to Exodus for a moment. I mentioned reading those chapters. I want to show you one key passage here, Exodus 33, and I'm going to hit a few verses here quickly. This is after the judgment that God brought about because of the idolatry of the golden calf. This is right after that. It's like textually moments after that. The next time God and Moses talk.

The Lord tells Moses in 33:1, Exodus 33:1, "Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite." It's important he said, "I will send an angel before you."

Verse 3, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst." I will not go up in your midst. Why? "Because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way." He said, "I'm a jealous God and you're an obstinate people and if I am in your midst, I might destroy you."

Verse 4, "When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his ornaments. For the LORD had said to Moses," here's the repetition, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you.'" This is what James is thinking about when he says, "Do you realize that the Spirit he has made to dwell in you, in your midst? The Spirit of God is in your midst. He's not in your midst even in the way it was in the old covenant. He is in you. Wonder of wonders, God has taken up residence in you." This is the glory of the Gospel, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now God tells him, "I'm not going to go up with you," but he put Moses there as the great intercessor in these moments. The Lord telling us what should be, "I shouldn't go with you because you are an obstinate people, it's crazy for me to go," not crazy, I'm overstating it a little bit, but the Lord is saying if we just do things according to reason. "You are sinners. I'm holy. I can't go with you." But Moses in beauty in chapter 33, verse 12 says, Exodus 33:12, "Then Moses said to the LORD, 'See, You say to me, "Bring up this people!" But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, "I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight."'" Look what Moses says, "'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.' And He said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then he said to Him, 'If Your presence,'" Moses says, "'If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.'" We don't want Canaan. We don't want any of the blessings, we want you, and if we can't have you, we want nothing. That's what Moses says. That's the heart God is looking for. If you take everything else, I want Christ. Everything else, I want you, Lord. This is what God is looking for and this is the most loving thing he could do is accept nothing less than that. He will accept nothing less than that.

Moses says right after this in verse 18, "Lord, I want to ask for one more thing. Show me your glory. Show me your glory." The Lord says, "I will make my glory known to you tomorrow." So it's basically, "Go and get a good night's sleep. You're going to need rest. Come back tomorrow." He comes back the next day and he says, "I'm going to make my glory pass by you. You won't be able to see me because you can't look on me and live, but I'm going to let you see the back parts of my glory with your eyes."

In chapter 30, this is remember, right after his jealousy has broken out and destroyed 3,000 people in a day. This is what the Lord says, the Lord descended in a cloud, 34:5, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD." And what we have reported is not what Moses saw. He asked him, "Show me your glory." It wasn't what Moses saw, it was what Moses heard, and listen to what the Lord says in this moment in history, what God says. "You want to know who I am, you want to know my glory." Verse 6, "the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.' You see, I'm a jealous God, yes. I'm a jealous God. I'm a holy God but I am a compassionate and gracious God. This is why you're not consumed."

So the Lord says to us, "Hate your sin but don't run away from me. Run to me." Run to Christ. He's always saying, "Come. Come." He will take you as you are but he won't leave you as you are. He will begin to change you little by little because he is a jealous God who desires your whole heart and how wonderful it is to know that the God, a God who is in you is a jealous God, the jealous God who is in you is exceedingly gracious, and you could add this as a conclusion, the jealous God who is in you is graciously fighting for you. He will not rest until he has all of you. Don't presume on that. Let that motivate you to seek him and to turn away from sin.

That's the glory of God that we serve. That is the glory of Jesus Christ. That is the glory of the Spirit that dwells in you if you know him. If you don't know him, today is the day of salvation. Repent and believe the Gospel. Place your faith in him. Receive his love and begin to understand what life is about.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank you for the wonder of who you are. We thank you for in your holiness and in your righteousness, finding a way to save sinners; for loving us so much that you gave your only begotten Son, and that he has borne your wrath. And Father, let the love of Christ that we see in the cross just captivate our hearts. Make us jealous for you, zealous to pursue holiness, not because we're trying to earn our salvation, we can never earn anything, but just because we want to dwell in your love and want to express our love to you out of gratitude for all that you have done for us. Be glorified in your people we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.