

1 THE CURE FOR CONFLICT

JAMES 4:5-10

2 REVIEW

3 What kinds of conflict do we have?

- Fights -- πόλεμοι -- a state of war
 - Prolonged conflict
- Quarrels -- μάχαι -- individual disputes or battles
 - Individual conflicts or spats that give evidence to the fact that a war is going on.
 - Short in duration
- A word that sums it up well = DISCORD
 - A dog-eat-dog, cut-throat, step-on-everyone world where it does not matter who gets hurt on our way to get what we want
 - We have not trust and no love. A friendship with the world means that we have no friends at all. (My Cobb salad story...)

4 Man was made in the image of God -- a trinity

- God speaks to our spirit (always mentioned first). The spirit is where we get input from God.
- Our soul is where we think, feel, and make decisions. It is the battleground of the conflict.
- Our body (our "members") is our flesh which provides input from the world to tempt us.

5 What is the difference between the mind and brain?

- The mind is an intangible part of our soul that receives input from the spiritual and physical realms and thinks about it, and applies logic or reasoning to situations.
- The brain is a 3 lb. wrinkled mass inside our skulls that uses electrochemical processes to store and transfer data.

6 Paul understood this difference

- *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* (Romans 7:23, KJV)
- *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [members]the law of sin.* (Romans 7:25, KJV)

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7 How much worldly compromise is OK?

- *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* (James 4:4, KJV)
 - Usually, James refers to his readers as "brethren" or "beloved brethren." But his tone changes here. (NOTE: The Greek only has "adulteresses" because James views the church as the bride of Christ.)
 - Friendship (*philia*) with the world is hatred toward God.
 - ANYONE can choose to be the world's friend and God's enemy -- even Christians!!

8 What disobedience really is

- This form of expression may offend some delicate modern ears, but the picture of Israel as the bride of God and of God as the husband of Israel has something very precious in it.

- It means that to disobey God is like breaking the marriage vow. It means that all sin is sin against love.
- It means that our relationship to God is not like the distant relationship of king and subject or master and slave, but like the intimate relationship of husband and wife.
- It means that when we sin we break God's heart, as the heart of one partner in a marriage may be broken by the desertion of the other.

9 James 4:5-10

Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:5-10, KJV)

10 James 4:5-10

Or do you think that in vain the scripture says, "The spirit which he caused to dwell in us desires jealously"? But he gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore, subject yourselves 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 purify your hearts, you double-minded! Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloominess. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (James 4:5-10, LEB)

11 It is OK for God to be jealous

- *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (Exodus 20:5, KJV)*
- Jealousy is protecting what is rightfully ours. I am jealous over my wife, because she is mine. Jealousy is not a sin.
- Envy is wanting what belongs to others and I do not have. Envy is a sin.

12 God will not tolerate a rival

- The Old Testament was never afraid to apply the word jealous to God.
- Moses says of God and the people: *'They made him jealous with strange gods'* (Deuteronomy 32:16).
- He hears God say: *'They made me jealous with what is no God'* (Deuteronomy 32:21).
- Zechariah hears God say: *Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy'* (Zechariah 8:2).
- Jealous comes from the Greek *zēlos*, which has in it the idea of burning heat. The idea is that God loves human beings with such a passion that he cannot bear any other love within the hearts of men and women.

13 Love vs. "in love"

- "There is a sense in which love must be spread among all people and over all God's children, but there is also a sense in which love gives and demands an exclusive devotion to one person.
- "It is profoundly true that we can be in love only with one person at any one time; if we think otherwise, we do not know the meaning of love." -- William Barclay

14 A TRANSLATION PROBLEM

JAMES 4:5-10

15 **A translation problem**

- This is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the entire letter.
- A very literal translation would be, "Or think you that vainly the Scripture says to envy yearns the spirit which was made to dwell in you, but He gives great grace."
- Is the "spirit" the Holy Spirit or the human spirit? Is the spirit to be taken as the subject of the verb "yearns" or as its object? Is "envy" to be seen as "unrighteous desire" or as "righteous jealousy"?
- Two possible translations:
 - "The Spirit who indwells you jealously yearns [for you] and He gives more grace."
 - "The [human] spirit which indwells you yearns to envy, but He [God] gives more grace."

16 **What is the context?**

- James' readers had allowed their desires for God and their desires for the idols of the world to wrap them up in a total conflict of desire and interpersonal relations.
- Instead of bridling their tongues, they had allowed their tongues to spew forth both blessing and cursing (3:10).
- Instead of pursuing the wisdom from above that counsels humility and peace, they had allowed the "wisdom" from below to dominate their aspirations (3:15–17).
- This dichotomous movement of the will back and forth between different worlds of desire and deed was what James had in mind.

17 **James' theology**

- There really is no pneumatology in this epistle.
- James reference to the spirit is likely NOT the Holy Spirit, but the spirit that God breathed into man during creation.
 - *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7, KJV)*
- The human spirit is that which communes with God on the one hand or adulterates itself with idols on the other (cf. 1 Cor 6:17).
- The most natural understanding of "spirit" then is the human spirit, which gives us life and makes us spiritual beings.

18 **Either way**

- One translation would be that "The Spirit of God living in us desires jealously a relationship with us." That certainly fits the context of calling those who are friends with the world, "adulterers." God has a right to be jealous over us because we are His.
- The other translation would be that "Our human spirit is wired to lust for what we do not have (envy)." This would point out that we are pre-wired by our sin nature to love the things of the world instead of loving God.

19 **A synthesis?**

- I suggest that James would agree with this statement: "The Holy Spirit of God desires jealously a loving relationship with us where we are faithful to Him. But our depraved human spirit is prone to seek the hedonistic pleasures of the world in a search for fulfillment in this life, making us spiritual adulteresses."
- It seems likely, however, that James' focus is on the tendency of the human spirit to want what we do not have.

20 **Barclay's translation**

- *Renegades to your vows, do you not know that love for this world is enmity to God? Whoever makes*

it his aim to be the friend of this world thereby becomes the enemy of God. Do you think that the saying of Scripture is only an idle saying: 'God jealously yearns for the spirit which he has made to dwell within us'?

- *But God gives the more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God sets himself against the haughty, but gives grace to the humble.' So, then, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you; draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*

21 THE ANTIDOTE FOR SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

GOD'S GRACE

22 But there is an antidote to hedonistic desire

- *But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (James 4:6, KJV)*
- *But He gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6, LEB)*

23 Where does it say that?

A likely reference to Proverbs 3:34

- *Surely he scorneth the scorers: But he giveth grace unto the lowly. (Proverbs 3:34, KJV)*
- *With those who scorn, he is scornful, but to those who are humble, he gives favor. (Proverbs 3:34, LEB)*
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24 A frightening truth of James 4:6

- Whatever translation problems we have with verse five, verse six makes a clear and frightening statement – God opposes the proud.
 - The word "opposes," or "resists," is ἀντιτάσσεται, a military term meaning "to battle against."
 - Proud is ὑπερηφάνοις -- "to show oneself above others"
- We need the antidote to hedonistic desires and pride because God is opposed to those who are opposed to Him. And we do NOT want God's opposition!
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25 Repeating a truth

- Earlier in James's Letter the story of the proud rich and the envious church leaders and their followers (2:2–4) shows both God's opposition to the self-promoting rich and their self-serving welcomers as well as God's preference for the humble poor.
- *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (James 2:2–4, KJV)*

26 How pride shuts us off from God's grace

1. It does not know its own need. It so admires itself that it recognizes no need to be supplied.
 2. It cherishes its own independence. It will be indebted or obligated to no one and not even to God.
 3. It does not recognize its own sin. It is occupied with thinking of its own goodness and never realizes that it has any sin from which it needs to be saved.
- A pride like that cannot receive help, because it does not know that it needs help, and therefore it cannot ask.

27 **A humble spirit gives us grace**

- *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* (James 4:6, KJV)
- We can receive God's grace instead of His opposition.
- James calls us to shun pride and submit humbly to God's authority.
- The cure for conflict is a humble spirit which is rewarded by God's unmerited favor.

28 **SPECIFICS OF THE ANTIDOTE**

IMPERATIVE VERBS

29 **Imperative verbs of James 4:7-10**30 **1. Humble yourself**

- *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* (James 2:5, KJV)
- We must admit our spiritual poverty and lowliness before God.
 - An example of this attitude is in David's reply to King Saul wanting to make him his son-in-law.
 - *And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed [little known]?* (1 Samuel 18:23, KJV)

31 **2. Submit to God**

- Like a magnet, the call for commitment has both positive and negative poles: submit ... to God and resist the devil.
 - "Submit" is a military term "to be subordinated" or "to render obedience."
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32 **3. Resist the devil**

- It knows that if anyone takes a resolute stand against the devil, the devil will be proved to be a coward.
- 'The devil', as the author of *The Shepherd of Hermas* puts it, '*can wrestle against the Christian, but he cannot throw him.*'
 - This is a truth of which the Christians were fond, for Peter says the same thing (1 Peter 5:8–9).
- *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* (1 Peter 5:8–9, KJV)

33 **The supreme example of resisting the devil**

- The great example and inspiration is Jesus in his own temptations.
- In them, Jesus showed that the devil is not invincible; when he is confronted with the word of God, he can be put to flight.
- Christians have the humility that knows that they must fight their battles with the tempter, not in their own power, but in the power of God.

34 **4. Draw nigh to God**

- The greatest privilege we have is access to God.
- In the Old Testament, the right of approach to God under the old order of things belonged only to the priests.
 - *And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break*

forth upon them. (Exodus 19:22, KJV)

- The office of the priest was to come near to God for sin-stained people (Ezekiel 44:13). *And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.* (Ezekiel 44:13, KJV)

35 4. Draw nigh to God (2)

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- Now, however, through the work of Jesus Christ, anyone can come boldly before the throne of God, certain of finding mercy and grace to help in time of need.
 - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* (Hebrews 4:16, KJV)
- There was a time when only the high priest might enter the Holy of Holies; but we have a new and a living way, a better hope by which we draw near to God (Hebrews 7:19).
 - *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.* (Hebrews 7:19, KJV)
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36 5. Cleanse your hands

- "Cleanse your hands, you sinners..."
- To James, Christianity is more than just asking and passively receiving. He is sure that moral effort is a prime necessity.
- His appeal is addressed to sinners. The word used for sinner is *hamartōlos*, which means the hardened sinner, the one whose sin is obvious and notorious.
 - Suidas, the tenth-century scholar who compiled works of reference, defines *hamartōloi* as 'those who choose to live in company with disobedience to the law, and who love a corrupt life'.

37 What does it mean to cleanse your hands?

- Originally, this phrase denoted only ceremonial cleansing.
 - Priests had to wash and bathe themselves before they entered upon their service in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:19-21).
 - Orthodox Jews performed a ceremonial washing their hands before they ate (Mark 7:3).
- People soon realized that God required more than outward washing so the phrase came to stand for moral purity. Psalm 26:6 – "*I wash my hands in innocence.*"
- *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;* (Isaiah 1:16, KJV)

38 THE FOURFOLD CLEANSING OF BIBLICAL THOUGHT

39 A. Cleansing of the lips

- It demands a cleansing of the lips (Isaiah 6:5–6).
- *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:* (Isaiah 6:5–6, KJV)
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- It demands a cleansing of the mind (James 4:8).
- That is to say, the ethical demand of the Bible is that a person's words and deeds and emotions and thoughts should all be purified. Inwardly and outwardly, men and women must be clean, for

only the pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

40 **B. Cleansing of the hands**

- *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, Nor sworn deceitfully.* (Psalm 24:4, KJV)
- Note that we once again have hands and heart tied together in a single passage as we do in James.
 - Hands = Actions
 - Heart = Attitudes
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41 **C. Cleansing of the Heart**

- A cleansing of the heart is to repent of wrong thoughts and attitudes.
- It is to ask the Spirit of God to transform our minds from Scripture It demands a cleansing of the heart (Psalm 73:13).
 - *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.* (Psalm 73:13, KJV)
 - *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* (Romans 12:2, KJV)
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42 **D. A cleansing of the mind**

- *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.* (James 4:8, KJV)
- The result of cleansing our actions and our attitudes is that it will also fix the problem of being double-minded. It helps us focus on our one true love.
- How quickly we tend to lose our first love as did the church in Ephesus.
- *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* (Revelation 2:4, KJV)

43 **6. Purify your hearts**

- A cleansing of the heart is to repent of wrong thoughts and attitudes.
- It is to ask the Spirit of God to transform our minds from Scripture It demands a cleansing of the heart (Psalm 73:13).
 - *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.* (Psalm 73:13, KJV)
 - *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* (Romans 12:2, KJV)

44 **7. Be afflicted**

- The verb is *Ταλαιπωρήσατε (talaipōrein)*, and it can describe—the Greek historian Thucydides uses it in this way—the experiences of an army whose food has all gone and who have no shelter from the stormy weather. What James is demanding is a voluntary restraint from lavish luxury and excessive comfort.
- He is talking to people who are in love with the world, and he is pleading with them not to make luxury and comfort the standards by which they judge all life.
- It is discipline which produces the scholar; it is rigorous training which creates the athlete; and it is a wise abstinence which produces the Christian who knows how to use the world and its gifts correctly.

45 **8. Mourn and weep; turn your laughter to mourning**

- Recognition of the tremendous need for cleansing allows no room for merriment. Grieve (lit., “be afflicted”), mourn, and wail was James’ candid advice.
- Exchange merriment for mourning and gaiety for gloom (lit., “a downcast look, lowered eyes”).
- A contrite spirit of confession is essential for God’s cleansing.
- Imagine the hurt that we would feel if our spouse was unfaithful to us. Now, understand that is how God feels when we live with a worldly focus, seek worldly pleasures, and develop a love for worldly things.
- Feel sorrow for how we have hurt the heart of God. This is the true essence of repentance.

46 **How grievous mourning turns to a joyful morning**

- Here, James is describing the first step of the Christian life which is taken when people are confronted with God and with their own sin. That is a daunting experience.
- When John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached to the miners of Kingswood, they were moved to such grief that the tears made streaks as they ran down the grime of their faces.
- But that is by no means the end of the Christian life. The terrible sorrow of the realization of sin moves on to the thrilling joy of sins forgiven. James is demanding that these self-satisfied, luxury-loving, unworried hearers of his should be confronted with their sins and should be ashamed, grief-stricken and afraid, for only then can they reach out for grace and go on to a joy far greater than their earthbound pleasures.

47 **9. Humble yourselves in God’s sight**

Only the humble can know the blessings of God.

- Salvation -- *When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; And he shall save the humble person.* (Job 22:29, KJV)
- Honor -- *A man’s pride shall bring him low: But honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.* (Proverbs 29:23, KJV)
- Revival from God’s presence -- *For thus saith the high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* (Isaiah 57:15, KJV)
- Exaltation (the lowly becomes the lifted) -- *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* (Matthew 23:12, KJV)

48 **Next time ...**

- We need to follow these imperatives of receiving God’s grace because they prevent us from the sin of judging others.