

Hostile Desires

War & Peace Part 3
James 4:1-3 6-28-2015

Summary: Just as good food can go bad, good desires can go hostile (when you start to think you need that thing to be happy). Hostile desires war against your conscience, and when they win that war, they strike out at anyone or anything that gets in their way. Win the war within by looking to God to satisfy the desires of your soul. Love God and use His gifts (rather than loving His gifts and using Him to get them). Pride results in entitlement, which destroys prayer.

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James 4:1 What causes wars and battles among you? Don't they come from your desires that wage war within you? 2 You covet something but don't get it – you murder. And you envy, but you cannot have [what you want] - you battle and war. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your desires. 4 Adulteresses! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

Introduction

Review: Hostile Desires

I'm sitting across the table from a man and his wife who have come in for marriage counseling. I ask, "How did it go this week?"
"Not very well."
"Did you have another fight?"
"Yes."
"What day did that happen?"
"All of them."

“What did you fight about?”

Long pause... Finally he looks over at her – “Do you remember?”

“Well, um, I think...it was...um ... I can't really... - it's just stupid stuff.”

“Yeah, we fight over the dumbest things.”

Either they can't remember what they fought about, or, when they can remember, it is such a silly thing to fight about that they're embarrassed to even tell me.

And very often they look at me and say, “We're never like this with other people. When I deal with other people I can listen, I can admit I'm wrong, I can show compassion, I'm not selfish. But somehow when it's just the two of us we fight like cats and dogs.”

Why is it such a common experience? How is it that we can get into a fight and not know why? We have been studying through the book of James and last week we began chapter 4 where James begins the chapter by asking that very question.

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you?

And then he immediately gives us the answer.

1 ... Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

The reason we fight is because of hostile desires. When you fight with your spouse over dumb little things that are so small that by the end of the fight you can't even remember what the fight was originally about – the reason that happens is because there is hostility in your heart over some unfulfilled desire. There is some latent resentment toward your spouse because of some desire you have that they aren't fulfilling or that they are blocking. There are 100 desires you have that you can live without. Those don't make you angry. But whenever you have one of those desires where your soul decides, “I *have* to have this in order to be happy,” (the Bible calls that a covetous desire), whenever one of those kind of desires gets blocked or goes unfulfilled, it results in some form of hostility. It might be yelling and screaming, or it might be a quiet, cold resentment or bitterness. But either way, it's hostility.

Desires are good. God made us to have desires and to seek fulfillment of those desires. But just as perfectly good food can go bad, so perfectly good desires can go hostile. It used to be a perfectly good desire, but now it is one of those ones where, if I don't get it, I'm going to get mad.

So we have these hostile desires, they go unfulfilled, and that results in a latent hostility and resentment and bitterness just sitting there under the surface. And you never even know it's there until your spouse does some tiny little thing wrong and you blow up. Or it turns into a fight. And you don't even know why because that little thing they did barely even matters to you. It is because of underlying hostility and bitterness caused by hostile desires going unfulfilled.

So this is a great insight that James is giving us. When you get into a fight with your spouse, or with your brother or sister, or your roommate, ask yourself these two questions: What do I want that I'm not getting? Or what am I getting that I don't want? It might be something totally unrelated to the current fight you're having, just like sometimes you go to the doctor with pain in one part of your body and he finds the cause of it in a completely different part of your body. When you find yourself getting into conflicts with someone, search your heart for desires that have gone hostile – perfectly good desires that have gone bad because your soul thinks it has to have those things in order to be happy. What do I want that I'm not getting? Or what am I getting that I don't want? What is it that I think I need in order to be happy, and that desire is being blocked?

In the Church

And this principle will help you with conflicts in your family, at work, in your marriage – all kinds of different contexts. But the primary application James has in mind is conflicts within the church. And those are not as obvious, because in the church we all try to maintain our good reputation as humble, godly people. So our wars and conflicts in the church tend to be cold wars rather than hot wars. We disagree over something in the church and were usually not screaming and yelling or slamming doors or

throwing things. We have to keep the hostilities within the bounds of our religious façade, so we express our anger in more subtle ways. We stop coming to prayer group because, “I can’t be in the same room with that person.” And whenever we talk about that person our words never build up their reputation – they always hurt their reputation. And we look at that person with suspicion, and we assume bad motives, and we refuse to trust them.

And if it does finally escalate to the point of direct conflict, we disguise the real issue and try to make it about something else. We don’t want to admit the real reason (I didn’t get my way). That would make us look petty and vengeful so we attack the person on some other issue. We accuse them of sin and say it’s a matter of principle. We say, “This isn’t personal – I just need to stand up for what is right.”

That is why so many church conflicts are so hard to resolve. When peacemakers come in and try to bring resolution to the conflict, it doesn’t work because they are focusing on a bunch of things that are really a smokescreen. It’s the same thing in marriages. A wife has 20 complaints, you resolve all 20 of them, and now she has 20 more. Why? Because those complaints aren’t the real issue. The issue is they wanted something and didn’t get it. Something happened that touched one of their hostile desires.

How to Spot Selfish Pride

One question we have been asking as elders is this – how can we spot this in potential leaders early on, before they get into leadership roles and cause all kinds of problems? And James gives us a good answer to that right here. One way we can spot selfish pride in someone is to watch him and see how he reacts when he doesn’t get what he wants. Three times in the life of this church we have had a leader who wanted something (all three times involving money). When they didn’t get what they wanted, they became angry, and then made an effort to split the church. This is one way you can spot selfish pride, because selfish pride will always react in peace-destroying ways when it doesn’t get what it wants. Selfish pride produces rogue, hostile desires that will attack anyone or anything that gets in their way – including their own conscience.

The War Within

Notice that James describes them in verse one as **your desires that battle within you**.¹ Did you know that you are being betrayed? You are trying to follow Christ, but your efforts are being undermined by a traitor. The traitor is your own, hostile desires. James says those desires **battle within you**. Those cravings declare war on your conscience. When your desires are in line with what is right then there’s no problem. But when a rogue desire comes into conflict with holiness – it wants something different from what God says is right, you get an internal war – your cravings versus your conscience. Your soul says, “I want that thing,” but God’s Word says, “No, that thing is forbidden.” The submissive soul that trusts God would say, “Oh, it’s forbidden? Well, in that case, I don’t want to have any part of it.” But our souls are not always that submissive and trusting, are they? The flesh says, “It’s forbidden? I still want it.” And your conscience says, “You can’t have it - you’ve made the decision to follow Christ.” And your flesh says, “*I still want it!*” And the war is on - conscience versus craving.

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from desires of the flesh, which war against your soul.

You see, when people go to war with each other on the outside it is because one or both parties have lost the war on the inside. First there is a war on the inside where the traitorous cravings of my flesh are trying to stage a coup and get up on the throne in my heart. And if my conscience loses that war, and those hostile desires gain control, the next step is they will declare war on anyone or anything that hinders the fulfillment of those hostile desires. So when we have a conflict, James wants us to look inward. Ask

¹ See Davids for a good argument that this is referring to internal desires, as opposed to “among you.”

the questions: What did I want that I didn't get? Or what was I getting that I didn't want? Leave no stone unturned until you can find those hostile desires that are causing the problem.

A Matter of Urgency

It is a matter of utmost urgency. Your flesh will try to tell you, "Oh, it's no big deal. These desires are not evil. The thing I'm desiring is perfectly reasonable. It is perfectly reasonable for me to expect my kids to listen to me. It is not an outrageous, unreasonable desire for me to want my husband to pay a little bit of attention to me when he comes home from work." And that's true. There is nothing at all wrong with desiring those things. But there is everything wrong with letting those desires go hostile. If you snap at your husband or your kids or you get into a bad mood when they don't do what you want, or you are giving someone at church the cold shoulder or avoiding them in the hallways – James wants us to understand how serious that really is.

James uses incredibly strong language. In verse 1 the NIV says **What causes fights and quarrels...** But literally it's **What causes wars and battles...**² Then the word in verse 2 is literally **murder**.

2 You covet something but don't get it so you murder.

The words that James used are so extreme that some scholars believe James is being literal – there really were some actual deaths. I doubt it went that far.³ More likely this is yet another reference to the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:21 You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Jesus equated anger toward your brother with murder. Obviously there are greater consequences if you carry out the physical act, but Jesus' point was that the DNA of both sins is exactly the same.

1 John 3:12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.

When John wrote that, was he trying to prevent an epidemic of people slaughtering each other in the church? No, he was going after a heart attitude. Not many churches have people killing each other, but every church has people with that same Cain-like sin in their heart - envy, hostility, and selfish anger. James uses the strong language for the same reason Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount – to wake us up to the severity and seriousness of this sin.

Problems in the Early Church

And as an aside - I want to point out that once again we can see that the romanticized picture of the early church as being the perfect ideal is a myth. James was very likely the first New Testament book written – very early in the life of the church. And yet even then, believers in the church were at each other's throats. There was disunity and disharmony and quarrels and conflicts to the point where James says, "You guys are warring and battling and murdering each other." That is the way the first churches in the New Testament were, and that's the way churches still are. There are some churches that keep everything so shallow that they don't ever have conflicts because they don't ever talk about things that are important. But if they did talk about important things, those churches would have just as much conflict as any other church because the things that cause conflict in churches are hostile desires. And everywhere where there are sinful people, there are hostile desires.

Someone was telling me about a group of people who left this church because they wanted to get away from conflict. They said, "There is too much fighting and quarreling in disagreement here. We just

² And he uses the same two words at the end of the verse - ... **you cannot have what you want so you battle and war.**

³ If they were literally murdering each other, I cannot imagine James would wait until chapter 4 to mention it. And if they were murdering each other, Rome would have taken action and they would all be executed.

need to get away from all that.” And so they left, and when we contacted them and asked, “Have you found a new church yet?” they said, “No – we’re disillusioned with traditional church. We’re tired of the fights and the politics and the problems in traditional church, so were just going to get together and have a fellowship group. We’ll get back to the pure, organic, early church approach of nontraditional, unorganized home fellowship groups, led by the Holy Spirit. The church without walls.” And so that group met for a month or so and then one of the people in the group made a suggestion for what they should do in their meetings, half of the group thought it was a great idea, the other half thought it was a terrible idea, it turned into a heated argument and half the people got up and walked out. Just one month in with a handful of people and their pure, organic, early church, Holy Spirit led fellowship group experienced its first split. Why? Because the problem with traditional church is not the traditional part. The problem with churches with walls is not the walls. The problem with organized religion is not the organization. The problems and divisions and fights and quarrels are not caused by the size of the group or the organizational structure. It’s caused by people who have hostile desires. And when those people say, “I’ve had it with all the conflict in this church – I’m leaving...,” they find that the conflict follows them wherever they go because it’s caused by something in the heart. The solution to conflict in the church is not to run away from it. The solution to anger is not to escape that thing that is provoking your anger.

I read you a quotation last week about how hard it is to stay together. Let me read you the rest of that quotation: "The hardest thing to do is to stick together. Friends, family, marriage, business, bands. It's like resisting gravity. ... The alternative is too predictable. You rid the room of argument... you empty your life of the people you need the most."

You may rid the room of argument but you also rid your life of the very people that God put there to help you grow and change. The solution to conflict is not to run away. The solution is in James 3:18 - be a peacemaker. And that starts with your own heart – dealing with your hostile desires. What did I want that I didn’t get? Or what did I get that I didn’t want?

How to Win the War Within

“Okay, but once I discover what the hostile desires are, what am I supposed to do with those desires?”

You want physical intimacy, your wife is withholding that from you, and now that good, God-given desire has turned hostile and you have resentment. Now you have discovered the desire that’s gone hostile, but now what? What would be the right way to handle that desire? You have the desire to have had a normal childhood, your parents ruined that, and now it’s gone hostile – you can’t forgive your parents. You want your kids to obey and be respectful. You want your husband to listen to you or to be considerate. You want people in the church to care about you. You want someone to welcome you into their life. And you’re thinking, “Okay, I can see that those desires have become hostile desires. But what would be the right way to handle them? How could I have kept them within the boundaries of godly desire?”

The Need beneath the Desire

The answer to that is in verse 2 and again in verse 8.

2 You do not have because you do not ask God.

8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

This is the point that we talked about last week. When your soul gets dried up and thirsty, realize that the only water that can satisfy that thirst is the presence of God. So you ask the questions: What did I want that I didn’t get? Or what did I get that I didn’t want? Then you remind yourself of the good news: whatever that thing is that I wanted, I don’t need it! I don’t need that thing in order to be happy because the presence of God is enough to make me happy.

The key to dealing with a hostile desire is to discover the need beneath that desire. When I'm thirsty, I desire water. But what is the need beneath that desire for water? The need is, my mouth is dry and my body is dehydrated. When I'm hungry – that's a desire for food. What is the need beneath that desire for food? My body is lacking calories and nutrition and my stomach is empty - that's the need that generates the desire.

What about the desires of the soul? What about when I desire love, or respect, or attention, or comfort, or peace, or honesty or a loving spouse? How do I keep those desires from going hostile? The reason those desires go hostile is because I forgot the need underneath them. When I desire comfort, what is the need underneath that desire? The presence of God. That is what my soul needs, and that need comes out as a desire for comfort. When I desire the benefits that come from having a considerate, loving spouse, what is the need underneath that desire? Fellowship with God. When I desire a peaceful, quiet home, the need underneath that desire is the peace that comes from nearness to God. The need underneath every one of the cravings of the soul is the presence of God. And as long as I understand that, my desires for those things will never become hostile. The hostility comes when I get confused and think that the reason I have a desire for a considerate, loving spouse is because I *need* a considerate, loving spouse in order to be happy. If I desire peace and quiet in my house, and I make the mistake of thinking that the need underneath that desire is a peaceful, quiet house, then I will become hostile if someone spoils that.

After last week's sermon some of you might have been wondering - if the presence of God is the only water that satisfies the cravings of the soul, is it wrong for me to go on a vacation? Is it wrong for me to watch a movie or play a game or eat some dessert or hang out with friends or enjoy some music? It depends. If you do those things because you think those are what you need to be happy, then yes, James says you are committing adultery against God. But if you do those things as part of your effort to draw near to God and have fellowship with God and enjoy God's presence, then the more you enjoy them the better.

Enjoying God Through His Gifts

I had a really interesting conversation with Priya White after the sermon last week. Priya just turned 8. She came up to me after the sermon and said, "When I don't feel good or I'm not happy, I need to go to the Bible, right? But what about when I don't feel like reading the Bible?" And so I explained to her, it doesn't always have to be the Bible. There are other ways to have fellowship with God and to experience His presence. I said, "You could go outside and ride your bike or go on the big tree swing. If you do that and think, "This is a gift from God. This is God saying, 'I love you, Priya,' so each time you have fun you say, 'I love You' to God – that is fellowship with God. So you are enjoying God Himself through the swing."

The pleasures of this world (tire swings and food and movies and vacations) are like drinking straws. They aren't the water, but you can use them to drink water. The only water is the presence of God. And that is why we don't have to get upset if we lose one of God's gifts. If you lose your tree swing or your bike or your best friend or your mom and dad, you can still have joy because those things are just straws. And if God takes away one straw, as long as you still have access to the water, you're okay.

So I explained all that, and then Priya asked this question - "What about when none of those fun things satisfy? What about when I'm unhappy, and I don't feel like playing on the swing or riding my bike or anything else?" That is a great question. Sometimes you go on the swing and it's a blast. Other times you go to the same swing and it doesn't satisfy at all. You keep on sampling every single thing in the refrigerator, but nothing hits the spot. Why is that? Why is it that sometimes the pleasures of this life don't seem to work? The answer is this – they usually stop working when my soul starts thinking that they are water instead of straws. I stop using them as a tool to draw near to God, and I look to that thing itself for my satisfaction. And when I do that, God, in His mercy, will take the enjoyment away. So I do my favorite thing, and it's not fun. And I hang around my favorite people, and I'm still down. God does that to remind us that those things are not the water.

So don't hear me saying it's wrong to enjoy God's gifts. It is a good thing to enjoy God's gifts as long as you are using them to enjoy God Himself. Here's a rule of thumb: Love God and use stuff. But we tend to get that turned around and we love stuff and use God. Instead of using the pleasures of this world as a tool to help us enjoy God, we use God as a tool to help us get the pleasures of this world.

Look to God!

And that is what James is talking about in verse 3.

3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives – that you may spend what you get on your desires.

When I think my happiness in life comes from something in this world, then when I'm dry and unhappy, instead of going to God I will go to that thing. Or if I do go to God, it will only be to use God to get the thing that I really treasure.

Covetousness Kills Prayer

That is how covetousness kills prayer. The more covetous desires you have in your heart, the less you will pray. The orientation, and direction, and attention, and focus of your soul will always be in the direction of whatever it thinks the source of happiness is. So if it is something other than God, God becomes a means to an end. I might still pray out of a sense of duty, but I'm not going to feel a lot of urgency or desperation to pray unless I need God to give me the thing that my heart has turned into an idol. And the only way to draw near to God to the point where He satisfies the cravings of your soul is if you seek Him with desperation and urgency.

Think of the presence of God as being something that is on top of a really high, steep, rugged mountain. Getting up that mountain is very difficult, and many times it seems impossible. Nobody ever makes it to the top unless they are desperate to get up there. The only people that are that desperate are the people who are fully convinced that the only water that can satisfy the cravings of their dried-up thirsty soul is up on top of that mountain. When your soul believes there is water somewhere else - happiness and fulfillment can be found from some other source, you might wander a little ways up that mountain, but as soon as you run into the first cliff, you'll give up. And so when you have covetous desires, your whole prayer life will become empty, passionless, perfunctory, boring, and, in many cases, nonexistent.

And you will get so the only prayers you ever pray are really just nothing but statements about how inadequate God is.

"God, please provide a spouse for me, because You're not enough. I need to be married in order to be happy."

"God, you're not enough – I need a better job in order to be happy, so please provide a better job."

We pray prayers like that all the time, except we don't articulate that first part. We don't come right out and say, "God, I need this thing in order to be happy in life."

In fact, we may not even realize it. We think it is a perfectly innocent desire, and we don't even realize that it has gone hostile. And so we go ahead and ask God for it.

"God, please, help me do a good job in this interview."

"Please, help my wife not be in a bad mood today."

It might even be a desire for someone else's benefit.

"Please let me get there on time so the people don't have to wait."

"Please don't let my boss call me in to work on Saturday so I can be free to help my friend move."

Even desires like that can become hostile desires.

Nevertheless, My Will Be Done

"So how do I know if the thing that I'm praying for is actually a covetous, hostile desire?"

One way is to look at your attitude. Are you praying with the same attitude Jesus had when He said, “Nevertheless Your will, not mine be done”? Or is your attitude, “Nevertheless *my* will be done”? When you ask for something in prayer, do you have an attitude that says, “If it turns out that this thing I’m asking for is contrary to God’s perfect plan at this moment, then I would really much rather have God’s perfect plan than this thing that I’m asking for”? Or is your attitude, “I want this thing, period”? If there is a conflict between what I think is best right now and what You say is best right now, I still want it to go my way.” If that’s your attitude, that is a covetous desire.

If I ask God for a new car or a job or a spouse or physical healing, my attitude should be, “God, I want this thing so that I can use it to draw near to You and enjoy Your presence.” And if God’s answer is, “If I give you physical healing right now, or if I give you a spouse or the car, in this particular situation that thing you are asking for wouldn’t result in a greater experience of My presence” - if that’s the case, then why would I still want that thing? If my purpose really is to enjoy God, and that thing won’t help me do that in this case, then why would I still want it?⁴

I hope you don’t read verse 3 and think, “Wow, some of my prayers are being rejected on a technicality.” This is not a little technicality about procedures or technique in prayer. This is a question of who is God – me or Him? When my flesh has covetous desires, and then has the gall to ask God to provide those things, at that point, instead of bowing before Him as God, my flesh is treating Him like an errand boy.

This is why people get angry at God. When people get in the way of our hostile desires, we get mad at them, and we quarrel and fight. If God gets in the way of them getting there hostile desires, they become angry at Him.

Entitlement

And it all comes from pride – just as he told us in chapter 3. And pride always has a sense of entitlement. Entitlement is when you think you deserve to have something and others are obligated to give it to you. That entitlement is what causes the anger. I don’t get angry when I don’t win the lottery, because I don’t feel entitled to that (especially since I never buy a ticket). I don’t get angry when I don’t get a bone-in ribeye every night for dinner, because even though my desire for ribeye is strong, I don’t have any sense that I deserve to have it every night.

But if I set my drink down and it spills all over my computer and destroys it, I get irritated. Why? Because I feel entitled to a trouble-free lunch. I’m *supposed* to have a trouble-free lunch, and that has been taken from me, and so now I’m mad.

Entitlement is one of the biggest things that causes people to walk away from the faith. They went to church every Sunday, read their Bibles, said their prayers, stayed away from R-rated movies, didn’t listen to secular music – did all this stuff for God, and then He takes away a loved one. Or something really painful happens. And they say, “Forget this,” and they bail on Christianity. Why? Because they thought God owed them something and He didn’t pay up.

It is so important to understand that there’s nothing we could ever do to put God even a little bit in our debt. We can never say to God, “You should give me this because I gave You that.” You can’t give God anything because you don’t have anything that isn’t already His. What are you going to give Him? You’ve got nothing to offer. Your life? He’ll take your life if he wants it. It is already His – He created you. Are you going to benefit God some way by worshiping Him? No, God will glorify Himself through your life no matter what you do. If you reject Him he will glorify Himself by demonstrating His justice when he sends you to hell. If you trust Him and follow Him and worship Him he will glorify Himself by demonstrating his infinite mercy and patience in forgiving all your sins and accepting worship from you

⁴ But if we can learn to enjoy all of God’s gifts as straws – as tools that we use to draw near to God, it is such a wonderful way to live because 1) there is no limit to how much you can enjoy His gifts. The more you enjoy them the better. And 2) it will keep you from sin. If I want to enjoy an earthly pleasure in order to draw near to God, as soon as the enjoyment of that earthly pleasure crosses the line into sin, I will no longer want it because if I enjoy it in a sinful way it will do the opposite of what I am looking for – closeness with God.

that is shot through with even more sin. There is nothing you or I could ever do to benefit God, enrich God, add to His greatness, add to his eternal blessedness – we have nothing to offer Him that is not already His. We are entitled to nothing but His wrath and eternal punishment.

Conclusion: Desire for Pleasure

Let's close our time today by taking one last look at verse 1.

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

Last week I told you that the Greek word for **desire** in verse 2 is the word for coveting. But the word translated **desire** in verse 1 is a different word. It is the word *hedone*, from which we get our word hedonism. I think a good biblical definition for this word would be this: the desire to feel good by indulging the flesh. And when I say "the flesh" I'm not just referring to the physical body. Scripture uses the term flesh to refer to that part of you that says, "I don't care what God says right now – I want what I want!" Someone hurts you, and there's that part of you that just says, "I don't care what God says right now – I just want to hurt them back."

"I don't care what God says right now, I just want some sensual pleasure."

"I don't care if wisdom from God says I need to get out of bed right now, I just want to sleep in."

"I know God wants me to clock out and go home to my family right now, but I just really want to finish up this task and get some more work done."

It's any time you say, "I know God wants this, but right now I want that." When you go with what you feel like doing instead of what you know God wants - that's *hedone* – living for fleshly pleasure.

There is nothing wrong with desiring pleasure. God promises pleasure.

Psalm 16:11 ...you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

God commands us to seek all kinds of pleasurable things – joy, comfort, rest, delight, thankful enjoyment of His gifts. He commands us to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven and to seek rewards from Him. God created pleasure, He gave us an appetite for pleasure, and He commands us to live for pleasure. So there is nothing wrong with seeking pleasure. The problem comes when we say, "I want this pleasure, right now, regardless of what God says." That's when it turns into this *hedone* kind of pleasure.

And if you give into those kinds of pleasures, they will do terrible things to you. For one thing, they will replace your love for God.

2 Timothy 3:1 There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be ... 4 lovers of pleasure (hedone) rather than lovers of God

These kinds of pleasures cannot exist side-by-side with love for God. If love for that kind of pleasure is in your heart, it means love for God has been replaced. How do they replace your love for God? They do it by deceiving you and then enslaving you.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were ... deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures (hedone).

They trick you into getting hooked, and once you are hooked you can't escape. They become the master and you become the slave. And from there they choke the life out of you.

Luke 8:14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures (hedone)

Solution: Faith

So how do we manage to resist *hedone* - pleasures of the flesh that resist God's way? We can do it the way Moses did it.

Hebrews 11:25 [By faith Moses] chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures (*hedone*) of sin for a short time.

The way to overcome hostile desires, covetous desires, and the hedonistic desires for fleshly pleasures is by faith. Trust in the promises of God – especially this one: if you draw near to Him, He will draw near to you.

Benediction: Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

1. Name two or three pleasures of life that you would really like to work on learning how to use them in order to enjoy God more.
2. Which of your desires most often tend to “go hostile”?
3. Which of your desires do you find it hardest to convince your soul that the need beneath that desire is the presence of God?