

James Part 9

War / Peace

James 4:1-10

Memory Verses: James 4:7

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

This morning we begin James chapter 4. And you may notice that I have my **sword**. Now, if you have been with us at Stone Creek for some time you know that I only bring out the sword when I'm talking about warfare. So I wonder what we are talking about this morning.

So far in the book of James we have seen that there are many battles we will face as believers in this life. In chapter 1 we saw that we will face the battle against various trials, the battle against temptation, and the battle against casual christianity in which we must decide whether to be hearers of the word only or doers of the word, putting our faith into action. In chapter 2 we recognized that we must face the battle against partiality, and the battle against dead faith which leads to a false salvation. In chapter 3 we were confronted with the battle against our tongues; what we speak, and the battle against our attitudes; how we act. As we saw last week, we can hold to a worldview where we are of the upmost importance which manifests itself in arrogance or we can choose a worldview where God is of the upmost importance which manifests itself in meekness. These are all battles that must be fought and won in the great war against Satan and the flesh. The great war which if lost will end in our eternal destruction, and if won will end in our eternal glorification. We may struggle to win every battle: some we will win and some we will lose, but in the end we must win the war against the never ceasing tractor beam like pull of the flesh.

Which brings us to chapter 4. Read with me in **James 4:1-10**. As the great Sean Connery, playing the role of King Arthur, says in the movie *First Knight*: "there is a peace that is only to be found on the other side of war. And if that battle must come, I will fight it!"

I promise you friends, that battle, that war, must be fought. In a famous message by one of my favorite pastors; John Piper, he says this; "The only possible attitude toward out-of-control desire is a declaration of all-out war. I hear so many Christians murmuring about their imperfections and their failures and their addictions and their shortcomings — and I see so little war. Murmur, murmur, murmur. "Why am I this way?" Make war! Don't just bellyache about your failures. Make war!"

Christian, I am here today to make sure you understand how important it is that we don't continue to treat the Christian life like a cruise

vacation. Rather, we arm ourselves, charge the enemy, and make war. And, here in James we find a strategy by which we can be assured of victory. Here we see how to win the war against the flesh and find a lasting peace with God. This morning I want you to know that... **There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!** Look with me at this passage this morning and you will see 4 strategies with which you can win the war against the flesh and find peace with God.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First, you make war with the flesh when you... **Recognize That Your Physical Confrontations Stem From Spiritual Complications**. Let's examine again **vs. 1-2**. As humans, and even as believers, we have a major problem; we like to fight. In this world, and in the church, it is not uncommon to see quarrels, fights, and even murder. If you go on youtube you can find endless videos of chaotic fights, fist fights, during church worship services and business meetings. Each one of you can share a story of a heated disagreement you've had with a co-worker, neighbor, or even brother or sister in Christ. And though many of us will never take it this far, just in 2019 there were over 16,000 murders in the United States alone. There is something within each of us, that if not subdued, will cause us to live at war with one another.

Verse 2 shows us the reason; sin - more specifically, the sin of covetousness. We see something we want, something that we do not have, something that someone else may have, and we go to war with them to obtain it. We covet worldly pleasures and possessions and cannot obtain them by any other means except quarreling, fighting, and murdering. Like the pirates of the Caribbean who would sack and pillage towns to gain their riches, we have become pirates among one another. Think about how this has this played out practically in our lives. You may want respect, but someone has disrespected you. It's time to yell. You may want a promotion but there's someone already in that position. It's time to slander. You may be hungry but you don't have enough money to buy food. It's time to steal.

For us as believers it shouldn't be that easy though, should it? Because we have two natures. We have our original sin nature, often referred to as the flesh. And, we have our new christian nature, often referred to as the Spirit. **Verse 5** tells us that as believers, God has caused His Spirit to dwell inside each of us. These two natures have warring passions. Within each believer lives a litany of worldly passions and godly passions which are diametrically opposed to one another. **When we yield to the flesh** instead of the spirit our spiritual war becomes a **physical war**. What's on the inside is manifest on the outside. Therefore, we must yield to the Spirit.

Romans chapter 8 speaks to this conflict in more detail. Look with

me at **Romans 8:5-8**. When we yield to the flesh we are hostile to God... we are at war with not only each other but also our Lord. However, when we yield to the spirit we find life and peace with God and with one another. We must make war against our flesh so we are no longer at war with each other and God. **There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!**

Secondly, you make war on the flesh when you... **Realize That Your Personal Contentment Can Be Satisfied Through Spiritual Communication**. As believers, we do not only have a problem with quarrels and fighting, covetousness and sinful passions, but we have a problem with prayer. Look again at **vs. 2-3**. We fight to get what we want so that we are content. What we really want is contentment and satisfaction in our souls, yet we constantly seek for it from sources that simply cannot satisfy us. **The things of this world cannot satisfy a soul that is not from this world**. We cannot be spiritually satisfied with physical pleasures. We can only be spiritually satisfied through spiritual means. So what does that look like? It looks like prayer. We cannot be spiritually satisfied apart from prayer. But we have a problem with prayer. The first problem... we don't receive because we don't ask... we don't pray! You can't expect to receive spiritual blessings when you don't even ask for them. I'm simply amazed at how many people claim to be Christians and yet have no prayer life with which to draw spiritual strength from.

So we don't find spiritual contentment because we don't pray... and we don't find spiritual contentment because when we do pray, we pray the wrong way. Once again, we won't receive spiritual satisfaction when we pray for worldly pleasure. There is a right way to pray.. for spiritual, supernatural blessings, and there is a wrong way to pray... for trivial worldly things like bags of cash and corvettes. Pray for God's will, not your will. Pray that God would mature you, not enrich you. Pray that God will grow your love for him and others, not that you would be loved. Look at **1 John 5:14** which says, "if we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us." When we learn to pray correctly, we will learn to be content. If you want peace in your soul... go to war on your knees. **There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!**

Thirdly, you make war on the flesh when you... **Repent From Your Pagan Carnality And Resist Any Spiritual Competitors**. We find this in **vs. 4, 7-9**. According to **verse 4** we are adulterous people; we are cheating on God. The Bible says that we are His bride and yet we are giving our affections, affections that should be reserved for Him alone, to worldly (fleshly, carnal) things. **Our deepest affections should**

be reserved only for our Lord and Savior. So, in effect, when we become friends (or lovers) with the world we make God our enemy... we have made war with God. And please recognize this, If we do this as Christians, God is not at war with us, but we are at war with God. **1 John 2:15** tells us that we are to not love the world or the things of the world because if we do, the love of the Father is not in us. Meaning we've exchange the love we should have for God for other things. In this way we have become as **verse 8** tells us, double minded. **Luke 16:13** tells us that we cannot serve two masters; you cannot serve both God and money, because we will hate one and love the other.

So how do we dismiss our mistresses and reject idolatry? We must resist the lure of the world and it's master, the Devil. We make war! When the Devil comes to temp us we arm ourselves with prayer and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God! We storm the gates of hell and resist their forces at every turn! We, in self-control, deny our fleshly desires and by proxy resist Satan. And when we do that, the word tells us, here in **verse 7**, that he will flee, the temptation will lessen, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim.

We resist the devil... and then we must repent of our sins and our idolatry. We must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts by confessing our sins and turning from them. And here we see the difference between apologizing for our sin and repenting of our sin. Repentance means feeling emotional regret and turmoil over our sin. **Verse 9** tells us that we are to mourn and weep over our sinful spiritual adultery. Tell me, when is the last time you wept and mourned over your sin? When is the last time that the joy of sinning was turned into gloom? When we resist the Devil and our own idolatry and every other competitor seeking the affection that only belongs to God... we war against the flesh and our hearts are broken. **There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!**

Lastly, you make war with the flesh when you... **Remember That You Were Purposefully Created To Glorify God By Finding Spiritual Complacency In Him**. Look again at **vs. 5-10**. **Verse 5** tells us that God not only loves us but that he yearns for us and is jealous for us. As our creator and our savior he wants us to love him and him alone. In **verse 6** He loves us enough to give us grace even when we cheat on him... when we sin he gives even more grace. What kind of a God is this? In **verse 7** He calls us to submit to his Spirit, rather than the flesh, and find satisfaction in Him alone. He is telling us that only through obedience to him, to his word, can we be satisfied. In him is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. In **verse 8** he calls us to draw near to him, to taste and see that he is good, to experience the warmth of his love, to fall in love with him alone. You see... and this is the point... **God is most glorified in us when we are most**

satisfied in him – John Piper. The purpose we were created for is accomplished when we find in him the one thing we've been searching for our whole lives... peace, complacency! And when we find it in him... by drawing nearer to him... then he will draw near to us, satisfy us... and, as we see in verse 10, exalt us. We win when we are satisfied in him. The war is over when we humble ourselves and find peace in God alone.

There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!

Application

The war with the flesh rages on and on as long as we live. It will not be over until we are taken home to be with God forever. But that doesn't mean we can't live in victory now. If we yield to the Spirit, if we pray for his will, if we resist the devil, if we repent of our idolatry, and if we draw near to God... we can win every battle we face with the flesh. Yes, **there is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh... so make war!** But there is another thing to consider... Jesus has also fought this war for us on our behalf. He fought the legalism and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He fought the racism of the Jews and Samaritans. He fought for the poor, the hurt, the needy, and the marginalized. He fought for you... so that you could be freed from the slavery of sin and the penalty of sin. He fought on the cross... he fought to the death.. and even then he kept fighting as he was raised again. And guess what... he still fights for you, interceding on your behalf before the throne of God. He will never stop fighting for you.

The question that remains, then, is this... How long do you want to go on losing at life? How long do you want to war with God? How much do you desire peace in your soul? Today you can find peace in your soul. Today you can stop fighting every single day to find satisfaction and contentment. You can stop looking in the bars, the parties, the sinful relationships, money, popularity, prestige, or power. And you can find just what you are looking for in Christ. When we make war upon our flesh and our sinful passions by submitting to God in repentance and humility the Spirit within us will be victorious. And we will be fully satisfied in God... we will find peace with God.

Conclusion

In June of 1940, at Dunkirk, France, 300,000 plus men were awaiting British ships to board and escape the advancing German tank battalions. But no ships were coming. Someone had messed up and barring a miracle every man on that shore would either die or be captured. But a miracle did come... in the form of civilian fishing boats, sail boats, and ferry boats; 860 of them to be exact. You see, someone caught wind of the situation and made a call out over the British radio air

waves... and unexpectedly, pretty much everyone with a boat made their way across the ocean to rescue these men.

You know the story. So perhaps you can think of it this way. How many people are at war with their flesh and after gaining no ground are left stranded on the shores of selfish idolatry. They've tried to save themselves with worldly pleasures only to find it gets them nowhere. But then, out of nowhere, you see a ship coming to rescue you... a ship you could have never expected. Rather than the sunk ships of self-gratification, this is the ship of God's loving grace. God is throwing you a life line... he says; "throw yourselves upon me and I will take you away from the war and into peace." In the end you realize... loving God, glorifying God, being satisfied in God alone is the only way to win the war against the flesh and find soul satisfying peace. Don't get left on the shore to be overcome by the enemy. Today there is a way to escape the flesh, win the war, and find peace.