

1 THE SOURCE OF OUR CONFLICTS

JAMES 4:1-4

2 Conclusion of James 1-3

- A believer should stand confidently (chap. 1)
- A believer should serve compassionately (chap. 2)
- A believer should speak carefully (chap. 3)
- He should:
 - be what God wants him to be
 - do what God wants him to do
 - and speak as God wants him to speak
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3 Today we are talking about conflict

- I think it is safe to say that we all experience conflict.
- Much of that conflict seems to get stirred up when we open our mouth to insert our foot!
- Probably most of us agree that we cannot always agree!
- And we should know that pride goes before a fall!

4 Pride goes before a fall!

- A minister, a Boy Scout, and a computer expert were the only passengers on the small plane.
- The pilot came back to the cabin and said that the plane was going down but there were only 3 parachutes and 4 people.
 - The pilot said, *"I should have one of the chutes because I have a wife and three small children."* So he took one and jumped.
 - The computer whiz said, *"I should have one because I am the smartest man in the world and everyone needs me."* So, he took one and jumped.
 - The minister turned to the Boy Scout and with a sad smile said, *"You are young and I have lived a rich life, so you take the remaining chute and I'll go down with the plane."*

5 Pride goes before a fall! (2)

- The Boy Scout said, *"Relax, Pastor, the smartest man in the world just picked up my knapsack and jumped out."*
- James has already warned against the problem of pride in the first 3 chapters. Now in chapter 4, he shows where a spirit of pride and the pursuit of self-gratification leads us.

6 James 4:1-3 (KJV)

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

7 James 4:4-6 (KJV)

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.

*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.*

8 **James 4:1-3 (LEB)**

*From where are conflicts and from where are quarrels among you?
Is it not from this, from your pleasures that wage war among your members?
You desire and do not have; you murder and are filled with envy, and are not able to obtain; you fight
and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*

9 **James 4:4-6 (LEB)**

*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, in order that you may spend it on
your pleasures. Adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?
Therefore whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
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."

10 **THE CAUSE OF OUR CONFLICT**

JAMES 4:1-2

11 **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...)

12 **How do we recognize conflict in our world?**

- Entitlement – when people feel the world owes them something without having to do anything to earn it.
- Focus of many children
 - Designer fashions
 - TVs
 - Complaining about good food
 - Teams that hand trophies out to every kid on the team to preserve self-esteem
- Impact of entitlement:
 - 1) debt
 - 2) inappropriate priorities
 - 3) laziness without responsibility
 - 4) blame others without accountability
 - 5) failure to be wise – to live as Christ commands

13 **Where do these conflicts originate?**

- James' question was rhetorical -- he answers his own question.
- James 4:1b
 - ...*come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* (James 4:1, KJV 1900)
 - *Is it not from this, from your pleasures that wage war among your members?* (James 4:1b, LEB)
- Desires = ἡδονῶν (hedonism) -- the playboy philosophy that makes pleasure mankind's chief end
- "in your members" -- μέλειςιν -- your body since it becomes the instrument of sin

14 **Romans 7:14-18**

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

15 **Romans 7:19-23**

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

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.

16 **1 Thessalonians 5:23**

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23, KJV 1900)

- Spirit occurs 6x more often than body
- Soul occurs 3x more often than body
- So from God's perspective, we are about 60% spirit, 30% soul, and 10% body

17 **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.

18 **Which is the most important?**

- To God, our spirit is the most important -- this is where the Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we receive Jesus as Savior and Lord
- Our soul is the battleground of life,
 - *Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life.* (Proverbs 4:23, KJV 1900)
 - Fasting helps turn off physical impulses so that we can better listen to God to improve our thinking, feeling, and decision-making
- While our body is a temple to God, it is the least important.
 - *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:* (Mark 9:47, KJV 1900)

19 **The mind and the brain are not the same....**

- The soul consists of three areas:
 - Your mind is where you think
 - Your heart is where you feel
 - Your will is where you make decisions
- The mind of a Christian is free at any time to make righteous and wise decisions because we are no longer the slaves of sin.

20 **Romans 6:12-14**

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:12–14, KJV 1900)

- By an act of our will, we can yield our flesh / members / body to serve God.
- Christians are no longer the slaves of sin!

21 **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.

22 **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 1900)
- *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 1900)

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23 **Changes to the human brain**

- When we act upon a decision, a set of neurons stores that information (sometimes in the “wrinkles” on the surface of the brain).
- But when we continue to repeat the action, our brain creates a well-established neural pathway that makes this repeated action easier and more efficient.
- This is why our “members” (body, including the brain) often lead us to follow previously-established patterns of sin.

24 **The road analogy**

- - We sin one time and stores a small neural pathway -- like a trail through the grass in the woods.
 - We continue to sin, and the trail turns into a dirt road, then an asphalt lane, and then into a divided 6-lane super-highway.
 - Our actions tend to take the path of least resistance

25 **Habitual sins have made an in-road to our lives**

- The more we repeat a wrong behavior, the easier it is to return to it.

- Pornography gets so easy for some men, they don't see anything wrong with it.
- People eat or drink things they know are wrong without any thought to the consequences.
- But there is good news! Even superhighways will break down and become useless without regular use and maintenance.
- We can build NEW neural pathways of righteousness with every righteous and godly decision.

26 James sees this truth

- Our flesh (members, brain) is hard-wired to pursue pleasure and avoid pain.
 - We pursue the fleeting pleasure of dopamine and serotonin that comes from gratifying the flesh.
 - Each time we do, we reinforce that behavior in the future.
- But each time we pursue righteousness, we reinforce godly behavior in the future. But we have to look for different rewards.
 - Illustration -- working out in the gym is not always fun, but it is worth it!

27 THE CONSEQUENCE OF OUR CONFLICT

JAMES 4:2-4

28 The fruit of the flesh

- *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.* (James 4:2, KJV 1900)
- War is the fruit of illicit wants.
 - Lust brings about murder.
 - Covetousness results in the frustration of not obtaining the hotly pursued desires.
 - It all leads to the "quarrels" and "fights," that "battle" against people, mentioned in verse 1.
 - The problem starts when we want the things of the world to fill a void in our life that only Christ can fill!
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29 A wrong focus

- If I want to make material things my focus then I will never be satisfied, I will never be content. I will be angry and depressed.
- One of the biggest reasons we find ourselves in this trap that James speaks of here is because of our passion for money.
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10 -- The love of money (instead of our love for God) is at the heart of all kinds of evil like fighting and quarreling; like envy and covetousness. In this hot pursuit of worldly wealth we pierce ourselves with many griefs.

30 1 Timothy 6:6-10

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

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31 The real problem

- The last part of verse 2, *You do not have, because you do not ask God*, is best taken with what follows.
 - James is NOT saying that their lusts are not being gratified because they have failed to ask God for what they covet
 - James IS saying that people fail to ask God to fill the right desires to truly satisfy the soul
 - He simply revealed the clear source of conflict deep in covetous human hearts

32 **The prayer request that God does not grant**

- *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* (James 4:3, KJV 1900)
- The correct way for Christians to have their legitimate needs met is by asking God.
 - One reason a believer does not receive what he asks for is that he asks with wrong motives (lit., “evilly” or “amiss,” *κακῶς*).
 - The verb ask is in the middle voice, meaning, “ask for yourself.” The purpose clause that follows further clarifies, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
 - “Spend” could be translated “squander.” “Pleasures” is again the Greek word *ἡδοναῖς* (cf. v. 1). God will never provide for “hedonistic squandering”!

33 **Going the wrong direction**

- It is strange how people refuse to listen to God’s His counsel yet they want him to answer their prayers. How can we expect a pure gift from God when we ask with impure motives? (Like praying to win the lottery so you can bless the church...)
- Having wrong motives will always lead us in the wrong direction.

34 **Tunneling in darkness**

- In November 1975, 75 convicts started digging a secret tunnel designed to bring them up at the other side of the wall of Saltillo Prison in northern Mexico.
- On April 18, 1976, guided by pure genius, they tunneled up into the nearby courtroom in which many of them had been sentenced.
- The surprised judges returned all 75 to jail. How misguided and misdirected were they?
- When you’re tunneling in darkness, it is easy to go in the wrong direction. When people live in darkness rather than light, they go in the wrong direction.

35 **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 1900)
 - Usually, James refers to his readers as “brethren” or “beloved brethren.” But his tone changes here.
 - Friendship (*philia*) with the world is hatred toward God.
 - ANYONE can choose to be the world’s friend and God’s enemy -- even Christians!
- A horrible consequence that is greater than not having your prayers answered: a rebellious Christian who has an illegitimate relationship with the world is at odds / enmity with God!

36 **Why can’t you have both?**

- We cannot pursue God and also make worldly pleasures our goal.
- Just ask your spouse how they would feel if you were as friendly with another person as you are with them!
- There is a reason James uses the word “adulterers.” God wants our love to be exclusively for Him, and not for the things of the flesh.

- When we turn to the world for fulfillment, it breaks the heart of God.

37 **Romans 8:5-8**

- *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*
- *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*
- *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*
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38 **“Best of both worlds” song by Van Halen**

*I want the best of both worlds,
and honey I know what it's worth;
If we could have the best of both worlds,
a little bit of heaven right here on earth.
You don't have to die and go to heaven,
or hang around to be born again;
just tune in to what this place has got to offer,
'cause we may never be here again.*

- Many Christians want the blessings of Christ but still want to be able to indulge in all the worldly pleasures too and have God be all right with it.

39 **Whom do we love?**

- Jesus said in Matthew. 6:24 -- *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* (Matthew 6:24, KJV 1900)
- Which one do we love -- God or the world?
 - We say we love the Lord but if that's true then we must despise the world.
 - It's not a problem for a Christian to be in the world, the problem is when the world is in the Christian!

40 **How do you know whom you love?**

- *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* (John 15:18–19, KJV 1900)
- If the world is too comfortable around you then you are its friend. People are most comfortable with those who are comfortable with them.
 - If people know you are a devout Christian and have no interest in spiritual truth, they are going to be uncomfortable around you. They will be uncomfortable in their speech around you; they will be uncomfortable in their actions around you.
 - Jesus isn't saying our goal is to be hated by the world. He is highlighting the inevitable.

41 **NEXT TIME**

THE CURE FOR CONFLICT (JAMES 4:5-6)