The Danger in Being a Friend of the World, Part 1
James 4:1-2
59-22

1987

Let's turn in our Bibles tonight for our time of study in God's Word to James chapter 4...James chapter 4. And we have an ongoing study of James' epistle. We're not in a hurry. It's a brief epistle and even if we take our time we'll get through this in my life time. So we are not pressed to run ahead of the things that the Spirit of God would lay upon our hearts as we study together.

We come for our message tonight to the first six verses of chapter 4. That's really a unit of thought, although we never are guaranteed that we'll get through any single unit of thought in one time together. That is a unit of thought and I'd like, if I might, to read you that section, James 4 beginning at verse 1 and through verse 6.

"From where come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence of your lusts that war in your members? You lust and have not, you kill and desire to have and cannot obtain, you fight in war yet you have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts. You adulteresses, do you not know 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 you think that the scriptures says in vain the Spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? But He gives more grace. Wherefore He said, God resists the proud but gives grace unto the humble."

Let's ask the Lord to bless our study together, can we bow for a moment?

Father, as we come to this passage, we do plead the power and the teaching ministry of Your blessed Spirit. We would understand and we would apply what it is that You are saying to us and we give You praise in anticipation of that for Christ's sake. Amen.

This, I believe, is one of the most potent texts in this epistle and it deals again with another test of living faith, another test of genuine faith. Do I need to say again that James gives us in this epistle a series of tests by which to evaluate the genuineness of one's faith? I heard today, in fact in our prayer time earlier tonight with the elders, we prayed for a lady, a lady well known to most of you in our congregation if you've been here for any length of time. She and her husband were very active in our church, very aggressive in serving with our youth ministry and serving with our children's division. He was serving in spiritual leadership in the church. They were high profile. I knew them well, watched them through the years. We had not seen them in quite a while and she appeared in the church in recent days to announce to the folks that she met and talked with that she no longer believed anything that she once said she believed, no longer affirmed the deity of Christ, no longer would even admit that she was a sinner. In fact made the statement, "I don't believe I'm a sinner

anymore, I've put that all aside and I believe Grace Community Church is a cult," and she went on and on and on.

Frightening and almost inconceivable thing to hear from the lips of this particular person whom I knew so very well and from whose lips I heard the affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ so repeatedly. Further information about the situation has determined that she has left her husband, is pursuing a divorce, engaged in adultery and a life that is displeasing to God and has demonstrated a heart that is a friend of the world and not a friend of God. And that's the issue James speaks of in this passage.

This is another test of genuine faith. It is one thing to say you believe, it is one thing to say you're a Christian, it is one thing to go through the motions, it is another thing to prove it by your life. And all through this epistle James is giving us tests of living faith. The first test was how you respond to trials, chapter 1. And then there was how you respond to temptations and who you blame for them. And then there was how you react to the Word of God, do you receive it and obey it? Are you a doer of the Word or only a hearer? And then how you respond to people in need, do you have the true religion that reaches out to the fatherless and the widows, or do you demonstrate, as chapter 2 outlined, partiality toward some people? And then there was that great and comprehensive test of works in chapter 2 verse 14 and following where James says if your faith is real it will prove itself in works, for faith without works is...what?...it's dead. And then there was the tongue in chapter 3 and the tongue is a test of true salvation, it's a test of transformation because out of your mouth comes the evidence of what's in your heart. And James is really reiterating what Jesus said that it's the heart that produces the vocabulary and the speech.

And then we just studied at the end of chapter 3 another test of living faith and that is the kind of wisdom that you exhibit. Is it the wisdom that is from above or is it the wisdom that is not from above which is earthly and sensual and demoniacal?

And now he comes to another key indicator of true saving faith and that is one's attitude toward the world. For to be a friend of the world is to be...what?...be enemy of God. And it's not so much that you are God's enemy as it is that God becomes your enemy, which is far more fearful a perception. Typically, by the way, as James unfolds these tests through the epistle, he really cycles back very often through something he has already said. And in chapter 1 verse 27 he really introduced this when he said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction...in their affliction...and to keep oneself...what?...unstained from the world." So he already introduced the fact that pure religion has a definition that keeps it separated from the world, unspotted, unstained, unsoiled by the world.

Now the key phrase that we want you to note in verses 1 to 6 is the phrase in verse 4, "the friendship of the world." Let me talk about that phrase for a little bit...the friendship of the world. We must understand to whom James refers. The phrase is the dominant theme in this context, either by explicit statement or by implicit statement. All the elements in those six verses, as I see it, fall in line under that concept of friendship with the world. Now the word "friendship" is the word philia, it comes from a Greek verb that's a somewhat familiar verb to us, phileo, it's often translated "love" in the New Testament. There is a word philos which means "friend." The word philia, friendship, is used only here but it's of that same word group. It means to love in the sense of having an emotional attachment to or an affection for. If I can make a distinction and I would admit to you that agapao, the strong and familiar word for love we see throughout Scripture, and phileo are very close in meaning. As I perceive it, if there is any distinction at all, it seems as though in agapao kind of love there is a

stronger volitional drive, whereas in phileo kind of love there is a stronger emotional drive. It is the word group phileo that gives us the word "kiss" to demonstrate emotion and affection. And so what we're talking about here is an affection for the world, an emotional attachment to the world. In fact, we might even imply that it's a strong affection for the world. It's not casual but it implies a deep and an intimate longing to be involved with the world. It is a falling in love with the world, with all the drives and impulses that we would associate with that.

James is not referring to some accidental or some incidental occasion where a believer might be doing something he doesn't want to do or not doing something he does want to do...a time when we fall into some sin or error. This can happen to any believer at any time. What James is referring to is a settled affection, a strong attraction, an intimate relationship. He is not referring simply to some sinful hankering after evil. He's not referring to some luring of the unwilling self into the clutches of the world. He's not referring to those times we fall into sin because in temptation we don't take the ekbasis, the way out, which God always provides. He's not referring to those sins that we stumble into because we do not strongly hold to the means of victorious grace. That happens to all of us. James is not speaking of the acts or circumstances related to spiritual weakness which can pull any believer into the world and into its sin.

But James has in mind a strong love and a determined affection for and an intimate relationship with and a desire to embrace joyfully the world. Philia implies, as best I understand the word, common concerns...common interests...common objectives...common enterprises...deeply felt affection...sharing of experiences. And by the way, the word form in one way or another is used about 29 times in the New Testament. It has the idea of an emotional bonding, of a real affection. And that I believe is the force with which James intends to use the Word. For example, it is used to describe the affection Jesus displayed for repentant sinners in Matthew chapter 11 verse 19, a love definitely of affection. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said...this was the criticism of His contemporary religionists...Behold, a man gluttonous, a wine bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." He demonstrates His affection for tax collectors and sinners.

It was even used by Jesus Himself to describe His loving affection for His disciples in Luke 12 and verse 4. It is used to describe the common interest in killing Christ that Herod shared with Pilate in Luke 23:12. They had a common interest, common concern, common objective and a common affection for one another in terms of their common enterprise to put Jesus Christ to death. It is the term used in John 3:29 to describe the relationship of the groom's best man to the groom...a close kinship, a close friendship, one of affection.

Perhaps a usage which gives us the simplest and clearest definition would be to look to John 15 for a moment. In John 15 and verse 13 here we have the usage of this phileo root and it says in verse 13, "Greater affection has no man than this, than that a man lay down his life for his philos, his friend."

In other words, it is a bond of intimacy which attaches you so deeply to a person that self-sacrifice even to the point of death could occur. Not every such use of the word "friend" implies that, but this one does. And then in verse 14 He says, "You are My friends if you do...what?...whatever I command you." It's a bond then of obedience. In verse 15, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does." He's not privy, he's not intimate. "But I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of My Father I've made known unto you." You have entered into intimacy with Me. You have entered into affection with Me, to common cause, common interest, common enterprise, common objective. And He goes on to say, verse 18, "If the world hates you,

you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you're not of the world I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." And He emphasizes that the union is so great and the identification is so strong that the way the world treats Christ is the way the world would treat the friends of Christ because they are so commonly bound to Christ.

So there it is used to describe the loving affection believers have toward the Lord Jesus Christ which sets them fully apart from the world. And may I take it a step further and remind you that that John 15 passage tells us very clearly that a believer is a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ, right? You are My friends if you do whatever I command you, I used to call you servants, now you've been promoted to intimacy. That could happen very easily in a household where a servant became a friend. You can understand that. And so Jesus is saying, I see you as My friends. And so if believers and disciples are identified as the friends of Christ, then people who are identified as the friends of the world have entered into a deep affection with the world, as the friends of Christ have entered in to a deep affection with Him.

Now what does it mean "the world"? Let's go back to James and just talk about that for a moment. I'm sure you're aware of the use of this term, kosmos, throughout the New Testament. Let me just give it to you simply because we've covered it in other studies together. But the term "world" refers to the man- centered, Satan-directed system of this world which is hostile to God, Christ and the Christian. It's not talking about the earth, it's not talking about the globe, it's not talking about terra firma, it's not talking about anything physical, it's talking about the spiritual reality of the lostness and the ungodliness of this system in which we live, a Satan-directed, man-centered system hostile to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Christian. It refers to all the values of the world, all the mores of the world, the life style of the world, the ethics of the world, the morals of the world, the institutions of the world as they are established apart from and antagonistic to God.

Robert Johnstone who has written a very helpful commentary on James, in fact he wrote it in 1871, has an interesting paragraph which sort of pulls things together. He says, "God made the world very good with beauty and harmony everywhere. All things around contributed to man's rational happiness, ever sending up his thoughts and his affections in admiration and love to the great creator so that he in the sublimity of reason and free will the Lord of the creatures led the chorus of the world's praise. But sin alluring his heart from his heavenly Father brought in jarring discord. The devil became the prince of this world and what God had made order, he made chaos. The world was now enveloped in a distorting and misleading atmosphere of falsehood. All things presented themselves to man's mind and heart in untrue dimensions and relations. And instead of drawing him toward God and leading him into the land of uprightness, guided him further away into the far country of wickedness and death. Thus now God and the world which He created are morally in opposition to each other."

Now the goal of the world is self-glory. The goal of the world is self-fulfillment, self-control, self-indulgence, self- satisfaction. And all of it is hostile to God and all of it is antagonistic to His Word. And all of it opposes His will. And so James is very direct. James says in verse 4 that a deep affection for the world is utterly incompatible with loyalty to God. Okay? Pretty clear cut. In fact he says it is enmity with God...enmity. That word enmity means personal hostility, personal hated. It is a very strong word. It is a form of the term that could be translated enemy. The people James has in mind are hostile to God. They are the enemies of God. They hate God.

Now it's important that we follow this through because we have to know who he's talking about here. In my study of this passage and in my discussions through the years about this passage, I have found that many people believe he's referring to Christians here who are friends of the world. But my study of this scripture indicates that that's an impossibility by the very use of the terms which he is so careful to choose.

Now it says, "Anybody who is a friend of the world is at enmity with God." Hates God, is personally hostile to God, is an enemy of God. Now let's find out who the enemies of God are, okay? Get your Bible ready and let's take a look. Let's begin in Acts chapter 13...Acts chapter 13. And it says in verse 6 when Paul and Barnabas just having been commissioned by the church at Antioch were sent out to the isle of Paphos. They found a certain sorcerer, that's one who performed magic, who may well have been a medium contacting demonic spirits, a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus, son of Jesus. He was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man who called for Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas and Saul, still called Saul, and desired to hear the Word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

So here is this sorcerer who is contact with Satanic sources and he tries to stop the gospel from penetrating the heart of Sergius Paulus. So Saul, who is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit set his eyes on him and this is what he said to this man. This is a no doubt a medium contacting false prophet who conjures up evil spirits and represents the Satanic enterprise. And he says to him, "O full of all deceit and all mischief, you child of the devil, you...what?...enemy of all righteousness."

Here is the enemy. The enemy is one who is closely and intimately aligned with the devil, with Satan and his enterprises.

Chapter 5 of Romans. Let's move a little further into the New Testament and find out who the enemies of God are. In Romans 5 verse 10 we read, and this is a recitation really of the blessings and benedictions that comes to us in our salvation, the results of our justification. Verse 10 says, "For if when we were...what?...enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." And we'll stop at that point. Before our salvation we were what? Enemies...enemies.

Chapter 8 of Romans and verse 6, fascinating text. In fact in verse 5 he starts, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. To be fleshly minded is death, to be spiritually minded is life and peace because the fleshly mind is enmity against God. The enemy of God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God, but you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you." Clearly here the enemy, the one at enmity with God is the fleshly person who does not possess the Spirit and verse 9 says if you have not the Spirit you don't belong to Christ. The logic of what Paul is saying then is an enemy is an unbeliever...an enemy is an unbeliever.

First Corinthians chapter 15, in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 25 we have a look at the future resurrection when the Lord Jesus Christ takes His own, He the firstfruits, verse 23, and afterward they that are Christ's at His coming, that future glorious resurrection. And then delivers up the Kingdom of God...the Kingdom to God, rather, even the Father and so forth. Then in verse 25, "He must reign until He has put all...what?...enemies under His feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death...death."

Look at Philippians chapter 3. The enemies are those who will be subject to Christ's sovereign judgment and in chapter 3 verse 18 Paul mentions people, at the end of verse 18, whom he calls the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, whose own glory is in their shame and who mind earthly things. The enemies of the cross of Christ.

Who are the enemies of God? They are the unbelieving, the unregenerate, the unredeemed who oppose God, who oppose Christ, who oppose the church, who oppose the Apostles, who oppose the preaching of the gospel. Colossians chapter 1 verse 21, "And you," he says in verse 21, "you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." In other words, Christ has taken you who were enemies and reconciled you to God and is presenting you holy, unblameable, unreprovable in His sight. That's salvation, making enemies into friends.

And then in Hebrews...Hebrews...and it's mentioned...enemies are mentioned in chapter 1 verse 13 but look at chapter 10 for just another illustration. This particular idea and statement is repeated in the Old and the New Testament that someday the Lord Jesus is expecting to make His enemies His footstool. In other words, He will put His feet of judgment on the necks of His enemies. I was just thinking of another statement in Nahum chapter 1 verse 2, God is jealous and the Lord avenges, the Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries and reserves wrath for His enemies.

Now what does all that say? I believe what it says is that when you identify an enemy of God you must be talking about an unbeliever. From the positive side, Jesus says you're My friends. From the negative side, every time you see the use of the term enemy it is someone violently opposed to the person of God, the person of Christ, the purpose of God, the people of God, the preaching of the gospel of God. Nowhere that I can find on any page in holy writ are believers ever called the enemies of God. That is not a term to designate true believers.

Chapter 2 verse 23, backing up in James, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and as a result of having righteousness he was called...what?...the friend of God. That's kind of helpful in interpreting this passage, isn't it, because it lets us know that James knows what a friend is and a believing person is a friend of God. An enemy of God can't be the same as a friend of God.

All of that simply to say we are His friends who love and fear Him, and long to do His will, even though we stumble into sin and even though we sometimes are attracted by the world and even though we are blind sometimes to the subtleties of Satan's temptation and we fall victim to that world, and even though there are times when we even lust after the things of the world and we hate the very sin which we do. But to say that a Christian has a settled conviction in his heart of total commitment and affection for the world and has set himself up as an enemy of God is contrary to scriptural terminology and fact. Scripture is very clear that you cannot be...listen carefully...you cannot be the friend of God and the friend of the world. You can't...they're mutually exclusive.

Can I show you that? Let's go back to Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6 verse 24, does this sound familiar? "No man can serve...you tell me...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." And then He says, "You can't

serve God and mammon, or money." In Amos 3:3 the Scripture says, "How can two walk together except they be agreed...agreed?"

I'm thinking too of John 17 verse 14, "I have given them Thy Word and the world has hated them...listen to this...because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world." You see? You cannot be a lover of God and a lover of the world. You cannot affirm your intimacy, affection, and love for God on the one hand and the same for the world. You may stumble into the world and you may fall to its subtleties and you may sin its sins, but you will not love it, it will not be the object of your affection.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 12 Paul says, "Now we have received...this is pretty clear cut...we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God." You see, the very...the very design of the new nature gives us the Spirit of God and not the Spirit of the world. We have a new human spirit planted by the Holy Spirit and that is a spirit that is not in love with the world.

Second Corinthians chapter 6 again emphasizes the mutual exclusivity of these two things. Verse 14, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, what fellowship is unrighteousness...righteousness with unrighteousness, what communion has light with darkness, what concord has Christ with Belial, what part has the one who believes with an infidel, what agreement is there with the temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the living God who said, I'll dwell in them, I'll walk in them, I'll be their God, they'll be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing."

In other words, what he's saying is you have a nature so utterly distinct from the lovers of the world, from the followers of Satan that you should never entertain any of the sins that are characteristic of their life. Now that passage is definitely a call to Christians to stay away from worldly things, but it still points up the incompatibility of the two systems.

Another passage that comes to my mind is at the end of Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14 where Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory or boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and then this statement, "by whom the world is crucified unto Me and I unto the world." Did you get that? What does it mean to be crucified? That signifies what? Death. There's a death here. There's a death to the world. That's what he's saying. At salvation there is a death to the world, a death has occurred. John even says you've overcome the world. Your faith in Me has overcome the world. The two are mutually exclusive.

In 2 Timothy 3 verse 4 Paul describes people who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. In chapter 4 verse 10 he describes a man who is a living illustration of that, Demas who having loved this present world has done what? Forsaken me. Those are again I say mutually exclusive.

And perhaps the capstone of all of it is 1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world...what's the rest of it?...the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. It's not this, it's this. And the world is passing away and the lust of it, but he that does the will of God abides forever." Again, mutual exclusivity, if you love God you cannot love the world. You may fall into worldly things but it will go against the grain of your true affection.

Now having said all of that, I want simply to indicate by that that James must have in mind a false Christian with dead faith who is still in love with the world. That shouldn't surprise us because you remember the statement in Matthew chapter 13, I just thought of another scripture, Matthew chapter 13 verse 22, "He that receives seed among the thorns," you remember it started to grow a little bit, "he's the one who hears the Word but the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choked the Word and it becomes...what?...unfruitful." Now that's the person who hears the gospel, has a momentary response but the love of the world chokes out the saving gospel and the evidence is he's never redeemed because he bears no fruit.

Now I'm not saying that true believers don't need to be warned against the world, we do. I just read you 2 Corinthians 6. And Paul says in Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world," and Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth." And Peter calls for the very same thing, at least a couple of times in 1 Peter. But chapter 4 comes to mind, "For as much as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. He that suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God." In other words, you ought not to act the way you used to act, that's an injunction to believers.

You see, it's one thing to do worldly things and then hate them, it's something else to love the world and love its lusts. And we're talking here in James about the affection of the heart. The lover of the world is the enemy of God and the friend and lover of God sees the world as his enemy. I believe James uses terminology that's far too strong to have believers in mind, far too strong. He's already given us the perspective back in chapter 3 verse 11, "Does a fountain send forth out of the same place sweet and bitter water?" Verse 12, "Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olive berries, a vine bear figs? So no fountain can yield both salt water and fresh." There are some things that can't happen and one of them is you cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God in terms of a deep settled committed affection.

Now that introduces to us the concept of friendship with the world. I want to talk to you out of this passage about the danger of that, okay?...the danger of it. And James really does help us to identify the danger. Friendship with the world puts a person in great danger. Anyone in the state of loving the world, seeking its values over those of God must face the fact that he or she is in serious danger. And that danger is spelled out by one word that we can remember and that's the word "conflict." If we were to define worldliness in one simple way I would think that James puts his finger on it here when he defines worldliness primarily as conflict. Have you noticed the conflict in the world? It's not escaping your attention, is it? At every conceivable level? Conflict in families, conflict in marriages, conflict in employment, conflict in every arena of human existence that escalates ultimately to conflict between nations where peoples as nations are warring against one another...that's simply the macrocosm of the microcosm of conflict that exists in the heart of a worldly person.

Where does all this come from, all this conflict, all this hatred, all this animosity, all this anger and rage that we see all over our world? And I mean it's in the littlest things or the biggest things. I mean, it's as simple as...the other day I was driving down the road and two lanes narrowed into one and I just took my place in one of the, you know, slots that was available and a guy went by me and made a whole series of obscene gestures. He didn't even know who I was, for all he knew I was a wonderful person. But, I mean, the guy was living in absolute conflict and if you got his 12 feet, you're in real trouble. I mean, the hostility is mindboggling. It shatters everything man touches, everything that it...that he touches. It's literally the victim of his hostilities. But that's how it is is you're

a friend of the world.

So, James poses three dimensions of conflict...conflict with others, conflict with self and conflict with God. And all three of those rise out of loving the world because the primary issue with the world is a little four letter word s-e-l-f. And when you have a whole earth full of people living for themselves, you have inevitable...what?...conflict...conflict. And so let's start with the implication that is given in verse 1 of conflict with others.

James says, "Whence wars and whence battles among you," that's the original text. In other words, where do the wars come from? Where do the battles come from that are among you? "Among you," by the way, is best understood in the context to refer to the agitated relationships between people in the church to which James is writing rather than some internal tension in each individual person. I don't think he's talking about your internal war, your internal fighting, I think he is talking about conflict in the assembly of the church...and serious and continuous conflict. The statement is pungent because it has no finite verb, he just spits it out without a verb. And because he uses the interrogative adverb twice, the word "whence," it just adds punch. What he says is...whence wars? Whence battles among you? How did this happen? Where is this coming from? He uses the plural for wars which is the word polemos from which we get polemic which speaks of conflict. And the word wars mean prolonged states of conflict. Then he uses the word for battle, mache, which means a separate fight. So where does the prolonged state of warfare come from and where do those individual battles that fill up that prolonged state come from? And both of these things are expressed in a sense that puts them in the present tense, whence wars and battles among you...it seems to be a continual condition among these people.

And James chooses the violence vocabulary. Look at verse 2, "Lust...kill...fight...wage war...that's pretty strong language." He could have chosen any kind of metaphorical vocabulary but he chooses violence terminology because it expresses the intensity and destructiveness of the conflict in the church.

Do I need to remind you that what was happening in this church was conflict and it was happening because you had some people in the church who were deeply in love with God and other people who were deeply in love with the world. I remember a pastor saying to me one time, we were having a conversation, he was telling me about the trouble in his church and I said, "What do you think the problem is?" He said, "I've just discovered what the problem is, half of my board is saved and half of them aren't." Now that spells trouble because you have people who love God trying to get along with people who love the world, people whose greatest priority is to glorify God, and people whose greatest priority is to glorify self...the conflict is inevitable.

So James uses hot conflict terminology. Now by the way, conflict in the church is not God's design, would you agree with that? Jesus said, "I want you to love one another so all men will know you're My disciples," John 13:34 and 35. Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer, chapter 17 verse 21, that His people would love one another and thus would bear His name properly. He wrote to the Corinthians and pleaded with them to be of the same mind and have the same opinion and speak the same things and break up their factions...I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Christ, and so forth. He wrote to the Philippians in that most beautiful verse 27 of chapter 1 and said I want you to stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. And in the second chapter he says I want you to have the same love for one another, being of one accord, one mind. Unity in the church was greatly on the heart of Jesus Christ. He prayed to His Father that they

may be one, that the world may know that You sent Me.

And yet, conflict in the church is a great reality. Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter 3 and says I can't even speak to you as mature people because you're in such conflict...you're in such hostility toward one another. It happens in the church. In 2 Corinthians even, I think it's at the very end of the epistle, yes in verse 20, "I fear lest when I come I'll not find you such as I would and that I'll be found unto you such as I would not and there would be debates and envying and wrath and strife and back-biting and whispering conceit and disorders." I'd hate to come and find all that stuff there.

Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:4 to 10 about the conflict in the church because false teachers holding up false standards were given a platform.

It was happening in this Jewish congregation to which James wrote, as well. And it was happening because you had lovers of God mixed with lovers of the world. The hot terminology, by the way, of verses 1 and 2 is a fast lane change, isn't it, from the cool terminology of verses 17 and 18 of chapter 3. That sort of sweet peaceful description of wisdom, pure, peaceable, gentle and so forth and so on and then he explodes in to chapter 4 and with that kind of wisdom coming from God, where do all these wars come from? Certainly not from the wisdom of God, not from the wisdom that is from above. But rather these things are definitely indicative. Go back to verse 14, of bitter envying, strife in your hearts, of a wisdom that doesn't come from above but is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. And where that envying and strife are there is confusion in every evil deed.

In other words, what he's saying is...look, you have some people who are claiming to know Christ but they demonstrate a wisdom that doesn't come from God. You have some people who claim to know Christ and they demonstrate a wisdom that is from God and that's the test of the end chapter 3. And that same test carries on into chapter 4. Where do these wars and fightings come from? Certainly not from people whose wisdom is pure and peaceable, easy to be entreated and gentle. The very wars he talks about in chapter 4 verse 1 are evidence of the presence of worldly wisdom in conflict with divine wisdom. So the legacy of conflict is given by the two kinds of wisdoms clashing. Small wonder there was conflict in a church where the wheat and the tares were mixed, where people who were the friends of God were trying to work with people who were the friends of the world. And as we saw in the final two verses of James chapter 5 when he wraps the epistle up, the goal of this epistle is to bring people to true salvation and these are the tests given to awaken them to whether it's true or not. And so he assumes in that first statement of verse 1 that there is conflict with others. And that's the way it is in loving the world because every friend of the world, interestingly enough, is an enemy of every other friend of the world in one sense because you live for self. And anybody who gets in your way is reason for hostility. So inevitably, a friend of the world, a lover of the world, one who sets his affections on the things of the world will be consumed with this own lust and his own pride and he will be in conflict with the people around him.

Secondly, and we'll look just briefly at this and pick it up next time, not only does friendship with the world create conflict with everybody around because everybody's got his own personal priorities first, but it also generates conflict within the person within himself. And James quickly moves to that...conflict with self. And this is the major thrust of the opening three verses. What he is saying here is the wars and the fightings, the external conflict, is rising out of an internal conflict. And he describes that conflict as a combination of three things...this is so fascinating. It's a combination of three things. Let's look, at least, at number one, the first thing that generates internal conflict...and let me stop at this point and say this. Again, if...I really...you know me, I like to keep moving in the text

and I sort of leave the illustrations to you a lot of the times, but just think about it for a moment. Do we need somebody to inform us that people in our environment today have a lot of internal conflict? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? I mean, just look at the proliferation of mental illness, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, therapists, psycho-therapists, on and on and on and on trying to help people resolve this tremendous conflict...suicide, drunkenness, drugs, all trying to alleviate tremendous internal conflict. So you have conflict on the outside only as a manifestation of a tremendous war going on in the inside. What's that war? People battling to fulfill their desires and lusts and ambitions and being thwarted in the process are frustrated internally. That ultimately translates itself into external hostility against people who stand in their way, or even against themselves in their own inability to bring to pass the things they want.

So, let's look at the question then in verse 1, whence wars and whence battles among you? Come they not hence...this is the answer to the question...out of your lusts that war in your members? And the form of the question expects a yes answer. In fact, it could be read this way, they come out of your lusts that war in your members, don't they? Yes.

Where does all that external conflict come from? It comes from internal conflict. "Hence" is tied to "thence" and gives us the true source of external conflict. Where does it come from? Look what he says, comes out of your lust. Very interesting word, this word, hedone, we get hedonist. Have you ever heard that? Have you ever heard of hedonism? It simply in our culture means one who lives for pleasure, that's a hedonist, and that's exactly what the word means...desire for pleasure. The word is in the plural here and all external conflict in the world rises out of people's tremendous uncontrollable desire. That's point number one under conflict with self. Three things cause conflict internally in people. One is uncontrolled desire. People are driven by their passions, their desires for pleasure. The term, in fact, describes the desires for worldly pleasure that are contrary, of course, to the will of God. By the way, it's always used in the New Testament in a bad sense. It belongs to unsanctified carnality, says Kittel in his Greek study and dictionary. It is a bad word. It is the word that means evil pleasure, desire for evil pleasure. One commentator, Hebert(?), in writing on this particular passage said, "Hedone expresses...quote...the yearnings of self love." It's perhaps as well defined as anywhere in 2 Timothy 3:4 which I mentioned earlier, men who are lovers of pleasure more than they are lovers of God. It is to be consumed with pleasure.

The unregenerate man is a slave to his desires. Do you understand that? He is a slave to those desires. It's a frightening slavery. And believe me, passion is a cruel master. I'll never forget reading as a young man some of the memoirs of Oscar Wilde, the great playwright who when he was discovered to be a homosexual and was publicly disgraced said, "I forgot that what a man does in secret he some day will shout from the housetop," and then he cried out, "Passion is a cruel master."

You want to see how cruel a master passion is? Look at the death of Liberace. You think a man like that with his smiling face and all of this theatrics was not in conflict? There was a man, a man whose life was tormented by homosexual perversion that ultimately killed him and from which he could never extract himself. Pathetic slavery. And while all sinful slavery does not ultimately manifest itself in AIDS, it's interesting to see what's happening today to so many people. And I realize as well there are innocent victims.

And you think back to the death of Rock Hudson, what kind of bondage is a person in to that point where they can't say no to that even though they know it's potential deadliness? I am appalled, to put it mildly, every time I hear somebody now on the news, and I think I hear it about ten times in every

news cast, that the Surgeon General is urging America to have safe sex. And what is happening is rather than stop sinning because they do not control their sin, their sin controls them, they've got to figure out a way to bypass the inevitable result of it. And even though the Surgeon General and everyone else says that the things that they say you're to use are not completely effective, people are going to do it anyway. And I'll tell you why they're going to do it, because they don't do that from between their ears, that is a passion. That is not something they control intellectually. And thousands upon thousands and tens of thousands and I don't doubt that hundreds of thousands of people will die from this disease because people are the victim of their sins, they do not control their sins and passion is a cruel master. They are dominated by it.

Look at Romans 1. God gave them over to what kind of a mind? A reprobate mind. And they gave themselves up to all manner of uncleanness. That kind of thing we see working out with every new generation. Romans 1 is repeated with every new generation. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3 tells us that the people in our society who are unregenerate live in the lust of the flesh...here it is...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind. They are driven by desire...driven by desire, beyond control, beyond the ability to restrain themselves. And they can say all they want about safe sex to homosexuals or safe sex to fornicators and adulterers and they can give them all kinds of means to try to prevent it and they'll continue to sin their sins because they are not able to be restrained one way or another because they're dominated by it. This is the principle of James 1:14, do you remember it? Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. And when lusts conceived it brings forth sin and sin when it's finished brings death. That's the cycle. Temptation activates lust, lust activates sin, sin activates death.

Now James sounds a lot like Paul. Go back to verse 1 for a minute. He says, where do all these battles and wars on the outside come from? They come from your inside, they come from uncontrolled desire, they come out of your lust. Notice this phrase, "That war in your members." He's not talking about church members now. He uses the word melos like Paul does, bodily members. The problems on the outside come from the war on the inside. It's not a reference, as I said, to members of the church. He uses the word members in the same way Paul does in Romans 6:7 where Paul talks about sin that's in my flesh in chapter 7. He talks about the members of the body where sin resides and need to be restrained. He said once you gave your members to sin, now yield ye your members as servants of righteousness, chapter 6. So he's talking about flesh, humanness. And he is saying in your humanness there is a war, in your very flesh there is a war, it's a war between your tremendous driving uncontrolled desire and your conscience. And he's not talking about a believer here, but even an unbeliever fights that war. Why do you think there's so much guilt in an unbeliever? Why do you think they want to go to a psychologist? Why do you think they want to get drunk? Take drugs? Why do you think they kill themselves? Probably the leading anxiety contributor is guilt. Even unbelievers feel guilt. See, guilt to the conscience is like pain to the body. Pain says...stop, you're hurting your body. Guilt says...stop, you're damning your soul. They feel that. It's the war of the fallen flesh with the fallen mind. It's the war of the fallen flesh with conscience which has enough of the knowledge of God, Romans 1 says, to be without...what?...excuse. These are the fleshly lusts which Peter says war against the soul, fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

I don't think any of us would deny that there is in man...there is in man a nobility, the residual image of God. Would you agree to that? Every once in a while you see that coming out in his philanthropy and his nobility and his creations of artistic value in the beauty that man can generate in his environment. But fighting against that sort of residual nobility is a driving passion to corruption. And those desires for the wrong kind of pleasure wage a raging war against everything that stands in their

way, everything that would stop their gratification. Passions, he says, are warring. And he uses a word that pictures an army ready to fight anyone who tries to stop it. And so here is the average person who is love with the world, they're driven by sexual gratification which wars against their better judgment and their conscience and the war is so hot that anything that gets in the way of their gratification gets trampled, it gets trampled. All that hostility comes from uncontrolled desire. And in verse 2 he says you lust and you have not. In other words, you want it but you can't get it, so what do you do? What's the next two words? You kill. That's what he says. And that's how it ought to be read in terms of punctuation. You lust and have not...period...you kill...period. And you desire to have and cannot obtain...period...you fight and war...period. Yet you have not because you ask not.

The "you kill" and the "you fight and war" are the things that man does when his gratification is thwarted. You lust, epithumia, evil desire, the evil connotation here. It emphasizes the desire itself whereas hedone emphasizes the pleasure of that desire. Strong passion, you lust, you're driven. You see it with sex and alcohol and stealing and gambling and criminal behavior and hostility and whatever. And you can't break your evil habits and if you're thwarted long enough you kill. Sometimes that's...that's real murder. That's why people kill people because their gratification is thwarted. It could refer to a killing hate. It could refer to thoughts of murder. It could refer to destructive behavior. It could refer to suicide. And you know there are people who kill themselves because they can't get what they want. Pretty strong language. You are so driven by an uncontrolled passion that if need be you kill...if you're thwarted. And then to put it another way he says, you...you desire to have, that's zeloo, you covet...a verbal form of jealousy, the word used in chapter 3 verse 14 and 16, you're jealous, you are envious, you want what others have and you want it so badly...so badly that when you can't get it you fight and you war...conflict...murder, hostility, conflict, anger, bitterness...all of that stuff. You fight, you wage war, all the cravings for pleasure, all the longings and lustings for evil desire, personal gratification, drive people to these hostilities.

What does he say? The people who are in love with the world are controlled by, as John put it, all that is in the world...the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. And all of that stuff basically is self-gratifying. The lust of the eyes...I see it, I...what?...I want it. The lust of the flesh...I feel it, I want it. The pride of life...self- gratification. And anything that gets in the way you fight against it, you war against it, you battle against it and maybe you even kill it, or him or her or them. Conflict is the result of all of this...personal conflict, personal anxiety, people having to go get psychotherapy and all the rest of the stuff. Marital conflict, family conflict, job conflict, associational conflict, national conflict, it all comes out of friendship with the world and friendship with the world creates conflict with others, conflict with self because it is constantly generating uncontrolled desire or passion.

The second thing and I just covered it so I won't have to go back to note is it's not only an uncontrolled desire but is an unfulfilled desire. Did you see that there? You want it but you can't get it. You're frustrated, absolutely frustrated. You lust and do not have so you commit murder, the NAS says. And you're envious and can't obtain so you fight and quarrel. A classic illustration, read the story of Absalom. He wanted what he wanted so badly that he would have killed his own father for it. Read the story of Ahithophel. Did you know that David's sin against Bath-sheba was a sin against Ahithophel who was the counselor to the king? Because Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bath-sheba. It's a marvelous little byplay there. He was the father of Eliam who was the father of Bath-sheba. And when David committed sexual sin with Bath-sheba, his granddaughter, and David then, in effect, murdered his granddaughter's husband, Ahithophel was furious. And that's why Ahithophel, the counselor to the king, joined in the rebellion of Absalom against David. And you remember

Ahithophel came in and said, "I have a counsel on how we can kill David. We'll get him in this situation, we'll surround him with troops, we'll wipe him out." And they said no, we don't want that, counsel. And Ahithophel packed his animal, rode back to his home, set things in order in his house and strangled himself. Totally frustrated with unfulfilled desire. Passion and frustration go hand in hand. Passion and frustration are mutually attached.

You know, you look at the book of Ecclesiastes, which we did a few weeks ago, and what does Solomon say? I've seen it all, I've heard it all, I've done it all, I've touched it all, smelled it all, felt it all, seen it all and it's all...what?...vanity. Boy, that's a frustrating perspective. I've been there and back again, folks, there's no sense in taking the trip...nothing there. Uncontrolled desire, unfulfilled desire, passion, frustration.

Well, we'll come back to this next time. But it's a tremendously vivid picture of the hostility of the human heart because of its friendship with the world.

Let me ask you a question just as we close. Look deep into your heart, will you, for just a moment. And as you look at your own heart, where does your love go? Where does your affection go? What do you feel your heart saying? What do you love? Do you love God? Do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? You say no. Do you want to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? You say yes. Good. Do you love the world? Do you have to say...no, all of my affections go to the world, I love the world, I love the things of the world, I love the joys of the world, the pleasures of the world, I'm driven by that. Then whatever might be your profession on the outside, you better do a little inventory on the inside because anyone who is affectionate with the world, who is intimate with the world, who carries the world in his heart, who has in him the spirit of the world, who has not died to the world having been crucified in Christ, any such friend of the world is the...what?...enemy of God.

You don't want to be the enemy of God because the day is going to come when God's going to put all His enemies under the feet of Jesus Christ for eternal judgment. Don't be an enemy of God. All there is in the world, all there is in the world is passing away and all it is is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life...and it's all going to pass away. And anyway, it's an uncontrollable passion that you can't control and it's an unfulfilled one to boot. What use is it? Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You again for the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ that we know You because of Him, that our sins are forgiven who are absolutely unworthy, that we who stand as enemies have been made friends. Yea more than that, sons, daughters, beloved children, brothers of Christ, family, joint heirs, partakers of the divine nature and that it's our nature to love you. Lord God, thank You for that transformation because of our faith in Christ. Thank You that You redeemed us that we who once were alienated and enemies have been made children, sons, friends. And, Lord, even though we love you, sometimes the world is very alluring and we need the Spirit of God every day to keep us from being conformed to it. We, too, can be drawn away by pride and lust, even though we hate the things that pull us to the world. Sometimes they overwhelm us. So, Father, I ask tonight that if there are those folks in our fellowship who are of the world and who love the world, and are Your enemies, that by Your sovereign grace this night You would make them Your friends. Reach into their heart and bring the conviction of sin and may they reach up in faith in the death and resurrection of the dear Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, delivered from uncontrolled and unfulfilled passion from a worldly wisdom that is earthly, sensual and demonic. And may they know the wisdom that is pure

and peaceable and gentle and easy to be entreated and without hypocrisy and without partiality, that wonderful peace that controls passion and end frustration that comes to those who put their faith in You. Lord God, save those who have been friends of the world tonight.

And, Father, we also ask for those of us who are Your friends, Your own beloved children, forgive us for our wanderings into the world, forgive us for being entertained by its allurements, forgive us for flirting with its lusts and make us clean and set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. And help us to love You more than we ever have. For Christ's sake. Amen.

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