

Confronting the Enemies of Unity – In Our Hearts – Part 2

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James 4:1-12

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Thank you so much, ladies. These two precious young ladies sing in the Master's Chorale and also in the special ministry, Majesty. And 8 or 9 young people, their best singers in my opinion, at the school, go around ministering and that's why Amelia was so slow getting home this summer. She was on tour. Thank you so much, ladies. What a beautiful song. What a tremendous message. "Own it all and reign supreme, conquer every rebel power. Let no vice or sin remain, that resists Your holy war. You have loved and purchased me. Make me Yours forevermore." That's the heart of every true believer. James certainly resonates with that same concern. James 4 is our sermon text this morning. We began to look at this particular text two weeks ago. We've been looking at James 3 and 4 for a number of weeks, actually. Oh, children dismissed. [Laughter] Before I said it, they answered. [Laughter]

We've been looking at the issue of unity for a long time, actually, now several months. We stepped aside from our exposition of the Gospel of John, where we've been working chapter by chapter, verse by verse through that book and had finished Chapter 6. We felt like, the elders did, that we needed to spend some time on the issue of unity in the Body of Christ. It's such an important thing to our Lord, and ought to be to us as well. So we've been looking for a number of months now at this issue. We've seen that it's the high calling of every Christian to be one with other believers, to manifest the glory of the oneness of the Godhead, the oneness of the Father and the Son in our relationships. What a high calling. What a staggering calling that is. And what a powerful reality it is when that is evident. Jesus made clear in His 'High Priestly Prayer' in John 17, which we looked at, "Make them one so that the world, as We are One, may they be one. So that the world may know that You sent Me." Our oneness is a powerful, validating testimony to the Gospel we preach. Therefore, a lack of unity is a lie. It's denial of the Gospel that we may preach if we're not one.

So James is dealing with this issue in very strong terms because he really confronts the enemies of unity in the heart of his letter, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. We've been looking at this series under an over-arching title. So the title of our message today is 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity – In Our Hearts – Part 2'. We looked at it in our words, Chapter 3:1-12. Then Chapter 3:13-18, in our attitudes. Then Chapter 4:1-12, in our hearts. 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity'. Our enemies are the

world, the flesh, and the devil, Scripture makes clear. Our own sin nature, that's the flesh. The world's system is organized against God of this age, organizing the value system and men in sin, rebelling against Him. That's the world. Then the devil himself, tempting us away from God. So those are our enemies and we have to resist them.

One of the areas we have to resist them is in our hearts. So we begin to look at this last time, James 4:1-12. What James does, the purpose of this passage is to unmask the true nature of conflict. It's something that we are asleep to. We just don't see the ugliness of it. So what you're going to see as we read the text, is that this text is packed with pungent words and images. I mean, it is sharp in its tone. It is painful almost, as you hear and you really listen to what he's saying to us, to the author's first audience—Christians and Jews throughout Asia Minor. But now to us because these words apply to us. It's pointed and painful, but it's something that we need to hear. The Lord is not like us, when He says something in hard words, it's because hard words are necessary. They are the only words that need to be said. God always says it perfectly and so He speaks to us with graphic language to get our attention, to wake us out of sleep.

It's kind of like when you go to your neighbor's for the first time to meet them, or you're talking to them, you don't go over and yell at them. “ HEY! HOW ARE YOU DOING? WHY ARE YOU IN MY YARD? WHY IS YOUR DOG IN MY YARD DOING HIS BUSINESS?” You don't do that. You go over and you say, “Hey, how are you doing?” You talk kindly. You're not going to have a relationship otherwise. But if their house is burning down, you go and you BANG on the door and you yell at the top of your lungs, “GET OUT OF THE HOUSE! GET OUT OF THE HOUSE!” You break the window if necessary because urgent times require urgent measures. So this is really the force of this passage. It almost has that sense of urgency about it. As we read it, listen to it. Hear the words. You're going to notice. A couple of things I want to just point out before we read it. The passage first of all, is intensely personal. The second person pronouns, you, you're, yourself are used 15 times in the first four verses. You, you're, yourself is used 27 times in the entire passage. In fact, there's more in the Greek than there is in the English, but 27 times in the English Bible you see you, you're, yourself. It's as if God is reaching out His finger and planting it on our chest. “I'm talking about you. Not them, I'm talking to you.” It's the imperative commands which are also second person. If you give a command it's the second person. There are 11 imperative commands in this brief passage. All of them packed between Verses 7-11.

It's not only intensely person, it's intensely pointed. I said the language is pungent. It's painful and sharp. He talks about quarrels and conflicts. It really could be translated more accurately I think, wars and battles. He refers us to adulteresses. He said that we're guilty of murder. He combines the second person pronouns with these hard words. Let me just point this out before we read it even. In Verse 8: *...Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* Do you feel the force of that? Now as we read it, see how this flows through the whole passage.

James 4:1-12:

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

Let's pray together:

Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that your Word is perfect, that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. Lord, these things are glorious and beautiful, they rejoice the heart. We pray that You would help us in seeing our sin, to rejoice our

hearts by showing us our Savior. May Your Word do its work in our hearts by the power of Your Spirit. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

The focus really is what is the true nature of conflict? Last week we saw that the first question the passage poses is, "Where do conflicts arise? Where do they come from?" Really it says, "Where from conflicts? Where from quarrels?" Even though the words used are wars and battles, he's talking about relational conflicts and he's using the inflammatory phrase wars. "They are like wars among you." Where do these things come from? We think from outside. No, he says, "From your heart." When I have conflicts in my life, when there are sinful conflicts going on, they always come from some sin. Now we're going to see they are rooted in spiritual adultery. Mine or the other person's, normally, almost all the time, both. 98%/2%, 60%/40%, 50%/50%, but when we have sinful conflict that is unresolved, it's spiritual adultery. It's from our hearts, that's where.

When we started looking at the question, "What?" and really that's the question that dominates from Verse 2-5 is, "What is the true nature of conflict? How does God see these things? How ought we to see these things?" Because we don't see it rightly, we engage in it, and we allow it, we tolerate it, and these things ought not to be. That's why James is speaking with such forceful language. It really is like somebody is in a stupor.

I have followed, as many of you I'm sure have too, the news related to the Colorado shooting in Aurora at the movie theater. James Holmes, a young man who colored his hair orange and went in with an incredible arsenal, and started firing. A murderous rampage that left 12 dead, actually 13 counting one lady's unborn child who also died. 58 wounded. In fact, that one lady I mentioned, she is the mother of the 6-year-old little girl, according to the media, the youngest to die. She also lost an unborn baby, and she's going to be paralyzed. What a tragedy! What an incredibly ridiculous, horrendous act. In the pictures of this young man, he looks like he's in a stupor. What possesses someone to do something like that? As I was watching that, I felt from the very first, seeing him, I felt a sense of anger and rage. There is a legitimate sense of righteous indignation. This blatant disregard for life, which is so precious to God, and this young man, for some stupid reason, goes in and does this. What in the world is he thinking, right? And the reality is, if things were as God would have it, He would be executed very soon. Genesis 9:6 makes this clear. Let me just be clear, this isn't the main point, but I'm just going to touch on this. Genesis 9:6 says, "If you shed man's blood," this is right after the flood. "The one who sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed because in the image of God, He created man." What He's saying is:

The reason that someone who kills a man must die, is because they have struck out at the image of God. It is the holiness of God that is at stake.

Now aside from that, a second point. If you read throughout Exodus through Deuteronomy, you will see over and over again that when someone murders someone, God says, "Put them to death." He puts this clause at the end of many of those times to stone them to death, whatever the command is, "Thus you shall drive evil from your land." Now the sociologists may say that the death penalty doesn't deter murderous acts. They are wrong. God says it does. If it's carried out in the first 20 years after it happens, it probably would have a lot more impact for the sociologists to research. This young man deserves to die. Now, he also needs the Gospel preached to him. He needs to have a little bit of time to have the Gospel preached to him so that he might repent. But I want to tell you that the real reason I brought that up was to say this: As I felt the anger against him coming up inside of me, I was really just sitting there at my computer reading the stories of the victims and just feeling such anger. The Lord put His finger on my heart and this thought came to mind, "Why am I so, so angry about this?" I think, like I said, there is righteous indignation. I know these people were in the image of God. These precious lives have just been lost. There's a sense of righteous indignation, but James himself tells us in Chapter 1:20, "The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Watch out when you get angry."

Romans 2 tells us that when we really want to condemn someone, when we find ourselves being angry and wanting to really go at someone in a sinful way, and stewing on something, it's because, Romans 2 says, "You condemn others because you do the same things." ***You lust and do not have; so you commit murder***, James says. We want something, we desire something, that is what our heart is set upon. That's what the word 'lust' here means. It means 'to set your heart on'. In English it has too much of a connotation of sensual pleasures. It means 'anything that you set your mind on' here in the Greek. Anything that you set your mind on, good things even, that you set your mind on. You want, and you want them in an inordinate way, inappropriate way. When you don't get it, what happens? You murder. Not literally, James is saying, but figuratively. In reality, you murder. You say hateful words. You mistreat those around you. You fly into a violent rage or you yell and you say things like, "You never will learn!" "Why can't you be more like somebody else?" We say things that are violent words and God looks at that and says, "That is murder!" He is using this kind of language to wake us up. So he's saying, "What is the true nature of conflict?" What is the true nature of conflicts in our relationships?

We saw last week that it's wars and battles. It's like the carnage of the battlefield. And here, as we continue on from Verse 2 down to Verse 5 this morning, we're going to see that there are two other stinging indictments that God brings against us. The first metaphor He used, we looked at last time, was wars and battles. But now He's going to make two charges against us. He's going to say this: "You and I are murderers, and you and I are adulterers." That's the force of the passage. If you have conflict in your life, and you're responding to it in sinful ways, you're not making peace, you're not doing as scripture says. ***As far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men.*** Then you are doing that because you are a murderer and an adulterer. When I harbor anger in my heart and don't deal with it, I am a murderer and I'm an adulterer. Both are true at the same time, that's what he's saying. "You're a murderer *and* you're an adulterer." We're going to look at these two stinging indictments one at a time.

James 4:2 ~You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.

When we want things and we don't get them, we react in an ungodly way. In any way that shows our hearts, there is a sinful desire that has become a controlling desire. What happens is that good stuff comes mingled with the bad. Just like I said about the response to the murdering in Colorado. There is a righteous level of concern that gets mingled in with a lot of bad stuff. If my desire for my children to be obedient was really pure, why is it that I'm more concerned about disobedience when we have company? What does that say about me? What's my real agenda in teaching my children? Is it for them to glorify God in obedience and respect their parents as they should to glorify Him? Is it their heart and His glory that I'm concerned about? Or is it my reputation? It's appropriate to have a desire for a good reputation, but if it controls me to the point that it competes with my concern for the glory of God? That is idolatry. That is wickedness. How do I know that that's going on? Because I murder. It's not Jonathan or Maggie, whichever I'm talking about. It sometimes is, but a lot of times it's not. "You have violated God's Word and I want you to see this. I'm concerned about you." When it comes in, "Why do you always do that? Do you not listen to me?" The tone of voice is an indicator. The phrases that we use, 'always' and 'never'. Almost always, when you use the word always, there's a problem. Hopefully it wasn't that time, but seriously, when you speak in categorical statements, it's a power thing. You're trying to put something over on somebody. Something is controlling the heart and it's not God. And it's doing violence with our words.

Proverbs 12:18 ~ There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,...

Quick words come out and it's like thrusting a sword into someone. Now here the focus is not so much on our words, but on what motivates the thrust. Why is it that we thrust the sword? It's because we want something that we're not getting and when we don't get it we will punish the other person. I mentioned last time the formation of an idol basically goes from desire, a very helpful chapter in The Peacemaker book by Ken Sande, he shows the process in four sentences. He says: First, I desire something. Maybe legitimate, maybe not. If it's not legitimate we have to die to it. But if it is legitimate we can desire it. But a desire becomes a demand. 'I desire' becomes 'I demand'. That means that I feel like I need it. This is one of the problems in our modern day, the church has been infiltrated by so much of the world around us. We don't see it. You know it's like a fish doesn't know he's wet. Think about that. He doesn't know, he's in the water all the time, his whole life. So he doesn't know what it's like not to be wet. Well, we're in this world and we imbibe things and we don't even realize we've imbibed them.

One of the things that's happened in recent years is this whole idea of 'need'. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist of great influence, of bad influence, but widespread influence. The idea that man is basically a collection of needs, and that you've got to have your needs met. Well the Bible doesn't speak of our lives in terms of needs like that. We need to see that there's an important distinction. You say, "I need love." Well the Bible doesn't say you need love. Jesus says you need food, shelter, and clothing. God knows what you need, He's going to take care of your needs. The Bible would also say that you need Jesus Christ. That He's living water, He's the Bread of Life. So you have need of food, shelter, water, and you need Christ. You need to be saved. These are things the Bible says we need. It doesn't say we need to be loved. Now love comes along with being saved, but we're not to think of it. Ultimately, there are things in our hearts, yearnings in our hearts that only God can satisfy. That's why the Psalmist says things like, "In a dry and weary land, I thirst for Thee, O Lord." It's like a person that's dying of thirst. If you were dying of thirst, all that you can think about is getting to water. He says, "Spiritually, I see that all I can think about is getting to You." We need God. We need to be in His presence. We need to worship Him. We need to obey Him.

Though what happens is, this need idea of Maslow comes into our thinking and we start thinking, "I need my spouse to love me." No, you don't need your spouse to love you according to Scripture. If anything, you need to love your spouse, but you don't need anything from them. You don't need your children to obey you. You

don't need anything to happen in this life, any certain circumstances. No, you do not need that. All you need is Christ. What happens is, this idea of need comes in and we think, "I desire something," and suddenly it becomes a demand because we think we need it, and we don't. God will give us what He wants to give us. We can ask Him. James tells us, "Ask." "I desire this, Lord." It's good to desire to have a wonderful marriage that pictures Christ and the Church. It's good to have a desire for your children to obey you and your children to walk in truth. Those are noble, godly desires, but ultimately, all those things depend on the Lord, don't they? You can't control any of those things. We can't control anybody else but ourselves, so we have to rest in the Lord and say, "Lord, help me be faithful to do what I am supposed to do, and to trust You." We know that a desire has become a demand when it doesn't happen, how we react. When there is sinful anger, it's a red light going off saying, "My desire has become a demand." In your anger, a great question is, "What am I wanting that I'm not getting?" Then lay it down.

'I desire', becomes 'I demand', becomes 'I judge'. My desire has become a controlling desire. My demand, I'm not even thinking about it, but let's say that I want my children to make me look good. That's my desire. That's a demand. Right? My desire of my children obeying God and loving Him becomes a demand, and which is, "I really want them to make me look good," not, "I want them to obey God." I do want that but that's second, really I want them to make me look good. Now, when they don't, what happens? I judge them. You are judged before the tribunal. This is the charge. I gave you the charge of making Dad look good. You failed, and therefore I punish you. I desire. I demand. I judge. I punish. That's the cycle of idolatry.

We talked about how Paul David Tripp talked about this desire he had to be with his wife and to have this wonderful night out, and then when he got home, she couldn't do it. She didn't want to do it because the kids had been so bad. She said, "Take the kids out for pizza. I need to go take a bath," and he became indignant, because his desire for a wonderful night of serving and loving his wife, and showing her how much he loved her, became a demand. "I want to do this. I want her to appreciate the effort I made, the thought I had. What a great idea. What a great husband I am. I want her to worship at the idol of how great Paul David Tripp is." Do you see that? "You won't do that? I judge you as guilty, as failing to worship at my idol, and I condemn you. I'm going to let you have it." That's what happens. "You haven't made me look good? I judge you and I will punish you, and I will let you know." Sinful anger. An unloving attitude. There are going to be problems, differences we have with each other, but if we can't go to one another in love and have a dialogue, it's because murder and adultery are in the heart. There

is no excuse. This is what he's saying, It's like we live with carnage and blood all over the floor, and we've gotten used to it. These things ought not to be. How could that young man do what he did? How could he do that? This passage says, "How could I do that? How could I respond in anger?" This text puts its finger on my chest and says, "You are the man. You're guilty of murder." But he takes it further. He makes a transition.

He said in Verse 2:

James 4:2 ~ You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel...

Then he makes a transition from the horizontal to the vertical to show us how great our sin is. He says, "Look at the horizontal. Look at the damage that you've done around you. Is your family like a war zone? Are your relationships like a war zone where people are bleeding all around you? Wake up!" Then he says, "Now, stop looking at the horizontal and look at the vertical. I want you to think about your sin in relationship to your relationship with God." He says:

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

"Why haven't you prayed? You have legitimate desires. Why haven't you asked your Father who knows your needs? Do you not think about the things that you want and that you feel are very important to you? Do you not take those concerns to your Father? No wonder you don't have anything. You do not have because you do not ask. Our God loves us so much and He is a loving Father who will meet our needs. You do not have because you do not ask." And then he says:

James 4:3 ~ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives,...

"When you ask, your prayer life has become controlled by your passions." This is when we start praying and our prayers are always about us. Remember when the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," and He gave them a prayer with seven petitions, seven requests that were made. What were the first three? The first three were all about God.

Matthew 6:9 ~ Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

May Your Name be revered and Holy. That's what I want first, Lord. I want Your Name to be made great in my life and in this world.

Matthew 6:10 ~ 'Your kingdom come...

Lord, I want the reign of God to come in more and more places. I want to see the reign of God in more and more hearts and lives, and evident in this culture. May Your glory be made known that way.

Matthew 6:10 ~ ...Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

May YOUR will be done, Lord. Not my will, but Your will. Now, having got all that straight:

Matthew 6:11 ~ 'Give us this day our daily bread. 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

See, it starts with God and it shows that prayer is about us not so much telling God what we want, but it's about getting our hearts recalibrated, refocused, reoriented, because we tend to wander off into a self-focus. So James says, "By your actions, by your words, you're hurting those around you. You're murdering. These conflicts that are unresolved are heinous, but now think about it before God. What does this say about your relationship with God? What does it say about your prayer life?"

Then that leads him into Verse 4. He's gone from the horizontal to the vertical. He says, "Look at your sin, your relational sins, in light of your relationship with God. You're not just guilty of murder, you're guilty of adultery."

James 4:4 ~ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?

The language is again flagrant. ***You adulteresses...*** He does something that we shouldn't do to each other, because we are not God. He's speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he can do it to us, and he's right, but when we talk, when someone lies to me, I shouldn't say, "You liar." If I think they lied to me, I should say, "Did you lie to me?" Do you see the difference? It's your action versus your character. "You're a thief," is an indictment of the person's character. "You stole something," is an indictment of their action. Normally we should

respect one another enough to do that, but God speaking through James here lets us know how He sees it, and He's trying to wake us up again. It's somewhat hyperbolic, but the reality is you are committing adultery. It's like your life is characterized by it.

How would you feel if people knew that you were adulteress? That's what it is that we're doing. It's strong language because the sin that's in our hearts is so much worse than we realize. This idea of adultery in the Old Testament, what is adultery? Adultery is when I give the love that I've promised to someone in covenant, to another. In the marriage relationship, it's when a spouse has a covenant to give their love to their spouse, and they give it to someone else outside of that covenant. It's a violation of trust. It's a violation of their love relationship. God says that when you and I are having conflicts in our life, when we're sinning, when our desires become demands, when they become idols, we are guilty of idolatry. We are worshiping false gods.

In the language of the Old Testament, you find this image of idolatry again, and again, and again. Steven Gaines is teaching these last few weeks on Hosea on Wednesday nights. Hosea is a picture of this. God sent the prophet Hosea to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom, and He basically said, "Listen, the first thing you've got to do is go out and marry a woman that is going to become promiscuous. You're going to go marry this woman, and she's going to be unfaithful to you, and you're going to have to love her like I love Israel, because Israel is My wife and she has been continually unfaithful to Me." So Hosea marries a woman named Gomer, and he loves her, she bears him children, and then she goes out and lives the life of a harlot. He goes after her and he brings her back home. He goes after her when she's been mistreated by her lovers and abandoned by them. They aren't caring for her. They're treating her with mockery and harshness. Hosea goes after this woman who had violated his trust and loves her and draws her back to himself. God says, "You do this because this is a picture of what I've been doing to Israel for her whole existence. I brought her to Myself. I betrothed her to Myself in purity. I gave My heart to her. Of all the nations of the earth, I set Myself apart for her, and she has wandered under every green tree on every high hill, the high places, the places of worship. She goes and offers sacrifices and worships other gods and trusts in other gods."

That's what idolatry is. Spirit adultery is idolatry. In the Old Testament, they were worshiping other gods. They were looking to other gods. They were trusting in the power of other gods, and that's essentially what idolatry is today. It's not worshiping an idol of stone or wood. It's trusting. What do you give your trust to?

What do you look to, to give you a sense of real satisfaction? If you were to say, “If only _____, then I would be happy,” if it’s anything other than, “If only I could please Christ, then I would be happy,” if it’s anything else there, it’s idolatry. Idolatry is at the root of all Spiritual conflict. That’s what James is saying. He’s saying that the reason you have been speaking these harsh words to one another, the reason you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, the reason that you have wars and battles is because you and I are Spiritual adulterers. We wish to be a friend of the world. He’s not talking about necessarily things that we know are overt worldliness, like enjoying the pleasures that are obviously of the world. That’s worldliness. But he’s talking to people who think they’re doing well.

This is flowing right out of Chapter 3:13 when he said: ***Who among you is wise and understanding?*** “Who among you is wise and expert in the things of God? Who among you is walking in the way that you think the Scripture tells you to walk?” He’s basically saying, “You think you’re doing well. Well, look at your heart. Look at your life. Is meekness in your life? Are there quarrels that are unresolved in your life? If that’s the case, then you who think you’re wise and skilled are a murderer and an adulterer.” You say, “Well, I’m not going to bad movies. I’m not watching bad TV. I’m not committing sexual sins or anything like that.” James says you’re a friend of the world if you value the things the world values. Those are the things I was talking about earlier. I mean if I care more about my children making me look good, that’s worldliness. Reputation in this world? What does that matter? This world is passing away. When we want people to think that we’re great, or to appreciate who we are or what we’ve done, these are things that make us a friend of the world. The word translated ‘friend’ and ‘friendship’ – ***Do you not know that friendship with the world... Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world...*** The Greek word is from ‘philos’ (φίλος) which is from ‘phileo’, the word for love. He’s saying in a sense that he’s making this contrast to show us how awful adultery is. He says, “Loving the world is hostility toward God. Loving the world is to hate God.” Any time we see the love of the world in us, we are actively hating God. We don’t want to hate God. He says that every time you value something other than what you should value, according to God’s word, you’re hating God.

James 4:4 ~ ...Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15 ~ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

If the love of the world characterizes your life and it's all that you think about, then you are an unbeliever. We can act like an unbeliever, and that's what James is talking about here is people that love God and are sincere Christians, but who have turned away and become guilty of adultery, and that they're letting ungodly desires control their lives. We need to see it as wicked, as going after other gods, and being unfaithful to our vows to Christ.

Following the flow of the text, he says we're murderers, we adulteresses, and then Verse 5 is a very difficult verse to translate and to interpret. In fact, the translations differ on how, because of the word order, and the fact that there were no capitals in the original, or like 'the Spirit' wasn't capitalized.

James 4:5 ~ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

Because of the grammar, it's somewhat ambiguous, and so some interpreters take it to mean that the human spirit that we have in us is prone towards jealousy. He's been talking about jealousy and selfish ambition, and so there's some argument for that. But I think really when you look at the word order, and you look at the context, what he's saying is – he says, ***"Do you think the scripture speaks..."*** And one of the problems is there's no clear verse that he's quoting here. In Verse 6, he says, ***...Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*** That's Proverbs 3:34. He says, "Therefore Scripture says," and then he quotes Proverbs 3:34. But here in Verse 5, there's not a clear verse that he's quoting. What he's doing is alluding to a teaching of Scripture, and often the New Testament does this. And you do this in your own conversation. "Well, the Bible says..." and hopefully you say something that the Bible really says. You may say something like, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." The Bible doesn't say that. James of course, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does say something the Bible says. So what's he saying? I think what he's saying is essentially what Exodus 20:4 says:

Exodus 20:4 ~ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exodus 34:14 ~ —for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—

After the sin of idolatry, the golden calf, His encounter with Moses, and Moses seeing His glory, He tells him, “The Lord, Yahweh, whose name is Jealous...” This is a picture of who God is. He’s jealous for His glory. “I will not share My glory with another.” He doesn’t take lightly the fact that we go worship other gods. It’s an offense to His holiness. He’s worthy of everything that we are. Every moment of our lives should be laid at His feet, and when He doesn’t receive that, He doesn’t take that lightly, because it’s the right thing not to take lightly. He should be angry.

If a man is sitting there and his wife is flirting with another man, should that man be angry? Of course. It would be a failure of who a man and a husband is if he weren’t. But there’s a sense of possession. This is a woman that before God has become in covenant to me, and you are expressing something that is ungodly, and if necessary there’s a place even where force has to be used. Be careful, but there are verses that talk about that. That’s right. He gave us a sword for a reason. But seriously, the point is there’s a place for jealousy, and God of all beings has the right, the obligation, to be jealous for His own glory. Nothing else should be in the place of God. And the wickedness and the essence of sin is to want His place. Satan said, “I will be like the Most High. I will ascend to the heights of the Most High.” Then he brought us into the rebellion. He said to Eve, “You will be like God.” There’s in our hearts this desire to have His place, and God is jealous for His place.

If you want to be saved, you have to confess Jesus as Lord. You have to bow your knee to Him and say He has first place. And if you won’t do that, you won’t be saved. When you do that, once you become a Christian with a new heart and you’re able to bow the knee to Christ, then you spend the rest of your life trying to live consistent with that, because we still bear in our body this sin nature. Paul says, “This wretched man that I am. Why do I find in myself the desire to do that which I ought not to do, and I find in my heart the desire to not do the things that I ought to do? What’s wrong with me? Lord, deliver me from this body of death.”

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ who has given us salvation, but that’s the struggle. We need to see how ugly it is so we keep turning from it. We need to not be like someone walking in a stupor, who doesn’t realize that he’s hurting people around him. We need to see that we’re being unfaithful to the one that loves us with an everlasting love, that before the world was born, before He created one thing, He knew your name and He loved you. His love was set upon you, and He’s never for one moment been unfaithful to you. He says, “Be faithful to Me.” This passage is written so we can see that, “Lord, You’ve been faithful to me, but I’m a

murderer and I'm an adulterer, and here I am again in this moment worshipping something other than You and Your glory. Here I am again, Lord, in need of grace." This passage is written to smack us in the face and to say, "It's not out there. The problem is not out there. The problem is in here, wretched man that I am. How can I kill? How can I be unfaithful?"

Then he shows us the way out in Verses 6-10. ***Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.*** The good news is God never knocks you down without an intention of lifting you up. Isn't that amazing? We're unfaithful, and He says, "You were unfaithful. I want you to see your unfaithfulness." It's just like when you read Hosea and Jeremiah 3:6, and following. In such strong terms, it shows them how awful they've been, but you always find something like He also says in Isaiah 54:6.

Isaiah 54:6 ~ "For the Lord has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," Says your God. 7 "For a brief moment I forsook you, But with great compassion I will gather you. 8 "In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," Says the Lord your Redeemer.

He lets His anger flare up so that we can see the wickedness of what we've done, so that we come out of our stupor, and then He says, "Come unto Me and be saved." Jesus Christ is a Savior who's able to save us. He paid for every act of idolatry that you or I have ever done or will ever do. He was perfectly faithful. He said, "My meat and My drink is to do the will of My Father who sent Me." Every moment, Jesus lived to please His Father. Every single moment. Perfect righteousness. And that perfect, spotless Son of God then was treated as if He had been the worst idolater a billion times over. He took all of our unfaithfulness and He bore it in His body, and God punished it. Everything that needed to happen to fulfill the righteous justice of God was poured out upon that precious Lamb of God. He bled and died, and He took every bit of the punishment into Himself. He drank the full dregs of the wrath of God, and He said, "It is finished!" Those are great words of victory. "I have finished with the wrath." He gave up His Spirit to the Lord. His body died. They put Him in the grave and on Sunday He was raised, just like we sang earlier.

*There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again*

*And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ*

That's the wonder of it. He did that so He could make you and me His, and when we know He is ours, we have a perfect righteousness. We see our idolatry. We see our adultery. We see our murder. We say, "Woe is me, Lord. Help me. How wonderful is Christ. Lord, I need only Jesus." Do you see how you only need Jesus? I don't need anything else, but I need Jesus. We run to Him and He is our righteousness. The Lord our righteousness receives us back like the Father receiving the prodigal son back. Delighted to see us, He wraps us with a robe of honor. He puts a ring on our finger. He kills the fatted calf. He celebrates. That is the God that we serve. Let that love so constrain us that we stop worshiping anywhere else. That's what James is saying. May God wake us up to our sin so that we can see our Savior.

Let's pray...

Father, we thank You that You are a God who abounds in loving-kindness, mercy, and compassion. We're so thankful that You have made a way to not treat us as our sins deserve, but Lord, we know that we who are born again need to be delivered from the body of this death. We need to be being saved on a daily basis, being made like Christ. We're thankful that You use our relationships and conflicts to even show us our idols. You let people around us offend us, fail us, to show us that we're worshiping somewhere other than at the throne of Christ. Help us to humble ourselves. Help us to be ready to see, Lord, that the problem is not out there, but that the problem is in here. God, thank You that, though You convict, though You expose, You also forgive, and You also cover, and You make us clean. Father, have Your way in our hearts. We pray for those that are here that have not yet been saved, and have not truly believed, who have not truly repented. Lord, grant repentance. Grant faith. Help them to run from everything else, for nothing else satisfies. All that satisfies is Jesus. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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