

The Source of Wars

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[0 : 00] And the title of the lessons that we'll be looking at in chapter 4 verses 1-10, War and Peace.

Now I hope that my teaching won't go as long as that book is long. How many have ever read War and Peace? See, I haven't either.

Cover the cover. I haven't. You have cover the cover. Just in one day. It sits in your bathroom. It's bathroom reading. That was kind of crude. I told my teacher I read it.

You what? I told my teacher I read it. That's one of those you wrote on your book list. Say, this is what I read. You got a grade for it, I guess, right?

I got a grade, yeah. All right. So then, the subject of James chapter 4, 1 through, I have 12 there, really.

[1 : 06] It's 10. I made a mistake on that. It's War and Peace. War and Peace. And that is the source of wars. And we're going to see that tonight.

That will be our focus tonight, verses 1 through 5, where James asks the question, where do wars and fights come from among you? So the subject of the first five verses is war.

And then the remainder of that particular text is the source of peace. Submit to God. Resist the devil. Now, that's not the entire answer that James gives us.

Or actually, James is answering his own question that he gave us in verse 1. But there's more to it. And we'll get to that next time. So we're going to focus on the first part of this.

And that's why I call this War and Peace. I'm going to give you a, and I gave this in your notes just for your pleasure. I'm going to go ahead and read through them anyway.

[2 : 05] But history is full of wacky wars. I don't know if you've ever read about any of these. But, for example, the War of the Whiskers. And, you know, well, let me just.

In 1152, this goes way back. War broke out because a certain queen didn't like the whiskers of her French husband, king of France. So he divorced him and married the king of England.

That would be Henry II. So that's a simple explanation. War of the Whiskers. I'm sure there's a lot more to it than that. But I thought about sharing this with Chris. And I said, you know, beards can lead to some trouble there.

War of the Oaken Bucket. In 1325, war broke out in Italy. Started over a stolen bucket. The war lasted for 12 years. Wow. Sounds like some fights that kind of come up in churches.

You know, the color of a carpet or, you know, whatever. Some churches have been at war longer than 12 years over such ridiculous things. War of Jenkins' Ear.

[3 : 12] 1739, Captain Robert Jenkins appeared before Great Britain's Parliament holding the remains of his ear in his hand. He claimed that the Spanish had cut it off. War was immediately declared. So, these are true now, by the way.

I didn't make these up. War of the Fleeing Wife. In Africa, 1879, because of a marital disagreement, a certain Zulu wife didn't go home to her mother. She went home to the British, the territory held by the British.

The Zulus caught her and had her killed. And so, England wanted to do the right thing by this woman. Promptly declared war on the Zulus. And before the year was out, their force utterly crushed them. So, that's a lot more serious there.

That's the War of the Fleeing Wife. You know, things just get started by some of the most insignificant things. How about the Pig War? 1906, pigs were not allowed to be sold by Serbia to Austria-Hungary.

Serbia wanted to become less dependent on goods from Austria-Hungary and started trading their pigs for French goods. As a result, Austria-Hungary got angry.

[4 : 17] Sorry to say got hungry. No, they got angry with Serbia and forced Serbia to find new markets for their pigs. Sorry, it's a simple thing. Then the War of the Stray Dog. This is one of my favorites.

1925, the dog of a Greek soldier wandered across the border in Macedonia. And like any good master, the soldier ran across the border to retrieve his dog and was promptly shot by a Bulgarian guard.

That made the Greek troops so angry that they invaded Bulgaria. And when it was all over, more than 50 men were killed. It took the League of Nations to intervene and stop the war.

The soccer war. Of course, about every time they play soccer, there's a war. I think serious. People get killed, get trampled on. And, you know, a lot of countries take soccer very seriously.

And so this is not an unusual thing. The intentions from a soccer match between the national teams of El Salvador and Honduras, aggravated by the economic inequality between the two countries, of course, that probably was the real source of it, escalated into fighting.

[5 : 22] Salvadorian immigrants were then expelled from Honduras, and the countries went to war. Some 2,000 people were killed in 16 days. The Organization of American States intervened in the fighting.

So these are just some, you know, little-known wars. I call them wacky wars and wacky titles anyway. So in James chapter 4, 1 through 5, the Bible reveals a source of all wars, be it between nations or states within nations, like civil wars, churches.

And that really is James' focus here, though what he has to say applies in all other types of conflict. Or between France, war between France, war in the home.

A lot of homes have, you know, raging wars taking place between marriages, in homes. Where do wars and fights come from among you?

That's what James asks. And then in James 6 through 10, the Bible reveals the source of real peace. So, war and peace.

[6 : 38] Now, the source of wars. That will be our focus tonight, wars, and what James has to say about that. And divide this into three parts, or really three levels of war.

Three levels of war. Phases of war. Or sources of war. That's what we'll look at here tonight. First of all, the war among us.

That's how James begins. By mentioning the war among us. And so, there's the question again. Where do wars and fights come from among you?

Now, I underlined three key words in that phrase, that verse, rather. Sentence. And so, I would say to you that the question that James poses here, not only an introduction to the subject, but it implies an indisputable reality of life.

He's not talking about hypotheticals here. He's not saying what if wars occur, where they come from. He's assuming the existence of wars, fightings, battles, disagreements.

[7 : 53] He's assuming that. And it's safe to assume, because we all know it's just a reality of life. So, it implies, then, the reality of life.

And you take these three words, the word war, or wars, plural, plural, palimas. And it's talking about ongoing conflict.

Now, this is not hard to figure out. A war is the big thing, the big picture. And then, when we get to the word fighting, or fightings, fights or fightings, depends on the translation.

Make, make, that's outbreaks of fighting. Battles. All right, so you have the war, which is ongoing. And then, you have skirmishes, or battles, or conflicts, you know, that are part of the whole.

And so, he says, where does all this come from? And then, the words, among you, is the key point here. Person to person.

[8 : 53] It can be groups of people against groups of people. But James is primarily focusing on particular people in the church here that are bickering, and battling, and warring, and fighting with one another.

And they are causing, then, factions to develop within the body that takes sides. And pretty soon, it's all out war. And it's ongoing.

And it's visible. This is the visible side of war. So, the war among us. This is not wars taking place in the unseen realm.

We'll get to that next. We're talking about what's very visible. Where do these things, these battles, these conflicts, these disagreements, these arguments, even sometimes physical fighting, where

does this come from?

That is among you. And so, it implies an indisputable reality. The context of the passage, and I've already mentioned this, the context of the passage, that is the reason for James' writing, his focus, is wars and fights within the body of Christ.

[10:16] The church. Alright? That's his focus. He's writing to the church. He's writing to born-again believers. And so, his letter, most likely being circulated among churches.

And it's being read by Christians. And so, he's speaking to that issue that is taking place, wars and fights that are taking place within the church body.

And yet, the principles that are taught here in the following verses apply to every kind of conflict and war, even murder.

Conflicts that end and result in killing one another. Murders. So, that's the war among us. That's the first level of war that James mentions.

Second, the war within us. The war within us. And that's where James goes next. Do they not come from your desires for pleasures, that war in your members?

[11:22] That's James' answer to the question. He answers the question with a question. But it's a, you know, it's a question that, it's redundant.

I mean, why not redundant? I can't think of the term. Just escaped my mind. Rhetorical. There it is. It's a rhetorical question. The question is the answer. They come from these wars and fightings, whether it's in the context of a family or a marital relationship or a church or a community or a nation or between nations.

Where do they come from? They come from your desires for pleasure. That war in your members. Now, when he says members, he's not talking about members of the church. He's talking about within you.

The members of your body, your mind, your heart, you know, and so forth. Your spirit, your flesh. All right, so, this is logical.

The wars among us are caused by the wars within us or the war within us. And so, this is the answer to the question. So, where do we need to look first then?

[12:32] Look inside for the answer. We don't look elsewhere and say, well, the war is because old so-and-so over here just always has to have his way, you know, or whatever.

And so, we kind of look to someone else, you know, pointing the finger, forgetting that there are three pointed back at me. And, no, it comes from within.

At the heart, here's a good quote, and, I've searched my notes, I can't remember who said this. But, at the heart of every war is the war in every heart.

And that, that's what James is saying. And that's where we need to look. The enemy, then, is the flesh. We say heart, but we're talking about the fleshy part of us.

So, the enemy is the flesh. And it's, quote, and this is how the New King James translates this, desires for pleasure. Which, by the way, is just one word in the Greek text.

[13:41] That's why I think in most other translations it just says pleasures. And, from your pleasures that war in your members.

Some might even use the word passions. So, it's one word, and it's from the word hedone. Hedone, and, in the Greek, from which we get our word hedonism.

Hedonism, which means a way of life ruled by the pursuit of pleasure. pleasure. That's a, that's a very simplistic definition that's a little more complicated than that, but that really kind of says it.

It's the way of life, a way of life that you choose, that you order your life by, a way of life that is ruled, dictated, by a pursuit of pleasure.

Whatever that pleasure may be. Just whatever feels good. You know, what I want, what I like. You know, and so all of your decisions, the activity of your life, the way you react to things, what you spend your money on, time you spend, all of it is, is geared toward, focused upon satisfying your passions, your pleasure.

[15:03] And, of course, in this sense, he's speaking of sinful, wicked passions and pleasures which are part of the flesh. It's what the flesh craves.

All right, so the flesh, then, is the source of all wars and all conflicts. Again, no matter what the context. He says you lust, by the way, that's the word epithumeo, or epithumea is usually the way we see it, which means burning, burning desire.

Epithumea or epithumeo is thumas is fire. I think I've mentioned this before. In fact, James has already used a form of this word, lust, and it's a, it's a burning desire that you have, a passion that you have, and so you lust, you burn in your desire for something and you do not have it.

The result is war, conflict. It is, then, we could say, thinking about various contexts, it is the wicked cravings of the flesh that cause battles in the church.

Or, if you want a different context, it is the sinful passions of the heart that cause conflicts in the home or in marriages. It is the earthly desires of the human condition that cause wars between nations.

[16:41] And, and on and on we could go and word that various ways. All right, so we are tempted, then, to react with violence when our desires of the flesh are challenged.

that is, when, whomever it may be stands in our way, says no, or someone takes what you desire and now you can't have it, or, or if there's any opposition whatsoever, I mean, we deal with this in our culture.

Today, I mean, it's just becoming more and more evident. you know, the desire to put no limitations whatsoever on immorality, whether it's in form of homosexuality, or whether it's in other forms of even heterosexual immorality.

Let's not put any, any, anything that would hinder that, not even for our children. Because, you know, if, if we put a hindrance on that, then that causes conflict.

That's why people will not, will not hear the word of God. Why they, not only just simply say, well, I just don't believe that, I don't care for that.

[17:57] They get enraged. They get, they get, almost combative. In fact, some people do. Well, why is that? I mean, it makes you want to say, well, if you don't believe it, it's a big deal.

I agree. No, they get angry. Like, what right do you have? To tell me that I can't live in such and such a way. You know, well, I'm not telling you that. That's what God's word says.

You see, see the resistance because it's the desires of the flesh. And when anything or anyone puts a stop, says no to that or hinders that in any way, then the result is, is conflict.

So you murder and covet, that is, you boil with envy and cannot obtain. You fight in war. When someone stands against our fleshly desires, there wells up from within us a desire to attack.

To begin with saying ugly things, might continue by getting violent, even murder. Even murder, and not necessarily just physical murder.

[19:05] I mean, you can murder in thought. You can murder with words. Happens every day. I've said this many times. Happens every day right here on the highway. You know, I don't know how many murders take place out here.

Tom doesn't ever get a call for that because they're not actual physical murders. But the way the Bible defines murder, people being murdered every single second. I mean, right out here right now, but very likely.

So, this is the progression of this. This is the war that is raging within us because of the flesh. So, this is the source of all wars.

It is inside every one of us. So, let's not speak in theory or hypothetical or kind of project that, this truth out to someone else that you know about or suspect.

Let's just realize that this is in every one of us. There aren't any of us here who are totally free and void of this. The potential of it is in every one of us.

[20:06] And then finally, the war with God. We're going to get done a little earlier tonight. Maybe I should talk slower.

Take time with war at peace. The war with God is the third thing and this is part of the progression of James thought.

Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Now, in this context, this idea of being a friend of the world is just another way of saying that you are guided totally, ruled totally by your flesh and you want the things of this world that the world has to offer and you do not want what God wants.

And so, he's saying you're at war and you're an enemy of God. Interesting that he begins really with a reference to prayer. And I think it kind of shows up there.

in a lack of prayer or not going to the Lord in prayer to satisfy some of these struggles we have with our flesh.

[21 : 31] He says there, you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss that you may spend it on your pleasures.

What's the it? The thing you've asked for. And so, you may want a good thing, wonderful thing, maybe it's some financial thing, or maybe it's some job, new job, better job, better paying job, maybe a nicer car, maybe, you know, I'm just talking about tangible things or other things as well. And a lot of those kind of things are not bad things and maybe God wants you to have those things. But, but, number one, you don't have them because you don't ask. And then when you do ask for them, you don't ask with the right motivation because what you want to do is get those things to feed your own flesh.

So, the thing you're asking, you're going to spend it all on your own pleasures. And that's why God says no. And again, the word pleasures is used here, hedone, and hedonism, same idea. pleasures or passions are not always a bad thing. And that's the next thing that James touches on here.

[22 : 58] Just in case we're misunderstanding, it doesn't mean that all passions are wrong. It's sinful. If you have a strong desire and passion for something, that's not a bad thing.

not necessarily so. God created us to have passions. And we can yield to certain passions that we have and have God's blessings so long as those passions are directed toward the right things. And chiefly, James refers here in verse four, chiefly toward God. Our passion is toward Him. So all the things that we have a desire for, we desire them because they would fit in with our relationship with God and His purpose for our lives.

We can have passion for some of those things. Passion for relationships. Passion for our church. Passion for our job. You can have passions for these things.

Even a passion to succeed. There's anything wrong with that. so long as it doesn't detract from and contradict God's person and His purpose for you and your life.

[24 : 22] And so that's what he's getting at in verse four. Spiritual adultery is the point of war with God. He says adulterers and adulteresses.

That's the way it's translated in the New King James. And I'm not real sure why they did it that way because actually there's only one word in the Greek text. And it is the feminine noun for adulteresses.

So it really really there's just the word adulteresses there. And so James is writing a letter here and he's addressing the people of the church and he's dealing at this point with the subject of wars and fighting and bickering and conflicts and so forth and all of that coming as a result of unbridled passions of your flesh.

And then he relates that to our relationship with God. He said you're all adulteresses. And so you know someone might object and say well is God singling out women here?

I mean can't a man be an adulteress? Well not in the grammatical sense. And so what's he doing? He's speaking to the church and the church is feminine in the sense of it's the bride of Christ.

[25 : 43] Not feminine in a gender sense but the church has been described in a number of places in the Bible as the bride of Christ. And so he's talking to the bride of Christ.

He said you're adulteresses. And so you know we can imagine the imagine this kind of scenario. Imagine a bride sharing her passions with other young men.

And that not being secret but being open. And this James is addressing open adultery, spiritual adultery in the church.

And he's saying this is the reason why you have wars, why you have battles. And there's strong words for the church. In verse 4, adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity or it's hostility with God?

Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. War with God. spiritual adultery is attempting to live in intimate fellowship with God and at the same time set your affection on the things of this world.

[27 : 01] Is that possible by the way? It's not possible. But we've sure tried an awful lot. Think that we can do it. You know, like I think it was Andy, not Andy, Charles Stanley said it's like climbing up on the altar.

and leaving one foot on the ground. So you're on the altar but you're playing footsie with the world. And it just doesn't work. The attempt to do that, it apparently, is even worse than just staying off the altar and just letting go with your passions.

because this adultery, this combination of wanting to be thought of as spiritual and have fellowship with God and at the same time still want fellowship with the world, that's hostility toward God. verse 5 is God's, then God's declaration of war. Or do you think that scripture says in vain, the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?

Didn't say that in vain, that's not a worthless statement. The spirit, God, the Holy Spirit, representative of Godhead in total, yearns jealously for us.

[28 : 33] He's a jealous husband and he has a right to be. We've been bought and paid for. We belong to him. So this is the declaration of war. We're going to go the route of spiritual adultery and allow your passions and the cravings of your flesh go toward satisfaction.

with the things of this world and you're going to be at war with God. This is the declaration of war.

So you put all this together, the source of all wars among us is the war within us.

And the war within us does not go well when we are at war with God through spiritual adultery with the world. So that's kind of a summation of what James is saying in these first five verses.

So next time we'll look at peace. This is the war side but the Bible does provide an answer for us if we have ears to hear it and we can know peace and not war with God.