



6. Conquering our wars

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

In Chapter 4 James deals with three wars we all experience in our lives and offers a practical solution. Practical but not easy due to our default nature of self-centeredness and self-importance.

The first war is the war within us.

James places the reason for the war within us squarely on our covetousness when he writes, “You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can’t get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them.”

To make our covetous desire appear pious we pray to God and ask Him to grant them. James points out that God studiously ignores covetous prayers offered to gratify selfish ambition.

Theologian Warren Wiersbe say this about the tenth commandment. “Covetousness can make a person murder, tell lies, dishonor his parents, commit adultery or in one way or the other violate all of God’s moral law. Selfish living and selfish praying always lead to war. If there is war on the inside, there will ultimately be war on the outside.”

So, the covetousness which is the genesis of the war within us leads us to the second war – the war with each other. These include class wars of status where the rich are given prominence over the poor even in churches as James mentions in Chapter 2: 1-9. There are economic wars where power and control of resources lie with some as we will see in Chapter 5 and also personal wars as in v 11-12 in this chapter.

James reveals the source of our personal wars with each other is our default nature of being judgmental. As we judge others, we find reasons to criticize, condemn and bad mouth them.

James exhorts Christians, “Do not slander one another. A person who speaks against a brother or judges them speaks against the law and judges it.”

I find this to be true, and in fact, it is unnatural for me not to judge others. But this is when we need to pause and consider what Jesus said, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

Let me say this though, when James tells us not to judge, he is not telling us not to evaluate others. We must exercise discernment but stop short of assuming God’s role of pronouncing judgement and then publicizing our judgement. Simply put, let’s not speak and slander someone with insufficient information or with ulterior motives. That would amount to sinning against God, which leads us to the third war.

As we sin and rebel against God we are actually engaged in a war against God. James states this war in these words, “You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God?” (James 4:4a). Since the church is the Bride of Christ our friendship with the world is compared to adultery by James.

Not having friendship with the world does not mean we remove ourselves from the world and begin living in alone in a cave. It just means that we should not conform to the standards of the world that are in conflict with God's standards.

Another way we are at war with God is by indulging with rather than fleeing and resisting the devil.

So, what is James solution that can help us bring these wars to an end? We find the solution in the verses 7-8 "... humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world."

We first must crucify our covetousness embodied in selfish desires, our ego and selfish prayers and humble ourselves before God. We must submit to His Lordship.

This is easier said than done and almost daily we must crucify ourselves in Christ. This is the first step.

Next, we must resist the devil. Resist him as Jesus did in the wilderness. Or else flee from sin as Joseph did when the devil used Potiphar's wife to entice him. James assures us that when we resist the devil, we can be sure he will flee.

The final solution offered by James is the one I find most attractive. He writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8). Dr. AW Tozer's says that "Nearness is likeness" rather than spatial distance. Since we are born in God's image we are nearer to God in likeness than we are to our pet cat. So, the more, we conform to God, the more we draw "near" to Him.

Drawing near to God means becoming more like Jesus in our being and doing.

Jesus willingly gave up His position and privileges of being the Son of God and obediently humbled Himself becoming human.

Jesus did not condemn those who crucified Him, but actually asked for them to be forgiven.

Jesus showed us how the devil could not only be resisted but also defeated.

Can we all draw near and become more like Jesus? With His love we can be "more than conquerors" in all these three wars.

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