

Confronting the Enemies of Unity in Our Hearts – Part 3
Pastor Ty Blackburn
James 4:1-12
August 12, 2012

Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 4. I mentioned earlier that this text that we're in actually deals with, and this morning we're going to see Verses 6-10, where he really lays out a pathway out of ingrained sin. When we find ourselves in the mire of entrenched sin in our lives, we recognize where we are. James then gives us the way out. We see in the first part of the Chapter 4 that he is basically trying to get our attention to show us exactly where we are. He's been using powerful language to show us our need of grace, and now in these next verses, having made us aware of our predicament, he offers a solution. So that's what we're going to be looking at this morning, if you remember, as we've been looking in recent weeks, it's in a larger context of a study on unity. We've been looking for a number of months on the topic of Christian unity, though we normally work through a book chapter by chapter, verse by verse. We have taken a break for a few months to work on this important subject. We've been at a number of passages: John 13, John 17, and Ephesians 4.

Now in James 3 and 4 for a period of time now, what we've looked at in James is that James is dealing with the real practicality of how we defend the unity that God has placed in our hearts. We are to be one, as we just sang about. We're the Body of Christ—one Spirit, one calling. That ought to be evident in our relationships. God intends that. It's a powerful testimony to the Person and work of Christ. "They will know," Jesus said, "that You sent me, Father, when they are one, even as We are one. The world will know that You sent me." It's the authenticating power of unity. Because of the authenticating power of it, Satan is its enemy, and he does everything he can to disrupt the unity. That's why we're called to guard it, and James particularly, is dealing with this issue of disunity in the Body in Chapters 3 and 4 of his epistle.

So we've titled the messages from these passages 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity'. The enemies of unity are the devil, the flesh, and the world. We have to confront those enemies because they are attacking. We've looked at in Chapter 3, working at confronting the enemies of unity in our words and in our attitudes, and now in our hearts is Chapter 4. So the title of the message today is: 'Confronting the Enemies of Unity – In Our Hearts'. This is Part 3 of this particular message 'In Our Hearts', and we're going to hopefully this morning cover probably half of this

subject of the way out. Confronting the enemies of unity in our hearts is really the way out of the conflicts we're in.

The reason we're in conflicts is because we are sinners. We have entrenched idols in our hearts. That's what James has been saying, and now he says, "What's the way out?" And this is what we have in Verses 6-10. Here is the way out. Here's how you uproot idols from your heart. This is how you put to death sin in your members. Let's read this passage together. We'll read Verses 1-12 of James 4.

James 4:1-12:

1 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.

Father, we bow this morning and we acknowledge our poverty before You. Lord, we, as it relates to righteousness, are completely and utterly empty. We rejoice that Jesus is fullness. As it relates to unrighteousness, Lord we are full, but rejoice that He was without sin. Help us this morning to see the glory of our Savior and how He can lead us in paths of righteousness. We pray in His Name, and for His Name, Amen.

The tone of this passage, as we've noted in previous weeks, is striking. The manner of address is jarring. He's writing to his brothers. James, in fact, says 15 times in this epistle, he refers to his recipients as brothers. "My brothers, my beloved brothers." So he's writing to people who profess to be Christians, many of whom are truly Christians. But of course, as always, the New Testament doesn't take for granted that a profession of faith, that baptism, that church membership means you're saved. No, we're to examine ourselves to see if we're in the household of faith, but he speaks to those who profess to be believers, yet he uses these jarring addresses. He says, "You adulterers, you sinners, you double-minded." Not only is the manner of address jarring, but the words he uses are exceedingly forceful. We've noted in previous messages that 'quarrels and conflicts' would be better translated 'wars and battles'. That's the Greek. "Where do these wars come from? Where do these battles come from? From the lust that wage war in your members." Strong word choice. It's continually through this passage. "You lust and do not have so you murder. I saw you get angry, so you've murdered," James says. The overall tone is intended to wake his readers up, to rouse them from slumber. His aim is to assault our apathy, to confront our complacency. His readers had the same tendency that you and I have, that is to become comfortable with conflict, to resign ourselves to a certain level of division, to get used to it, to think it's really not that big a deal.

James here shakes us and says, "Wake up! See this for what it is! Conflict among Christians is war." The carnage and horror of war is the imagery that he brings up. The sin in the heart that leads us to these conflicts is adultery. In our relationship with God, conflict is rooted in spiritual idolatry, which is spiritual adultery. We're worshipping other gods, we're putting other things in the place that God alone is supposed to have. He says, in a sense, the tone of Verse 4 when he says, "You adulteresses," is he's basically saying, "Listen, you have conflict in your lives because of your sin. You're cheating on your spouse!" How someone leveled that charge against you, "You're cheating on your spouse!" That's what James says. "You and I are cheating on our husband."

The point of Verse 5 is to say, "You're cheating on your husband," where he says: ***Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?*** That is saying, "Your husband is jealous and angry." Now think about the impact of that. You're cheating on your spouse. Your husband knows it and he's angry. That's the predicament we find ourselves in. It's not cheating on an earthly spouse who's imperfect which is wicked and to be despised. We're cheating on the Lord of Heaven Who has bought us and Who loves us with an everlasting love. It's sin

against love, and it's sin against a holy love. God is a jealous God. Exodus 34:14, Yahweh Who's name is jealous. He wants His place. His place is the center of our lives and He's jealous for that place. When you and I relegate Him to the side it's not something light, it's not something to laugh about, and it's something of the greatest urgency. When you think about the fact that the Word tells us that our God, in Hebrews 12:29, that our God is a consuming fire. He's not something to be trifled with. We see this in the Old Testament in a number of places.

Remember when Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron went into the temple and they went in lightly? They'd been drinking and they mixed up an incense that was inappropriate for they were going in to worship the Lord. Because the incense was not the one that God had prescribed, He sent fire out from the altar and it consumed them and killed them. God is not to be trifled with.

Or do you remember the other story? When you see things like this, it makes us tremble, doesn't it? The story in 2 Samuel, where David is bringing the ark to Jerusalem. He's ready to celebrate the return of the ark to the center of God's people, the new place He's built, the city of David, Jerusalem. He's bringing the ark in and they have it on an oxcart, which is not the way God prescribed for the ark to move. He prescribed the arks to move on the shoulders of the priests. They haven't done their reading and so they have it on an oxcart. The oxcart hits a bump and the ark is unsettled. It looks like it's about to fall and so one of the men there Uzzah, does what you and I would have done had we been standing there, and he reaches up to grab the ark to steady it, to save the honor of the ark. God sends out His fire and kills him. David is brokenhearted. "Why would the Lord do this? What is this about?" He leaves the ark at the home of a man named Obed-edom for a period of time, and the Lord blesses Obed-edom. David goes back and reads his Bible and finds out from the priest what they had done wrong. They had not carried the ark the way God said to carry the ark.

You see, God is jealous for His glory. We look at that and we think, "Sin is no big deal. What's the big deal?" The problem is that you and I look at things through the lenses of wicked, sinful, human pride. We think we know so much, but we don't know anything. The Lord says He is holy, and the miracle of the Old Testament, if you look at it rightly, is not that what happened to Uzzah happened, or what happened to Nadab and Abihu happened, the miracle is it didn't happen to everyone in the Old Testament. God's judgment breaks out ever so rarely as just a warning sign. "This is what everyone deserves," but He occasionally breaks it out. That's how God feels about sin. James, writing to Jewish Christians who are steeped in the Old Testament says, "You are adulterers. God is jealous!" The effect

of his words and the harsh tone that he's taken with them to wake them up would help them have something of an experience of Isaiah. "Woe is me. I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell amidst the people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the Lord. What am I to do?" Isaiah says, "Woe, I'm undone. I'm coming apart at the seams. I'm disintegrating. I have nothing to stand before God." That's the effect of these first five verses. That's why it makes perfect sense out of Verse 6. It makes Verse 6-A, the first part of it, so precious.

James 4:6 ~ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

The grace of God. One of the sweetest words that can come upon the human ear—grace. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin. Grace is God's unmerited favor, His kindness, His love given to those who are completely undeserving. In fact, are deserving of the opposite. We deserve wrath, and hatred, and yet God is a God Who abounds in loving kindness and grace. He's a God Who's holy, but He's a God Who in His holiness, looks at us and knows us as we are. We can't hide anything from Him. He knows that we're adulterers. He knows that we're murderers, and He says, "Come to Me. I am the fountain of grace." But when you recognize yourself, it changes everything about the way you come, and that's the point of this passage. It's so encouraging when he shows us how awful our predicament is. It's kind of like someone not realizing what they've been doing. Someone that's been doing something terrible, they've been doing something that's causing all this devastation, but they don't even realize it until someone calls it to their attention. "Do you not see what you've done? Oh, I can't believe it." That's what James is doing, but then he says, "Do you see what you've done? Now look to the One that can heal you."

This is so encouraging because after James awakens us to our awful predicament, he shows us the way out. Sometimes we wonder, "Can I truly change?" The areas of besetting sin in our lives, "Can I really change? Can I really overcome this? When I find an idol that seems so deeply rooted in my heart, how can I deal with that?" In these verses, James shows us the way out, the way out of hardened sin patterns. He gives us, in this path of change, which is really a road of repentance. It's all about repentance and it's all about grace. There are ten commands from Verse 7 to Verse 10, ten imperatives, one after another in rapid fire. James says, "Do this. Do this. Do this. Do this. Do this." This is the way out. "How am I freed?" "Follow these ten commands."

We're going to look, Lord-willing, this morning, at the first four imperatives. Then next week at the final six. What are the instructions that James gives us. When we see how bad our situation is, we see how ugly our sin is, what are we to do?

1) Humble Yourself:

The first thing that you need to do is to humble yourself. Now in the order of the imperatives, that's actually the last imperative in the passage. In Verses 7-10 there are ten. Look at Verse 10:

James 4:10 ~ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Now why do we start there? Because that's really the most important imperative in the entire passage. I base that on the fact that if you look with me at Verse 6, before the imperatives start, after we hear those wonderful words, ...***He gives a greater grace***,... look what James says. "***Therefore it says***" and he quotes Proverbs 34:14.

James 4:6 ~ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

"Submit to God. Resist the devil. Draw near to God, cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, be miserable, mourn, weep, let your laughter be turned, let your mourning be turned. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord." Humble yourselves at the end of this list is really the summing up of all the other imperatives. In it is captured everything else. So he leads with it in describing the urgency of humility. If you don't have humility, according to Verse 6, God is opposed to you. The word 'oppose' is a very strong word. Literally, the word is made up of two words—antitassōmi. 'Anti' means 'against', and 'tassōmi' means 'to array in order'. It's used in a military sense so that the word 'antitassōmi' means in the military 'to draw up your army'. It's like a general places his army, his cavalry, his artillery, his infantry units, and his reserve, getting them in place as he prepares to do battle with the enemy. If you're proud, God is doing that to you. That is His attitude toward you.

That's what the Scripture says. That's the tenor and tone of the whole Old Testament. God resists the proud. He's opposed to the proud. He is at war with the proud. But He gives grace to the humble, so there at the beginning of this passage, He's saying, "What we need is humility." In fact, in the truest sense, humility is the

quintessential attribute of the follower of God. It is the one thing that matters from beginning to end. If we can say, and we should say that salvation is all of grace. From first to last, salvation is all of grace. God is the God of grace, the God of all grace. Salvation is Him acting at every point, Him awakening us to sin, Him giving us a new heart, Him enabling repentance, granting repentance, as it says in 2 Timothy 2:24. Him giving the gift of faith as He says in Ephesians 2:8. Him giving us the ability to overcome sin, and Him glorifying us. From beginning to end, it's all of grace. If salvation from God's standpoint is all of grace, what is it from our standpoint? All of humility. From the beginning to the end, it's humility. It is a complete, radical reorientation of how we see self. That's what humility is.

The essence of sin, the root of all sin is pride. Pride is seeing ourselves as great, desiring greatness for ourselves. Desiring position, desiring honor. Pride in itself is war against God. That's why God opposes the proud because you're warring against Him when you're proud. The proud person is trying to knock God out of the way, as if we could. To knock God out of the way so that we can have the preeminence. This was Satan's sin. What did he want? Though he was created the highest and noblest creature that God had made, Lucifer, he said in his heart, "I will ascend in the place of the Most High." He wanted to be equal to God. When he said to Eve, "Has God said that if you eat of that you will die? You shall not surely die, for God knows in the day that you eat of that fruit of the knowledge of the tree of good and evil, and the day that you eat of it you will be like God."

That's the heartbeat of, the essence of sin in the world. People want to be God. The reason they become enraged when they hear the truth of the Gospel, the reason people become so angry when they find out that you won't acknowledge that their lifestyle is legitimate. Why would they care, really? If it was just about logic and reason, why does somebody care what I think about their lifestyle? The reason they care is because when you say, "A homosexual lifestyle is against the will of God," or when you say, "I don't agree with it. The Bible says..." they hear the voice of God and they hear God saying to them, "You are not God. I am, and I determine the way it is," and they rage against that. When we find sin in ourselves, the times we get the most angry is when we're wanting something to determine something for ourselves. Like James says, we want something, we desire something, we don't get it, we murder. "I will have that!" We're acting like God. The essence of turning that around is meekness, which says, "I am not God. I want this, but if God chooses for me not to have it, I hold everything with an open hand. I'd like to have this particular blessing, but if the Lord takes it away, no big deal. I can respond in a way that pleases Him."

So pride is the essence of trying to lift ourselves up. Humility is lowering ourselves down. In fact, the words translated ‘pride’ and ‘humility’, the word ‘pride’ means ‘to shine over, above, and beyond’. The word for humble means ‘to be low physically, to be low to the ground’. That’s literally what it means, ‘to be physically low to the ground’. So figuratively, it means ‘to have a low opinion of oneself’. So the idea of humility is to see God rightly and to see self rightly. There are some people who think they’re humble because they go around badmouthing themselves. “I’m just terrible. I’m just a failure.” A lot of times when people are doing that, it’s an expression of pride. What are they doing? They are fishing for you to say they’re not so bad. The way you know it is, if you’re always talking about yourself, you are proud. C.S. Lewis rightly said:

“Humility is thinking of yourself less, and less, and less.”

“It’s not about what’s happening to me or what’s happened to me, it’s about Jesus Christ and it’s about serving You.” That’s a humble person. How can you get there? You see that God is everything and you are nothing. “So what does it matter what’s going on in my life? Lord, it’s all about You.” The humble person is seeing that, and that’s the person God draws near to. To see ourselves rightly. Listen to this quote from the Valley of Vision Collection of Puritan Prayers. This is an excerpt called ‘Self-Knowledge’.

It is a good day to me when Thou givest me a glimpse of myself. Sin is my greatest evil but Thou art my greatest good. I have cause to loathe myself and not to seek self-honor for no one desires to commend his own dunghill.

When we see ourselves rightly, we are a dunghill. Apart from the grace of God, that’s the indictment. This is why people who want to be God hate that message. The reality is, when you humble yourself before God, He exalts you. When you exalt yourself before God, He will humble you, He will break you down. Every unbeliever who wants to be God will find that they are utterly destroyed. Every believer who is willing to take God’s indictment and humble themselves before Him, He exalts us. Isn’t it amazing that the end of salvation is a theological word, loaded glorification? You and I, those who have truly repented and believed are destined for glory. He’s going to share His glory with us. That is unspeakably miraculous! How can that be? The Lord is going to take the dust of the Earth and set it beside Him. In fact, in Jesus’ taking humanity to Himself, the second Person of the Trinity, I remember hearing my theology professor talk about this, he said, “Do you realize now that the dust of the Earth sits enthroned at the right hand of the Almighty? The Majesty on high?” The dust of the Earth has been taken up and

you and I, in Christ, will be exalted somehow to share in His glory. We will never be God, but somehow He's going to honor us above the angels. You and I will judge the angels, the Scripture says.

So when you humble yourself, you're exalted, but the key is humility. I said earlier, it's all of humility. How do you get saved? Jesus said the beginning of salvation, remember He lays out the path of salvation in the first sermon recorded in the New Testament, The Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, The "Blessed are" statements. What's the first Beatitude?

Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Oh how happy, that's what the word 'blessed' means, oh how happy are you when you are utterly impoverished in Spirit. There are two words in the Greek that he could have used, or as they translated what Jesus said, they could have written down. One means impoverished and living kind of hand to mouth, week to week, paycheck to paycheck, and the other means utterly destitute and bereft of any hope of provision. The second word is the word Jesus uses. Blessed are you when you are utterly bereft of any hope. "Nothing in my hands I bring, only to Thy cross I cling." That is the beginning of salvation. That's why Jesus told the parable about the Pharisee and the Publican. Remember the Pharisee who's touting his resume' to God? "I thank You Lord that I'm not like other people. I thank You that I'm not a person who does wicked things, but I fast twice a week. I give a tithe of all that I have. I thank You, Lord, that I'm not like other people like this wicked publican over here." And the publican who was sitting over there was not able to look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "Have mercy on me, oh God, a sinner." Jesus said, "I tell you that the latter rather than the former went to his house justified."

The essence of salvation is utter dependence, a complete acknowledgement of our absolute poverty before God, nothing that we can ask God to look at. It's a dung hill. So humility is the beginning. Humility is the pipe that reaches the spring of God's grace.

My grandfather built a cabin in the mountains about 25 years ago, and one of the things he did was he tapped into a spring up on the hill, and he ran a pipe all the way down to the house, so that you were drinking spring water in the mountain house. He was thrilled about it. It was all gravity. There was no pump. It came down the side of the hill and came in, and he was able to store it in a place. There was pressure in the shower and all that. Imagine if he laid all that pipe but didn't get it all the way to the spring. What good would it be? It's nothing. Humility is

laying your pipe all the way to the spring. It's the only way that you can tap into the resources of God's grace. You must be humble. So, humble yourself. That's the first requirement. When we see that we have conflict in our lives because of idols in our lives, because of sin in our lives, when this entrenched sin becomes clear to us, when we see the ugliness, what's the first thing we need to do? Cry out to God in humility. "Lord, I need help." And the second imperative is:

2) Submit to God:

James 4:7 ~ Submit therefore to God.

One thing I want to mention is all ten of the verbs here are in the aorist tense in Greek, and the aorist tense is a tense which emphasizes completed action. It has the effect of emphasizing a decisive act, the definiteness of what it describes. So when he says, "Humble yourselves. Submit," what he means that there's an intentionality about it, a finality about it. It doesn't mean that you don't do it again and again, but it means that there's this determination about it. So submit to God means that in a decisive, definite way, I realize that I need help, and now I'm going to submit myself to the Lord in this area of my life that I've now become aware of, this area of sin. The word 'submit' means to arrange under. I'm going to take all of the details of this area of my life where I'm seeing the ugliness, and I need God to help and to clean up this mess. How's it going to happen? Acknowledge that I need Him, and secondly, that I bring it all before Him and it's all His. I submit to Him. This means that I'm going to bring all things in my life under His authority, according to His Word.

Proverbs 3:5 ~ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

If you want to be free from sin, you have to trust in the Lord with all your heart, which means you don't do what you think you ought to do, you don't do what feels right, but you do what God says. It doesn't matter how it feels. It matters what God says. You don't do what the world says to do. The world says that in dealing with anger, what you need to do is just vent it. Haven't you heard that? I remember hearing of people being counseled before even by "Christian" counselors, who were told that what you need to do is beat something with a baseball bat. One person who was counseled was told to imagine that that was her father, and to beat that and express the anger, to get it out, the catharsis of the anger. I can tell you that it makes you feel better a little bit if you do something like that, and that has a sort of appeal of worldly wisdom. It's fleshly. It appeals to the flesh, but it is

directly contrary to the Word of God. God says, “You let no unwholesome speech proceed from your mouth, much less unwholesome actions. You’re to put those things to death, not act on them.” Acting on them will make you feel better for a few minutes, but later what you’ve done is you’ve stirred up anger and you’ve got greater anger later.

It’s kind of like stoking a fire. It’s so stupid. You’ve got a fire of anger in your life, and you go to a counselor and you say, “How do I fix the fire? How do I get rid of this fire of anger in my life?” They say, “Well, what you need to do is you need to really throw a whole lot of wood on that fire,” and it’s going to get so hot that I guess you run away from it and you’ll feel like you don’t have a fire anymore. It’s not a perfect analogy, but work with me. Essentially it’s true. What they’re doing is saying that stirring up your sin will make you less sinful. The reality is that the way to be less sinful is to look to Christ. So submitting to God means not doing what the world says, not doing what my friends say, and not doing what the experts say. All that matters is what sayeth the Lord, and making a determination to do only what God says. That’s what he’s saying. Humble yourself, and then submit to God.

What’s the third imperative?

3) Resist the Devil:

The second part of Verse 7 says:

James 4:7 ~ ... Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

The verb translated ‘resist’ means literally to stand against. It means to take your stand against, and it certainly has military connotations. The idea is to fight. It’s interesting that he gives that command. Resist the devil. The reality is that you and I don’t resist the devil. Isn’t that odd that we don’t? But it’s true. The reason that we’re in the predicament that we’re in is we haven’t been fighting. The reason that the enemy has got dominion in an area of your life is because you haven’t fought him there. If you are a child of God, you are more than a conqueror, and the reason that there’s dominion in an area is because we have not been fighting. It’s like he’s saying, “Wake up. Fight! Will you fight? There’s a war going on. You’ve been complacent and tolerant of this sin. You’ve allowed Satan to come in and establish a bridgehead. Now it’s time to take up arms and fight to the death.” The same word is used in Ephesians 6:12-13, where the apostle Paul reminds us:

Ephesians 6:12:13 ~ For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

The word 'resist' here is the same word as in James. Stand against. So that you will be able to stand against evil in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm. You have to fight. You've got to have a warrior's mentality if you're going to be free from entrenched sin. You've got to have a warrior's mentality if you're going to be a peacemaker. I mean, how did Jesus come and make peace? He came by attacking the devil. He came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to bind the strong man, to plunder his house. Satan wasn't going to let things go easily. And praise God that Jesus came and utterly defeated him and made a spectacle of him. That's what the word says in Colossians 2. He made a public spectacle of Satan and all of his minions on the cross when He triumphed over them. In His death, He humiliated them, and you and I are heirs of that great victory if we belong to Christ. So the reason that there's bondage is we are not walking in light of that great victory. It's like we have the weapon of all weapons to use, and we've laid it aside, and we're letting some little mickey mouse country like Trinidad and Tobago walk on the United States.

What do we need to do? Wake up and fight. That's an unworthy analogy. It's a whole lot more distant than that. Satan is a great enemy. If you and I were fighting in ourselves, we've got no chance. We're to be wary of him. He's a roaring lion. Peter uses this same word also in 1 Peter 5:8-9, when he says:

1 Peter 5:8-9 ~ Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

He's dangerous, but greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. So when we stand and remember who we are, we resist the devil and we stand up to fight. That's the beginning of the end, and that's why the promise there is: ***Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*** You resist him with your faith. You resist him with the Word. Submitting to God is all about the Word. You look at what the Word says, and you believe it. You replace your thoughts with God's thoughts, and you start thinking God's thoughts after Him. "It feels like this, Lord, but I'm going to believe Your Word." That's what it means to submit to God.

You resist him in the moment of battle. When the temptation comes to go and to continue down that process of responding in anger, or giving into sexual lust, or whatever it is, when you have that happen, to be overcome by fear or anxiety, in the moment, that's when you put on the Word of God, and you come back at the temptation with the Word of God. That's how Jesus fought. Remember, we have Him leading the way. In the 4th Chapter of Matthew, Satan tempts Him three times. "If you're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." He was tempting Jesus to lay aside His mission of dependence upon the Father and use His powers for His own ends, to make it easy for His humanity. No, He lived dependently. He says, "No, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Where did He come up with that? Deuteronomy 8:3. He brought the Scripture. He didn't fight Satan without the word. And if He didn't fight Satan without the word, how are we going to fight Satan without the word? So we've got to hide the word in our hearts, that we might not sin. So we bring the word to bear.

Resisting the devil means learning the Scriptures that relate to the issue that I'm dealing with. What does the Bible say about anger? What does the Bible say about worry? What does the Bible say about lust? What does it say about fear? You bring the Word to bear, and you resist the devil decisively and intentionally. And if you resist him, he will flee from you.

What does that mean? It means that we'll triumph over it. I like what Calvin says in his commentary, because he acknowledges that in reality, when we resist him, it gets tougher. So what is this verse really promising? Listen to what Calvin says in his commentary on this passage. Speaking of *and he will flee from you*, John Calvin writes:

However, the promise which he adds, respecting the fleeing of Satan, seems to be refuted by daily experience; for it is certain, that the more strenuously any one resists, the more fiercely he is attacked.

Do you get that? The more we resist, the more we're attacked. That's the feeling of what you have in your experience, it seems like the promise is not consistent, he's saying, with our experience. He's going to go on to show us what it really means and how it *is* consistent. He says:

For Satan, in a manner, acts playfully when he is not in earnest repelled;...

I like that. He just acts playfully. If you're not really serious about walking with God, he's not going to bother with you that much. But if you get serious about walking with God, Calvin says:

...but against those who really resist him, Satan employs all the strength he possesses. And further, he is never wearied with fighting; but when conquered in one battle, he immediately engages in another. To this I reply, that fleeing is to be taken here for putting to flight, or routing. And, doubtless, though he repeats his attacks continually, Satan yet always departs vanquished.

That's what it means. Satan comes at you in this area, and if you walk according to the resources that you have, you trample on him. That's the promise that we have.

When the Lord told Adam and Eve as he was talking to Satan, remember the first preaching of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15, when God is saying to Satan, "I will put enmity between your seed, Satan, and the woman's seed, between you and her, and your seed and her seed. You will bruise his heel and he will bruise your head." That's ultimately the cross, but it's also talking about humanity. In Jesus, we continually walk on Satan's head. God's made us more than conquerors *hypernikaō* (ὑπερνικάω) We are over, above, and beyond conquering. That's the resources that we have. So, walk in that. Resist the devil. Pick up the battle. Why let him come into your house and plunder your life, and plunder your family, and plunder your church, when all you've got to do is stand up and remember Whose you are, and walk in victory? Resist the devil.

So, humble yourself, submit to God, and resist the devil. The fourth is:

4) Draw Near to God:

James 4:8 ~ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Again, the tense is aorist, and it means to make a definite, intentional effort in the battle to seek God's face. This is something that seems so obvious, and yet it really isn't. It's so against our natural disposition, and the way that we've been trained through our sin nature, and through Satan's effort, and through the world's system is that when we're tempted, our tendency in temptation is to isolate ourselves from God even when we're trying to obey him. Here's that temptation. "Oh no. It's coming again. I feel this desire to sin. I've been memorizing Scripture," and so you think about a verse, maybe, which is trying to resist the devil. "I'm trying to fight," but that's not all we're to do. He says, "Draw near to God in the temptation." It's like we want to show the Lord we can do it. "I've been listening to You. I know

that You're upset with how I'm living in this area, and so, Lord, I'm going to do it now. So You stay over there and watch me." What He's saying is, "No. When the temptation is happening, draw near to Him then."

It's like a little child, who, when danger is around, runs closer to Dad and grabs onto his leg. God wants us to be like that. "Come to Me. Come to Me in the moment. Come to Me with your weakness. Come to Me lamenting the fact that here my heart is again, Lord, wanting to go after this which is unclean. Here my heart is again, Lord, disappointing me, disappointing You, but I need You, Lord. I need You. You're a God of all grace. You've told me, 'Come'. You've beckoned me, 'Come' and here I come. Help me." That is where victory happens. When you come into the presence of God, and you live your life before the face of God, you have His power. It's not a weapon that we have. It is the ultimate power of the universe that we have. We have the power of God, and we come near to Him, and now we can stand against anybody and anything. Draw near to God in the moment. The idea is to try to bring the area of weakness, the area of stumbling, to bring that area before the face of God, to continually try to bring it to Him. Even when we sin, that's what we're supposed to do.

When we fail, what are we supposed to do? Not sit there and beat ourselves up. Satan wants to do that. He's the one who is the accuser of the brethren. He tempts you to sin. He doesn't make you sin. You choose to sin because of your own simple hearts. That's what we do. When we sin, then, he tells us how bad we are. Satan questions whether we're Christians. Satan says, "How can you act like that?" He condemns. That's why Scripture reminds us that *there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. There is no condemnation from God. He says, "You sinned. Look to My blood. Look to My Son." He doesn't condemn. He says, "You're My child. Why are you acting like this? I don't like this, but I love you. Come here." He doesn't say, "Get away from Me," if you're in Christ. God never says that. He says, "Come child." He says, "Look, child, why are you allowing this to happen, child? Come to Me. Come to Me. Come to Me."

If we only look up, we see Him there beckoning us. His Word tells us even when we don't feel it. We don't feel it a lot of times, but this is where faith comes in. "I don't feel like God wants me to come to Him. How could He possibly want me to come to Him?" His Word says so. I don't care what you feel like, and you shouldn't care what you feel like. All that you and I should care about is what God says. God says, "Come to Me. Draw near to Me." It's really a staggering thing in light of the Old Testament.

I mentioned earlier about Nadab, Abihu and Uzzah reaching up, and what a fearful thing it was to draw near to God. This holy God, how can you draw near to Him? That's why David left the ark in Obed-edom for so long. He was like, "I don't think that we can bring the ark into Jerusalem. I don't want to be that close to it. How can we be that close to God?" And part of that was to show man this was the Lord baby-talking with us. We think sin is a small thing, and God says, "No, you've got to see that sin is a huge thing." Sin is so much bigger than we ever imagined, and if you don't come to see that, you'll never see how glorious your Savior is. He's not a Savior that saves you from little human errors. He's a Savior that saves you from utter and complete rebellion, from murderous intention. You and I would have murdered God if we'd had the opportunity, and Jesus Christ died to take that as far away as the east is from the west. That is the glorious Savior that we serve, and so you have to see sin in all of its magnitude to see Christ in all of His glory.

So the Old Testament is saying, "How can you draw near to a God like that?" That's what the author of Hebrews is saying just a few chapters back. Look at Hebrews 12:18. Look at how he's drawing on the Old Testament imagery to show the difference between where we are and where they are.

Hebrews 12:18 ~ For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

Do you see the terror of the Old Testament imagery there? That's what it was like at Sinai. If you come to Sinai, there was a fire. There's darkness. There's gloom. There are whirlwinds, so that when God spoke to the people, they said, "Please don't speak to us. Speak through Moses." You have not come to that kind of mountain.

Hebrews 12:19 ~ and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

You have come to that, the reality of the city of God, the mountain of God. That's where you and I have come. That is unimaginable. How can it be? And so when he says, "Draw near to God," these Jewish Christians had all that Old Testament imagery. They must have been marveling again, saying, "We can come to God even as we wrestle with sin now." The priest had to go through ritual washing and come exactly as they were supposed to. They had to make sure they were clean for seven days before they could come in. We can come even in our uncleanness to God, because we come through the blood of Christ, an offering that speaks better than the blood of Abel. So come, draw near to Him. Marvel at it even as you come, but don't forget to draw near. He gives that promise. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

One thing we need to remember is that whenever we feel like God is distant from us, we know who left. It's us. In Jesus Christ, there's all favor, and grace, and love for you if you're in Christ. Nothing but love and favor. It's a fountain of unending love and unending favor. He loves you, and He will love you, and nothing you can do could ever change that. The moments when you're in sin, it's like you put up an umbrella under the rain of His love, and you're standing under the umbrella wondering, "Why am I not wet with love anymore?" Take down the umbrella and you'll find that the flood of His love is still just as strong as it was. In fact, it's even greater. That's the wonder of it. When you take down the umbrella, it's like it's raining harder when you really see as God intends you to see. He loves me even in this. So draw near to God.

That's the heartbeat of how we get out of ingrained sin, is we start drawing near to Him in the moments, and what happens is His holiness starts going in and burning up sin. It starts changing everything, and we're going to see how he continues to open this up through the rest of these ten commands. But we need to start off by remembering it's all about humility. It's all about an acknowledgement of complete dependence. You and I have to stop being proud and afraid to even acknowledge our sin. This is one of the reasons we don't confess our sins to one another. We're too proud. We think we're supposed to have it together. We've bought the lies of the world. People of the world are skilled at making it look like everything's great on the surface, but Christians are people who can be real. We should be transparent. There's nothing good in me. Why would I shine up my dung hill? I'm just a dunghill, and that's what you are too. But isn't Jesus wonderful? And He's cleaning us up. He's fitting us for heaven so we can open our hearts to one another, we can pray for one another, and in humility, we can then confront one another when we see something our brother needs to see, and it comes from

one dung hill to another, nobody looking down on anybody, but rather just saying, “Hey, I’ve got a concern for you.”

Humility is at the heart of the whole Christian life. It’s all of grace and it’s all of humility from A to Z. When humility is in the hearts of God’s people, how can they be but one? There’s no division when you’re humble. May God make us people like that. May God make us people who so acknowledge who we are, that we see His face, and we see our ugliness more and more, and we see the glory of Christ’s provision that He died for this, He paid for this, and He’s not only paid for this, but He’s given me His righteousness in exchange. Where I tend to be angry, He’s meek, and He’ll give me His meekness if I keep clinging to him, if I run to Him, and cling to Him in the moment. May God help us do that.

Let’s pray...

Our Father, we praise and honor You, and we stand in awe of You. It is beyond our ability to conceive how You could be gracious to us. It’s something that we do not possess toward one another. We judge one another. We get angry with one another. If we were God, we would not be gracious. We marvel that You who are so high and exalted, so lifted up, so far above us that we cannot even comprehend how small we are in significance, that You who are so great would yet be humble and meek and lowly, so much so that You would stoop down to associate with sinners like us, that You would send Your Son, the Lord of glory, to live in this world, to take a body that was in the likeness of sinful flesh upon Himself, to live in this sin-stained, stinking world and then to die as if He were the most reprobate and wicked person, punished for all of our sins, and You did that so that You who dwell in light inaccessible hid from our eyes, too holy to look upon sin, might by His offering fulfill Your righteous wrath and punish to the full extent every sin that has ever been committed by everyone who would ever believe. You punished completely, so that He could say, “It is finished!” and it was. And then we can come to You having recently sinned, frustrated with our own inadequacy, and marvel that we receive grace. That is too wonderful, Lord, for our minds to conceive, but we are so glad it’s true. We’re so glad that Your whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, paints that picture perfectly. You covered their sins in the garden. You killed the animals and you covered their sins, because one day You would kill Your Son and cover our sins. Lord, help us to be holy. Help us to be so enamored and amazed by Your love and Your grace, to be so awed by it that we lose the desire for everything else. We know that this flesh is still going to be with us, but help us kill it. Help us to be holy. Help us every moment of every day to

cling to You and to love our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name, Amen.

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.