

## Week 8 - Wars, Worldliness & Worship

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well if we could, this evening, with the Lord's enabling and the Lord's help, we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, James chapter 4, and we're going to be looking at the verses 1 to 12, James chapter 4, and we just take as our text the words of verse 1, James 4 at verse 1, what causes quarrels or wars, and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? What causes wars, and what causes fights among you?

Have you ever heard of the War of the Whiskers, or the War of Oaken Bucket, or the War of Jenkins Ear?

Believe it or not, they were actual wars, and they were fought between nations, and we can read about them in most history books. But when we consider the history of our world, it seems that war has been a fact of life since the fall.

There have been wars, and as the Bible says, rumours of war. There have been divisions and conflicts, factions and separations, wars and bloodshed.

[ 1 : 37 ] And yet despite there being peace treaties and covenants between peoples and nations, there are still wars that go on for generations, and they never seem to come to an end.

Despite the fact there are so many world peace organisations, the threat of war is always just bubbling under the surface. And we've seen that in the news in the past week or so, with the threat of nuclear war from North Korea.

As the days go by, tensions are escalating all the time to the point that America and North Korea, they're now on the brink of war, they say. But as tensions rise between these two formidable forces of nuclear power, the threat of war is in word only.

At the moment, the war between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, as he's called, it's a war only with words. There have been lots of words said, lots of threats made, lots of promises given.

But time will tell whether these words are empty or these words are full of war. And you know, it's interesting that the first question James asks in this chapter is, what causes quarrels or wars among you?

[ 2 : 54 ] And having just spoken about the tongue in chapter three, and that it's an unruly evil, and it's full of deadly poison, and it's set on fire by hell, it becomes apparent as to the source and origin of wars and quarrels and fighting.

But James's question here is not with an eye towards the international stage and the quarrels that existed and still exist between nations and peoples and tribes.

James's concern is the wars and quarrels and factions and divisions and fighting that goes on within the church and its community. And the reason James asks this question is just so that he can answer it.

He asks, it's like a rhetorical question. He wants to explain what the heart of the problem is. And the heart of the problem, as he says, is the problem of the heart. What causes quarrels or wars and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? Our heart and what goes on within our heart is what causes quarrels and divisions in the church and within our community.

[ 4 : 06 ] But as James has stressed again and again and again throughout this letter, we need to have a heart that loves Jesus and desires to live in submission to his word.

And as we said before, that's what the letter of James is all about. That's what it's about. It's a handbook to Christian living. It's a handbook for those who say that they love Jesus and they desire to live in submission to his word.

It's a handbook about having our life transformed by the power of the gospel and applying that gospel in our lives and living out the gospel every day in this practical way.

Because James, he's reminded us that we need to be doers of the word and not only hearers. We need to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, because wrath and anger doesn't produce in us the righteousness of God.

And last time when we were considering the tongue in chapter 3, James told us that our tongue and the use of our tongue, it defines our Christianity. It defines what kind of Christian we really are.

[ 5 : 18 ] But what James tells us in this passage is that the root cause of wars and quarrelling, whether at home or away, is pride. Pride is the root of war.

But in this section, we can see that James, he also speaks about three areas that affect our life. He speaks about wars, first of all, then he speaks about worldliness, and then he speaks about worship.

And they're all linked together. And hopefully we'll see how they all link together near the end. So we're looking at wars, worldliness, and worship. Wars, worldliness, and worship.

So we look first of all at wars, verses 1 to 3. He says, What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

[ 6 : 21 ] You know, when we consider these verses, we have to see that they're very closely connected to what has just been said in chapter 3. Because, as we said, the war which James is referring to is not an international conflict, but a conflict between church members.

And so James, what James is implying is that the war between church members, it isn't physical. The war is mental and emotional. And the weapons of warfare, they're not mortars and missiles.

The war is with our sharpest and most powerful weapon, our tongue. Because, as James told us in chapter 3, the damage which our tongue can do and inflict upon others, it's unimaginable.

That little member in our bodies, he says, it's a world of iniquity. It defiles our whole body and it sets on fire the course of our life.

And he says, it's set on fire by hell. Therefore, says James, we have to guard our tongue. We have to watch what we say because wars are often started by our words.

[ 7 : 31 ] But more than that, he says, we have to guard our heart. Because what's in our heart controls our tongue. That's what Jesus said, from out of the heart the mouth speaks.

Jesus said, out of the heart of man comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these things come from within and they defile a person. And so we have to watch what we say. We have to guard our tongue. We have to guard our heart.

And we have to be wise with our words. And that's what James stressed to us at the end of the chapter. The end of chapter 3. He said to us that our wisdom with our words is evidenced by our walk.

Our wisdom with our words is evidenced by our walk. He says, chapter 3 at verse 13. He says, who is wise in understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

[ 8 : 36 ] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual and demonic.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. And so what James is saying is we are to be peacemakers, not peacebreakers. We are to be wise and peaceable and gentle in our conduct, willing to yield.

Willing to say sorry, even if we aren't in the wrong. We should be willing to seek reconciliation and sow seeds of peace and pursue peace rather than leaving it to fester and bubble under the surface.

And that's what we're just singing about in Psalm 34. The psalmist urged us, he said, depart from ill, do good, seek peace and pursue it earnestly. And what James is saying to us is that it's far wiser for

us to pursue peace and pursue reconciliation and pursue forgiveness than to leave it to grow.  
[10:00] And to grow into something that it's not. And far too often we often find, well, that's what happens. Whether it's an issue with another church member or someone in the community or a neighbour or a family member or even our own spouse.

Words can spark something. But in no time at all that little spark has grown and developed into an uncontrollable fire. Therefore we have to be wise and pursue peace, pursue reconciliation, pursue forgiveness.

Then leave it to grow and fester and become worse. But more often than not we refuse to seek peace and reconciliation and forgiveness. We refuse to put down our weapons of warfare. We put up the barriers and instead we stand our ground and dig our heels. Because we don't want to be the one who says sorry. We don't want to look weak and apologetic.

We don't want to be the one to make the first move, especially when we're not in the wrong. And they've caused the hurt. And they've made the false accusations or spread the lies or spoken out of turn.

[11:06] Whatever it was. We don't want to make the first move to bring reconciliation. And James says that the reason we don't want to make the first move and seek peace and pursue reconciliation is because of our pride.

And with this James, he identifies the root cause of all wars. Whether it's local or international. Whether it's between nations or church members.

Whether it's feuds between family and friends. The root cause of it all is pride. Naturally, we are selfish.

And in our heart, which we're to guard, we always think we're right. There's no denying it. We do. And we think that our opinion is the best.

And everyone should think like we do. And everyone should do as we do. Our default position is that when there is conflict or confrontation, we are right, they're wrong. And that might even be the case.

[12:06] But what James is showing us is that pride is not the answer. Looking for position or being proven right or getting one over on someone else, that's not wisdom. That's from above.

That's earthly and unspiritual. He even says it's demonic. It's demonic because the wisdom from above, it seeks peace. And it pursues it earnestly.

But what gets in the way of peace and reconciliation and forgiveness is pride. Pride gets in the way. And you know, when we look at the international stage and all that's going on just now, with the threats that are going back and forth between America and North Korea, the root cause of all the tension and all the animosity is pride.

Because both nations, they're jostling for position of being the superpower of the world. And they're boasting to one another of who has the strongest army and the most powerful weapons.

And it's all a show of military muscle and its root is pride. It's all about pride. And James says that's where tension comes from. That's the root of it.

[13:15] That's how things escalate and they're blown out of all proportion. Pride. Pride. And pride in the church, he says, or pride in the community, it leads to lust.

We want what others have. We want what others are. We want to be what others are. We want to have position or prominence. And you know, we see that time and time again in the Bible.

All these examples within the church where quarrels or divisions, you can see they're hidden under spirituality. You remember when Miriam and Aaron, they took a dislike to their brother's wife.

Moses' wife, she had done nothing wrong. But Miriam and Aaron, they had it in for her. Because deep down, they were jealous of Moses' position as a leader of the Israelites.

So there was pride there. Well, there's the other occasion in the Gospels. You see James and John. And they go to Jesus and they ask, Jesus, we want you to give us what we ask for.

[14:19] What we request from you. And they request that they will be given thrones in the kingdom of God. They wanted to sit one on Jesus' right and the other on Jesus' left in his glory.

They proudly wanted recognition and status. But it only caused animosity within the 12 disciples. And what James, and not the James in the Gospel.

This James was the Lord's brother. And he's stressing to us that pride and jealousy and selfish desires, they lead to murder and covetousness.

And in most cases, the cause of physical murder is because of pride, jealousy and selfish desires. But of course, James is, what he's speaking about here, is not physical murder or covetousness, but a murder and covetousness in our heart.

It's all back to the heart. Joni emphasizes the reason that we need to guard our heart. And what we can see is that James' teaching, it's the same teaching as Jesus.

[ 15 : 28 ] You know, in the Sermon on the Mount, the most hard-hitting sermon ever, ever preached. Jesus speaks into every situation. And he challenges every area of our lives.

It's just like he opens us up. And he says, when he speaks about murder, he says, you've heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder. And whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. And whoever says you fool will be liable to the fires of hell.

And Jesus emphasizes the need that we need to pursue peace and seek reconciliation and look for forgiveness. Because he goes on to say, if you're offering your gift at the altar and your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before you go to the altar.

First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. And that passage, it's often been applied to coming to sit at the Lord's table.

[ 16 : 40 ] That if we have something against our brother or our sister in Christ, or they have something against us, that we should pursue peace, seek reconciliation, look for forgiveness before sitting at the Lord's table.

And I believe that this is also what James means here when he says in verse 3, you ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

My friend, when our heart is not right with the Lord or with others, we're asking amiss. We're not in a right spirit and we don't have the right attitude towards others.

We may even be praying that the Lord would bring our enemies down, that the Lord would teach them, the Lord would show them what they've done to us. But in reality, we also need to be shown that we need to be like Jesus in our attitude and in our actions.

Was it not Jesus who went on to say in the Sermon on the Mount, you've heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.

[ 17 : 52 ] But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him also have your cloak. You've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. And then he comes with a final blow. Therefore, says Jesus, you must be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Wave after wave after wave of just opening us up, telling us how we ought to be. My friend, that's the standard what we must strive for, perfection.

And we're not to settle for second best and think that it doesn't really matter because it does. As one commentator put it, he said, the quarrels which James speaks of here have too often marred the Christian church.

Because too often we're good at holding grudges, digging our heels in and standing our ground. But that's not the call of the Christian.

[ 19 : 01 ] That's not the call to be Christ-like. That doesn't follow the example of Jesus and it doesn't witness the Jesus we profess to love. And this is what the apostles, this is what they're emphasizing again and again.

Peter said to those who were being persecuted, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

And the apostle Paul, he said, I urge you to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

very, very challenging. And so my friend, James is calling us to be wise in our conduct, to seek peace and to pursue it earnestly.

[ 20 : 17 ] So wars, that's the first thing. But secondly, James speaks about worldliness. Worldliness. He says in verse 4, You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that it is to no purpose that the Scripture says he yearns jealously over the Spirit that he has made to dwell in us, but he gives more grace?

Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And when we read the Bible, you know, we can never deny its relevance to our lives in the 21st century.

If wars within the church and outwith the church, if there's something that we're very familiar with, then so too is the issue of worldliness. It was an issue to the church of the first century and it's still an issue to the church of the 21st century.

And James puts it very bluntly when he says that if we are both a friend of God and a friend of the world, then we are committing adultery. And we all know what adultery is.

[ 21 : 31 ] It's being committed to two people when you profess to be committed to one. And the result is you're unfaithful to both. Adultery is being double-minded and unstable in all your ways.

It's wanting the best of both worlds and to please everyone, but in the end you please no one. And when James calls worldliness, when he calls it adultery, he's choosing his words very, very wisely because he's using a term which the Lord repeatedly used to describe the Israelites throughout the history of the Old Testament.

And as you know, the Israelites, when they were called to be God's chosen people, they were called to be holy, they were called to love the Lord, they were called to follow his commandments and to worship only him.

But the history of Israel, it's tainted with adultery and instability. Because time and time again, the Israelites, they turned away from worshipping the Lord and they turned to idols.

They adopted the false gods and all the idols of the foreign nations and they worshipped them.

They even tried to worship both at the same time.

[ 22 : 44 ] where the Israelites, they would continue to worship the Lord and offer the sacrifices and attend to all the rituals and perform all the duties that were required of them in the laws of Moses.

But at the same time, they would go and bow down to all the idols and the shrines and worship them. They would do both at the same time. And you know, nothing has changed.

The day and generation may be different, but the same things are taking place. As Christians, we may think that if we attend church maybe only once on the Lord's Day and take communion twice a year, we're pleasing the God we profess.

And then the rest of the time we spend it with our idols, whether they're the idols of the land or idols of our leisure. And you know, sometimes I think, well, we think that we're such good Christians that we can post all the pictures of Bible verses on social media for the world to see and know how holy we are.

And then only days later, we post pictures of being in pubs or concerts or drinking with all our friends and we tell everyone how good God is. But my friend, surely that's a contradiction.

[ 23 : 59 ] Surely that's double-mindedness. And James says, yes, it's adultery. It's adultery. And throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites, they committed adultery by worshipping both the Lord and their idols.

They weren't dedicated to the Lord. They weren't committed to loving, following, and serving only the Lord because they were still doing what they wanted to do. They were still going off and pleasing themselves.

And the Lord said to them, you're prostituting yourselves to these idols. You're selling yourselves to them. You're not living as my holy people. And you know, when you read the book of Hosea, wonderful book, but you see in that book that the Lord told Hosea to go and marry a prostitute called Gomer.

And Hosea's marriage to Gomer was to be a picture and an illustration of Israel's relationship with the Lord. Where the Lord, he had married a prostitute.

a prostitute that was unfaithful and uncommitted and was going off and committing adultery with all these other gods. But the beautiful thing about the book of Isaiah is that despite Israel's unfaithfulness, the Lord was willing to restore them, willing to forgive them, willing to redeem them and make them his own because of his love for them.

[ 25 : 27 ] But that doesn't mean that they could continue in sin that grace may abound. It doesn't mean that we can continue in sin that grace may abound.

No, we're to be dedicated, committed, devoted, enthusiastic, steadfast, loyal, faithful Christians who have a singular love for the Lord.

And we're to be holy because God is holy. And that's the verse which is repeated throughout the Bible. Be holy for I am holy.

That was the call to the Israelites. Be holy for I am holy. That's the call to the Christian. Be holy for I am holy. And as you know, the word holy, it means to be separate, to be distinct, to be set apart. To be holy is to be committed to the Lord and to his word. Which is why the Bible urges us as Christians to be separate from the world and come out from among them.

[ 26 : 39 ] And it was the 19th century minister or preacher of J.C. Ryle. If you get anything of J.C. Ryle, read it. He wrote two famous books called Holiness and Practical Religion.

He wrote many books but these in particular, Holiness and Practical Religion. And if there was ever a list of recommended reading for the Christian, these two books would be on that list.

Holiness and Practical Religion. Because J.C. Ryle, he stressed that holiness and living a separate life from the world, it's mandatory for the Christian.

And in his book on Practical Religion, when Ryle addresses the subject of the world or worldliness, he says, the world is an enemy to the soul.

There are three things which a Christian must renounce and give up and three enemies that the Christian must fight and resist. These three are the flesh, the devil and the world.

[ 27 : 39 ] All three are terrible foes and all three must be overcome if we are to be saved. But you know, in order to prove how much of an enemy to our soul the world really is, Ryle just quotes passages of Scripture.

That's all he does. And he says, if the text that I'm about to quote do not prove that the world is a source of danger to the soul, then words have no meaning. And Ryle, he begins with Paul and he states, this is what Paul says.

Romans chapter 12, do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then he says, we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit that is from God.

Then quoting Ephesians 2, you were once dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, but by grace you have been saved through faith. Then Ryle, he quotes from James chapter 1, then verse 27, and he says, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Then Ryle quotes the words of verse 4, therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Then he quotes from the apostle John, he says, do not love the world or the things in the world.

[ 29 : 05 ] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride in possessions, it's not from the Father but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. And then lastly, Ryle, he quotes the words of Jesus in John 15.

And he says, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

And Ryle, in practical religion, he drives home his point against worldliness by saying, I make no comment on these texts. They speak for themselves.

If anyone can read them carefully and fail to see that the world is an enemy to the Christian soul and that there is an utter opposition to the friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ, he or she is past the reach of argument and it's a waste of time to reason with them.

[ 30 : 15 ] To my eyes, says Ryle, the words of Scripture contain a lesson as clear as the noonday sun. And, my friend, it is clear friendship with the world is enmity with God.

It declares war with God. Worldliness declares war with God. And so, how do we deal with war between Christians and war with God because of our worldliness?

James says that the only way to combat war and worldliness is through worship. And that's where we come last of all. We've considered war and worldliness but lastly, worship.

So, look at verse 7. He says, Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Throw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

[ 31 : 27 ] Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge.

There is only one lawgiver and judge. He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge? Your neighbour. And in this last section, verses 7 to 12, James gives to us instructions on how to avoid war with others and war with God.

James issues instructions for peace. That instead of living lives filled with war and worldliness, our lives are to be filled with worship. We are to live lives of worship to God.

And in order to do that, the first thing James says is, submit to God. Submit yourselves to God. And that command, it's actually a military term.

And James is saying, get into your proper rank. Get into your proper rank because what he's saying is that our pride and our self-centred nature, it places us on this higher rank, higher up the ladder than we really are.

[ 32 : 44 ] Where we think highly of ourselves, we refuse to pursue peace or reconciliation or forgiveness with others. And we think that it's okay to be a friend of the world and a friend of God.

But James says that we need to get back in line. We need to get back in rank and back into position and submit ourselves to God.

We need to submit ourselves under his authority and under the lordship of Jesus Christ and commit our life to his will, to his word and to his way.

And when we do that, when we put Jesus first in everything, he says that we will seek to resist the devil and he will flee from us. When Jesus is first, we will resist the devil and he will flee from us.

And my friend, our testimony, it's to be a testimony of submission in which we submit our whole life and every aspect of it under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

[ 33 : 48 ] That was the testimony of Paul. You remember in Galatians when he was, you could say, well, the confession of the Christian, he said, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And so in order to live lives of worship to God, we must submit to God. And then in verse 8, James says that we must draw near to God. We're to draw near to God.

Draw near to God, he says, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

So we need to draw near to God by confessing our sins, by seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, not only with God, but also with others.

[ 34 : 52 ] Because, you know, we were all taught it in our youth to pray the Lord's Prayer. We all know it of by heart. But, you know, how can we ever pray, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors?

How can we pray that if it's not true? If we're not forgiving our debtors, those who trespass against us? How can we draw near to God if we're at enmity with one another?

How can we truly love God if we don't love our neighbour? And so, in order to live lives of worship to God, we have to draw near to God in confession of our sin and asking for his cleansing.

Because the promise is that when we draw near to God, he will graciously draw near to us. But the opposite is also true. That if we don't deal with our sin, and if we don't deal with our quarrels, and if we don't deal with our worldliness, then the Lord will keep us at a distance.

because as those who have been bought with a price, the Lord will not share us with anyone. He owns us, and he demands from us complete commitment.

[ 36 : 10 ] And so we can't be double-minded when it comes to the worship of God. We have to be wholly committed to him, and live our lives in worship of him.

We must submit to God. We have to draw near to God. And then he says, last of all, we must humble ourselves before God. He says in verse 10, humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will

exalt you.

And it is possible. It's possible to live humbly in the sight of others, and yet not live humbly in the sight of the Lord. But because the Lord hates pride, the frightening thing is he will humble us, and he will teach us that true worship involves humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord.

The Lord will teach us to put him first in everything. and he will teach us to make him Lord over every area of our lives.

But you know, just in conclusion, time is going. When we consider what James is teaching us here, in this section with wars and worldliness and worship, you know, James, he's just expositing, he's just expounding upon the greatest commandment.

[ 37 : 47 ] The greatest commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, all your soul, all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself.

Because instead of war with our neighbour, we're commanded to love our neighbour. Instead of worldliness and being a divinity with God, we are to have this singleness of love, to love God with all our heart, all our mind, our soul, and our strength.

And that is to be our act of worship. Our lives are to be an act of worship. Because we're to worship the Lord by loving him, loving him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

We're to worship the Lord by submitting to him, by drawing near to him, and humbling ourselves before him. I don't find it easy preaching about this subject.

I find it very challenging to myself. And in one sense I feel such a hypocrite having to preach this. Because I look at myself and I think, well, I am not this person.

[ 39 : 02 ] But this is the challenge. Be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. And James is reminding us that war, worldliness, and worship, it just brings us back to the greatest commandment.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and your strength, and your neighbour as yourself. A great challenge.

And may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, when we stand and look into the mirror of thy word, we realise how far short we come.

And the more we search the scriptures, the more we see the beauty and the holiness and the wonder of who thou art. And Lord, the more we stand in the mirror, the more we realise how unlikely we are.

But help us, Lord, we pray, to know that thou art the God who has begun that good work in us and will bring it on to completion, that it is thy work, that as Paul says that we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto every good work.

[ 40 : 22 ] And we pray that thou wouldst continue to work in us, that thou wouldst mould us and shape us, form us and fashion us, to be more Christ-like, to serve thee more faithfully in this world, to live for thee more diligently, to have a witness, Lord, that bears the testimony of Jesus, that those who see us would know that we love Jesus, that they would know that we follow him, that we, O Lord, would be able to speak that word in season and testify to this risen Saviour.

Bless us, Lord, each and every one of us. Help us in our witness, help us in our walk, help us not to lose sight, but to keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.

Bind us together, we pray, remember those who are not with us this evening, those who are laid aside, those, Lord, who are receiving treatment, and those who are suffering. May thy hand be upon them for good.

May they know thee, the God who keeps our going out and our coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore. Go before us then, we pray, and do us good, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing the words of Psalm 119. Psalm 119, singing from verse 33, page 402, verse 33, down to the verse marked 37.

[ 41 : 55 ] Psalm 119, from verse 33, teach me, O Lord, the perfect way, of thy precepts divine, and to observe it to the end, I shall my heart incline, give understanding unto me, so keep thy law shall I, yea, even with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully.

Down to the verse marked 37, to God's praise. teach me, O Lord, the perfect way, of thy precepts divine, unto the end, I shall my heart take high.

You understand in your heart to me, so keep thy law new consequences.

Praise carefully. If I lost my need to go, for I delight there.

My heart unto thy testimonies and not to create and climb.

[ 44 : 14 ] For thou away my sight and eyes from you in vanity.

And in thy good and holy way, be pleased to quaken me.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.