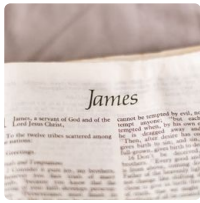


# OpenTheo

## James 3:13 - 4:4



### James - Steve Gregg

James 3:13 - 4:4 is a passage warning against the damaging effects of speech, specifically addressing teachers and their power to do harm. True wisdom involves understanding the importance of using our words for good, rather than for envy or self-seeking. The passage also touches on the issue of war, urging Christians to value peace and leave vengeance in the hands of God.

### Transcript

So I think that by adding the last verses of chapter 3 to the total of chapter 4, we have a manageable size portion to cover. And since we only have one session after this left, that would leave the final chapter to be covered there. In the beginning of chapter 3, the first two-thirds of that chapter have to do about the use of the tongue.

We covered that a little more rapidly than I would have liked yesterday, because we had to add that on to the end of chapter 2, and chapter 2 has some basic major points to get into. But, very briefly, James tells us here that the way we speak reflects a great deal on our spirituality. This is the third time that he's brought up the issue of how we speak, or maybe the fourth time.

A couple times in chapter 1, for instance in chapter 1, verses 19 and 20, he says, Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to rap. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. That clearly has something to do with the way we speak, the way we use our tongues.

We need to be not too quick to throw in our two cents, not too confident in our first impressions, willing to hear, not answering a matter before we hear it, and when we do answer it, not answering it as if we have the last word and the know-all and end-all insights on the matter. It is a mark of immaturity on our parts, and I've certainly seen it in my own self, when we think that our own position is the best thought out and the most reliable that is out there in the marketplace. There's been many times when I thought that was the case with my opinions, and later had to change my opinions, and have embarrassed myself listening to tapes of former times when I was so confident about

some other thing that I now know is wrong.

We need to be slow to speak, slow to get angry as well, and eager to hear. We should be people who do more listening than talking, really. You know, the Anabaptists, the early Anabaptists, from which the Amish and the Mennonites and the Quakers and some other groups sprang.

Of course, not all those groups in our own time have the distinctives quite like the originals did, but in the early days, the Anabaptists were nicknamed the quiet of the land. They were called that by those who weren't particularly friendly toward them. It was not necessarily a flattery.

I guess maybe in some sense they might have seemed a little unsociable, because they were just so quiet. And, you know, that is actually pretty much of a virtue, unless you're being quiet because you are unsociable, or because you feel aloof and snobbish and don't want to talk to people. But if you have the power to listen and be the last to speak, or even not the last, but to be, well, like Elihu in the book of Job.

He listened through these three cycles of debate between Job and his counselors, and finally he said something. And some people think that when he spoke he was a little too arrogant. I don't necessarily think so.

I don't get the impression he was arrogant. I get the impression he was a young man who felt like he should defer to the older guys, listen to what they had to say first, and when it seemed like they had kind of come to loggerheads and were out of stamina, he thought he'd throw his two cents in and hopefully help to break up the logjam, you know. And I don't know whether he was arrogant or not, but it seems wise that he sat there so silently that we're not even informed of his presence until nearly the end of the book.

He was slow to speak, and that's good. James tells us that's one thing that should be characteristic of our speaking patterns. Also in chapter 1 in verse 26, he says, If anyone among you thinks he's religious but does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

Not bridling the tongue is a proof that all other religiosity is only a sham. Why? Because what comes out of the mouth is clearly what's in the heart. And what's supposed to be in the heart of a person who's truly righteous and religious inside God in the positive sense is love.

And there are times when you must bridle your tongue out of love. When the first thing that comes to your mind, if you speak it, would be hurtful. That, you know, you have a flash of anger, where a sarcastic remark or a hurtful remark would be the most natural thing to speak.

To hold back on that, to bite your tongue, to bridle your mouth, it would be the loving

thing. Until you can get your composure and speak in a manner that would minister grace, that would edify the hearing. It says in Proverbs, he that speaks his whole mind is a fool.

A wise man holds it in his mouth. But the ability to hold in what you're thinking rather than speak your whole mind is the ability to bridle your tongue and to take charge of it, to set a watchman in your mouth, as the psalmist used the expression. And that is something that James says must characterize our use of our tongues.

Also in chapter 2, verse 12, there was a passing reference to our speech. I didn't comment on this portion of that verse when we took it, but it's so speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty, which, of course, is the law of love. The royal law mentioned in chapter 2, verse 8, you shall love your neighbors yourself.

Speak and do. Your actions and your words must be governed by the awareness that when you stand before God, you'll be judged by whether the things you said and did were loving things or not. And so he says speak and act in such a way as people who are conscious of the fact that you're going to stand judgment.

And the judgment is going to be based on the law of liberty, the law of Christ. Were you loving? Were you not loving? The story of the sheep and the goats illustrates this as well as anything else in the Bible does, where the judgment is depicted as almost entirely a judgment based on words. To the sheep he says, I was hungry and you fed me.

I was in prison and you visited me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.

To the goats he says, I was in all those conditions and you did administer to me. And in each case the parties are surprised to hear of it and have to be informed that when they did this to other people, to Christ's brethren, they were actually doing it to Christ. And some of them went into eternal life, some of them went into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Some were saved, some were lost. And the issue upon which they were judged was this. Did you do the loving thing? When you met somebody in need, did you do what love would dictate or did you not? Now, the Bible makes it very clear that judgment is a judgment of words.

The question is what kind of works are going to be at issue. And of course the question is not whether you've done religious works like been circumcised and kept Sabbath and kept the Jewish festivals and all those kinds of religious things. Or, of course, what are Christian kinds of works, whether you were regular in church, made your tithes to the church, whether you witnessed on a regular basis and those kinds of things, passed out X number of tracts per week.

Religious activities, if they're not from love, are worthless. And therefore, the judgment will not be based on how many outward acts you did alone, but the quality of those acts and the motivation of those acts. And were the things you did loving things? Were they done out of love? Because that is from the law of liberty that commands.

And you should currently behave as those who know that you'll be judged by this law, the law of liberty. Now that was the third time in James that something came up about speech. And then chapter three has, of course, the longest discussion of the use of the tongue.

And it's not the last time he speaks of it. It comes up again in chapters four and five as well. But chapter three is the longest section about how to use your tongue.

And essentially he's warning teachers, first of all, because teachers more than others have the power to do damage or good with the use of their tongues. Because they're not just like the rest of us who speak in ordinary conversation one-on-one or in small groups of teachers to address the body of Christ as a whole. Therefore, a defect in what they say can render defective the whole church, can devalue the whole body.

And therefore, one needs to realize that the bridling of the tongue, again, is absolutely essential. And that's like the bridle or the bit in a horse's mouth or the rudder on a ship or like a small spark that can set a whole forest fire. Something, a small word or even the tongue itself, a small member, is capable of doing disproportionate damage in the body of Christ.

And it's up to yourself and to your own spirit. He says you can sort of use your tongue as a barometer of whether your heart is holy, the Lord's or not. Because out of a spring there doesn't come salt water and fresh water.

A spring either has as its fountain a source, a supply of fresh water or a supply of salt water, but not the two. Likewise, vines don't produce some grapes and some figs, only grapes. And a fig tree doesn't bring forth olives and figs, only figs, not olives.

In other words, whatever the nature of the thing is will be evident by what it brings forth. Just as faith produces words, so the heart produces speech, speaking of some sort. And whatever your nature is will be exhibited in your speech.

And therefore you need to watch your speech as a barometer of what's really in your heart. And of course, not to speak out your whole line, because sometimes things in your heart are not the right things. And as a Christian who wants to operate in love and speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of liberty, we need to hold back those times, those words that we might speak that we recognize to be unloving.

And there are times, by the way, when you don't have an unloving attitude, but still to say something would be an unloving thing to say. Even though it's not a caustic remark

or a slanderous remark, there are times when even just speaking the truth, the timing isn't right, and it'll hurt somebody in a way that they don't need to be hurt at that point. It's just being able to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

As Isaiah talks about in Isaiah 50. And so anyway, the tongue is a very, very important member of the body to keep an eye on, and to keep under control and governed by the law of love. Verse 13, then, is where we take up new material in James 3.13. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who are peacemakers. Wisdom is something that everybody would like to think that they have.

It is a very humbling thing to think of yourself as a fool. And depending on how you evaluate what wisdom is, you might think poorly of yourself, or highlight yourself and be out of touch with reality in either case. For instance, wisdom is defined in terms of performance in school, and grades on tests, and academic discipline, and so forth.

And very often that's the way that our culture does consider intelligence. How do you do on these various tests, and so forth, for aptitudes, and for academic disciplines, and so forth. If you don't do well on those, you might think yourself not very wise, not very intelligent.

And if you do very well on those things, you might think yourself to be very intelligent, although Paul indicated that there are people who are ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. And that real wisdom is not intellectual. Real wisdom is not, doesn't have anything to do with your aptitudes, or your IQ.

It has to do with your moral choices. This is something James says that comes very much out of Proverbs as well. Proverbs has a lot to say about wisdom, but it never treats wisdom as something that has to do with how well you do on a test.

It has to do with how consistent your actions are with what would be wise in view of long-term results. A wise person foresees long-term results of his actions. A fool doesn't.

It says, a wise man foresees the evil and hides himself. The foolish man proceeds carelessly and suffers for it. Because the wise man foresees what the long-term results will be.

In Proverbs it says, go to the ant, slugger. Learn her ways and be wise. In the summertime she gathers food for the wintertime.

Now, I don't think that we should make direct applications and say, okay, we know winter's coming, so we're going to store up food. The idea is that the ant foresees, somehow instinctively, that a time will come when the food is not available, and therefore labors to lay up more food than they need at the moment. Because they're acting now in such a way as will give them security and peace later, when they won't be able to work or whatever.

And so also the parable of the unjust steward in the teaching of Jesus in Luke chapter 16. A strange parable, very strange and troubling in some ways, because the steward gets commended for his actions, which really were kind of dishonest actions. But the point of the parable is that the steward at least had enough good sense to know he was losing his job, that he was going to come into a place that he was not yet in, but in the future he had to look forward to a place of being unemployed, and he needed to use his opportunities that he had now in order to secure something for himself later.

And the broad application of the principle is that we have to look forward to the fact that we won't always have opportunities as we do now to prepare for our eternal habitation. But we anticipate a time when what we do now will have prepared us for one or another eternal destiny, and if we're wise we'll do those things that will cause us to have a desirable future in eternity. So that we may in fact labor harder than we need to, we may sacrifice more than we would ultimately have to, we may give up more of our rights than circumstance would demand, and we may live our lives somewhat more deprived, a little more less self-indulgent and so forth than we otherwise would, but because we're not living for the short term, we're living for the long term.

And we realize, as it says in Hebrews chapter 11, that there were certain people who were despised and afflicted, and they refused deliverance from their trials because they looked for a better resurrection. And it says that then the world was not worthy. They weren't living for this world, they were looking for something better, and they were willing to take losses of even legitimate rights and comforts in order to obtain something better later.

This is what wisdom does. Wisdom foresees long-term results. And so in Proverbs, the wise man is always the one who, he's not doing the thing that's convenient, he's doing the thing that will please God, because he knows that ultimately having God on his side is what's going to matter in eternity.

And while he can take another course that brings short-term gratification, it is a course that will not get God on his side, which he will therefore regret for a very long time afterwards. So the wise man is the one who knows how to make moral choices with a view to eternity. That's what wisdom is.

And in that sense, a highly educated atheist is a very foolish person. He may have degrees after his name as long as your arm, but if he doesn't fear God, he doesn't have even the beginning of wisdom. The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

A person who doesn't have enough common sense to fear the God who's going to be the judge of every act and word that he speaks is an idiot. Really. And it doesn't matter how academically proficient he has proved himself to be by academic degrees, the guy's a fool, an absolute fool.

What does it propagate against the whole world? It loses his soul. Anyone would be a fool to take the world in exchange for his soul, as Jesus points out. But the person who doesn't have enough sense, enough common sense to realize this gaining the world for 70 years in this life or less is going to be a bad deal if I end up burning to hell for all eternity, anyone who doesn't have enough good sense to realize that is just an idiot.

And it was John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress. He said he had no respect for any profession or boasting that any man would have that does not start with contrition and repentance of heart. He said, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and he that has not the beginning has neither the middle part nor the end either.

In other words, you don't have the fear of the Lord. It's the beginning of wisdom. You don't have any wisdom at all.

So, there are people who are very academic but fools. There's an old Negro spiritual song which says, you can go to your college, you can go to your school, but if you ain't got Jesus, you're an educated fool, and that's all. And, yeah, that's a great verse.

There's other verses in that song, but that one stands out in my mind. God has chosen the foolish things to confound those that the world calls wise. But Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, if anyone really wants to be wise, let him become a fool.

And what he means by that is if anyone really wants to be truly wise in God's sight, he has to take a stance which will be called foolish by the world. The world will call you a fool, but Paul says he's a fool for Christ, and that's fine, because the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. Now, here we have a contrast between two kinds of wisdom.

The kind that man values and the kind that really God values. One kind of wisdom is from above, he says in verse 17. The wisdom is from above.

That means it's heavenly. It's of God. It's a godly kind of wisdom.

There's another kind of wisdom that is from below. He says in verse 15, a certain kind of wisdom that does not descend from above is earthly, sensual, and demonic. Now, there's

hardly three worse words that could apply to a person's decision-making than earthly, sensual, and demonic.

Because, I mean, the three things that are arranged against your soul and against God are the world, the flesh, and the devil. And here they all are. The world, the flesh, and the devil.

They all conspire to influence you along a certain path. That path will be represented to you as the path of wisdom, of course. Because nobody wants to proceed on a path that they know to be foolish.

In order for you to go the wrong way, the devil has to convince you, against reality, that the wrong way is really the wise way to go. And there's an awful lot of people, the majority of people in the world, that are convinced of this, are in dissension on this point. And the problem here is that James is concerned that some Christians may be deceived along some of these lines.

If people see wisdom in terms of how much revelation they've got about the things of God, or how much Bible verses they can quote, or how systematized their theology is, or how much they can talk religious theological sophistries off the top of their head from memory, if that's what wisdom is being called, then the educated Christian is going to think himself secure to others. And that doesn't mean necessarily formally educated. I'm not formally educated, but I'm an educated Christian.

I mean, I'm self-educated because I've studied a lot on my own, but if I have any illusions that somehow being able to quote more Bible verses than somebody else, or being able to draw from more parts of the Bible to make a point than someone else, that that proves I'm a wise man, I'm simply judging by the same standard that others do. Because many people who can do exactly those things are full of envy, and strife, and jealousy, and self-promotion, and ego, and those are the very things that he says, if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, don't boast. That is, don't claim to be wise.

Because that's a wisdom of a sort. That's a worldly kind of wisdom, but it's a wisdom that is earthbound. It's not from God.

It originates from the world. And since it doesn't originate from God, God doesn't have any respect for it either. Only the earth respects that, not the world.

The flesh exalts in that, and the devil inspires that kind of stuff. Now, the true wisdom, he says in verse 13, if there's really a wise and understanding person among you, now this may be a follow-up on the context about teachers, because he says in verse 1 of this chapter, let's not be many teachers. It goes off into a discussion after that of speech and the importance of speech and how damaging a wrong use of the tongue can be, and of course that would apply to teachers in a special degree.



And you may have the same concept in mind. Teachers, again, he says, who is wise? Who is understanding? Let him prove it, not by his erudition. Let him prove it, not by his academic gymnastics.

But let him prove it, let him show it by good conduct, that his works are done in meekness of wisdom. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. Good conduct is the same thing that characterizes wisdom in the Old Testament, in Proverbs, for instance.

It's not how much you claim to know, it's how is your conduct. Is your conduct such that you are winning God's approval for what you're doing? Because Jesus said on the Day of Judgment, every idle word a man speaks is going to be brought up again. He's going to have to give account for it.

A person who has an appreciation for that fact, as Peter says, will live in fear. Peter says in 1 Peter 1 verse 17, If you call him a father, who without respect to persons, judges every man according to his works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. If you know that God's going to judge you according to all your works, you should pass the time of your year in the fear of God.

And Peter's not running to non-Christians there, he's running to Christians. And therefore a wise man will devote himself to good conduct. The way a guy can preach, or teach, or expound, is no indication that he's wise in the biblical sense of the word.

If you can see that he loves his wife, that he pays his bills, that he bridles his tongue, is not a gossip or a slanderer, that he's compassionate and meek. Meek would mean not self-seeking or self-assertive. Then you've got reasonably, this guy has the wisdom to count.

The kind of wisdom that you'd really want to find in somebody who's guiding the body of Christ. Because he's not only talking to you, he's living it. And he's modeling it.

And there's, of course, a lot of pastors who are good examples in this respect. There are a lot, unfortunately, who are not very good examples in this respect. There are pastors who are just as ambitious, self-seeking, paranoid, insecure, fearful of people taking their positions, and things like that.

There are people like that in the body of Christ who are nonetheless reputed for wisdom because they can preach a good sermon. But that's not how wisdom is demonstrated. A certain kind of wisdom is there, but it's worldly.

Even though it may be a wisdom reflected in preaching biblical things, it is still just as fleshly, just as demonic. Because it passes over the issues that matter to God. God's not impressed with how well you speak, or how many facts you know, even biblical facts.

So this man will I look, even to him that is of a broken and contrite spirit, and who

trembles at my word. So God is not impressed with that kind of wisdom. The devil is.

The flesh is, and the world is. The devilism isn't from above. But the wisdom that is from above has these characteristics.

Now we talked about this when we gave our introduction to the book of James, because I pointed out that James, more than any other epistle in the Bible, draws upon the Sermon on the Mount as its basis, and has many places where it alludes, or even quotes. Not very many where it actually quotes, but there are a few places where it actually quotes the Sermon on the Mount. But at this verse in particular, James 3.17, seems to be an intentional summary of the Sermon on the Mount, because he talks about its pure, and the Sermon on the Mount says, Blessed are the pure in heart.

Peaceable, James said, Blessed are the peacemakers. And he says, May I smite you on one cheek, to turn the other in cheek. That certainly is peaceful behavior.

Gentle, or meek. Gentle and meek are kind of interchangeable terms. Jesus said, Blessed are the meek.

Willing to yield. Jesus said, if anyone wants to take you to court, and take your coat and give you your cloak also, that certainly is a willingness to yield to another person, to give up your rights for someone else. Full of mercy, and good fruits.

These things are in the Sermon on the Mount also. Blessed are the merciful. In fact, Jesus goes on about being indiscriminate in your mercy.

Not just be merciful to those who are merciful to you, but be merciful to those who don't. Treat you kindly. Good fruits.

Jesus said that you'll know the false prophets, and true prophets by their fruits, in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 7. Good fruits is what's in the good trees. Without partiality. That's part of the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount also.

Not just saluting those who salute you, not just loving those who love you, but even love those who are your enemies. Not being partial. And without hypocrisy, a major point in the Sermon on the Mount.

Don't be like the hypocrites when you pray, when you fast, when you give alms. Don't be like the hypocrites. So everything in this description is basically the summary of the content of the Sermon on the Mount, really.

And he says this is what the wisdom from above is like. And Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with the statement that anyone who hears these words of mine, and does them is like a wise man who builds his house on rock. A person who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who builds his house on sand.

So that Jesus himself indicated this is what wisdom would do. The things taught in the Sermon on the Mount are the description of a wise life. Of a wise man.

And who is making provision for his eternal future. And so James can draw heavily on that passage and say this is what the wisdom from above is characterized by. This kind of life.

Now verse 18 is very possibly more a part of chapter 4 than chapter 3. It's the last verse in chapter 3, but it's conceivable the chapter division should have started, it should have been placed a verse earlier. He says, now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Where do wars and fights come from among you? See, a contrast between peace and war.

Now, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace. Now, what I understand this means, righteousness is the fruit we're looking for. Remember in the Old Testament? The vineyard, certainly you remember that, we covered it many, many times in Isaiah.

God was looking for fruit in the vineyard, he didn't find it in Israel. But the fruit was righteousness and justice. The fruit of righteousness the Christians are supposed to be producing.

Jesus said he's going to take his vineyard from Israel and give it to a nation, the church that will bring forth the fruits of it. So the church is now assigned the task of producing this fruit in our lives. We're supposed to produce justice and righteousness.

That's what we're supposed to be like. Well, where does this fruit come from? How does this fruit come about? Well, like any fruit, you have to plant seeds before you can grow fruit. The plant has to be planted.

And once it's planted, it can eventually produce the fruit. But how does the fruit of righteousness produce? Well, you have to sow the seeds of peace. And when you sow the seeds of peace, it grows up into the fruit of righteousness.

This is in contrast, as I pointed out when we were in chapter 1, with chapter 1, verse 20. Where it says, the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. The fruit of righteousness is not produced through man's wrath.

By the way, the wrath of man, as we pointed out when we were at that point, in Psalm 76.10, the term the wrath of man seems to be used of war. Where God says that God can't even make the wrath of man to praise Him. I think what it means is that even the wars and the carnal fighting that men have among themselves can be exploited by God's sovereignty to bring about His ultimate purposes.

And so the wrath of man could be simply a code word for war itself. And war is not the way to bring about righteousness. The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness

of God.

But the righteousness of God, the fruit of righteousness, is sown by peacemakers. People who make peace, not war. Which is another allusion to the Sermon on the Mount.

Because in Matthew 5.9, he said, blessed are the peacemakers. For they shall be called the sons of God. James says the fruit of righteousness can be produced by those who sow peace.

These people are called peacemakers. Those who make peace. And this is in contrast to those who make war.

Which is what chapter 4 then addresses. Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure? That war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain.

You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss or with wrong motives.

That you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity or hostility? Instead of being an enemy with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.

Now let's stop there. And comment on these first five verses. In some translations, I think the word war is omitted.

And something like quarrels. Does anyone have a translation that says something about quarrels and fighting or something like that? What's in the NIV that says fights and quarrels? Fights and quarrels, okay. In other words, the NIV and I think there's some other versions that do the same thing.

Although the better versions don't. But I read the NIV and I think some others do. They make this a statement not about wars on a national or international scale.

But about personal quarrels between you and your next door neighbor and so forth. Now they do this because most Christians in our society approve of war. At least in fighting and some wars, but they don't approve of paid quarrels.

And you know, relationship breaks between brothers and so forth. Everyone knows that to have unforgiveness, to have strife, to have quarrels with your brother, to be angry at your brother for whatever cause, that these are sin and they're wrong. Somehow, however, when these things are magnified on the national level, they become sanctified and it's okay.

And so since James talks about war here in a very negative way, as if war is not a good thing, and since most Christians today do not feel that way about it, the NIV, for example, has removed the reference to war here. It's not wars, it's fights and quarrels. So that you would not, by reading that version, have any idea that James is talking about actual war.

Another thing the NIV has done in James, which reflects the same sentiment, is in James chapter 5, which we'll come to tomorrow, he says to the rich in verse 6, James 5, 6, that you have condemned, you have murdered the just, he does not resist you. In other words, the righteous person, when he's being killed, does not offer resistance. He's non-resistant.

He follows what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. He turns the other cheek and he dies. Without resistance.

The NIV, however, because of the same antipathy for the Anabaptist style of response to war, and the Jesus style of response to war, because the Sermon on the Mount is essentially what James is working from, Jesus taught that you shouldn't fight. You shouldn't resist when someone tries to kill you. That's what Jesus said.

I don't want to change his words. That's what he said. And for reasons that are not practical, well, maybe it doesn't seem practical.

A lot of people don't think being a Christian is very practical, or trusting God, or whatever. But those who have done it have proved it is practical. There are whole denominations, whole groups of movements, people that have taken Jesus' status word, literally, and have proven that it is practical, it does work, and it leads to peace in the end.

They are peacemakers. Now, what the NIV does in the case of James 5-6 is he says something like, you have condemned and killed the righteous, and he was not opposing you. In other words, it makes it a past tense sentence.

It basically says, shame on you for afflicting these poor people. They were doing you no harm. In other words, your attack against them is not promote by them.

But the passage is not talking about whether or not the righteous had promote the attack, but how they responded when they were under attack. They didn't resist. And every translation in the whole world, as far as I know, although the English translations of this passage, as well as if you look at the Greek, it indicates the righteous man does not resist when he is being condemned and killed.

Because he takes Jesus' words seriously about that. But the NIV doesn't like that concept, and so they've changed it into a totally different concept. Anyway, I mean, really, I'm not trying to blast anybody who uses the NIV, but from time to time you just

hit points where you say, why in the world did those guys do that? And you can see what their underlying biases were, their underlying prejudices, by the way, they've changed things.

And you can see that to a certain extent in other translations, too. I pick on the NIV a lot, mostly because it's so popular. I don't think it deserves the popularity it has.

And also because I find more of this kind of stuff in the NIV than almost any other translation I've seen. But other translations have their flaws, too. So I don't just mean to single out the NIV problem.

But we do have a problem here with James 4, as far as the NIV goes, because for reading the NIV you get the impression that war is not really what's being discussed here. What's being discussed is just quarrels. Interpersonal problems among Christians or something.

But let me just say that the word war is here. It's used a number of times in the New Testament. And as near as I can tell, it's always referring to what we use the word war for.

To change it to simply battles or fights or quarrels would be to do the word injustice. If you'll look with me, for instance, at Matthew 24 6, we have the same Greek word. Matthew 24 6, Jesus says, And you will hear wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not troubled for all these things, for the end is not near. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. That certainly sounds like international conflict.

Wars and rumors of wars. It sounds like it's a reference to international conflicts, the very thing that we refer to by the term wars. It's the same Greek word that's used in James.

And by the way, the parallels of this whole discourse in Mark 13 and Luke 21 also use the same Greek word when speaking in this passage. So in three places in the Gospels, all parallel to each other, this word is used. A war.

Likewise in Luke 14. Excuse me. Luke 14 31.

Where Jesus says, Or what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider, etc. etc. The word war is the same word in James.

Or what? Going to make war. Kings making war with kings. Doesn't sound like an interpersonal squabble in the church.

It's talking about international conflicts, wars. Also, in 1 Corinthians 14 8. 1 Corinthians 14 8 is illustrating the need to speak words that are intelligible so that people can be edified instead of speaking in tongues without an interpretation. But to give an

illustration, it says in 1 Corinthians 14 8, For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? Same word.

In the Greek. In Hebrews chapter 11 34. It says, Those who had faith quenched the violence of fire, escaped into the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle.

Obviously referring to wars. That too is the same Greek word. So, this word, in the other occurrences in the New Testament, is in places where it's very obviously referring to international conflicts.

What we call war, and therefore the King James and other versions that use the word war are using the right word. To change it to quarrels is to basically emasculate the word and make it look like it's talking about something other than it is. This is talking about the Christian's view of war.

This is what this is talking about. Where do wars come from? And fighting among you? Now, I don't know how much foresight James had about this, but of course, not too long after he wrote this, there was the Jewish war. Where a certain group of Jews rebelled against Rome and brought the Roman anger upon them in the form of war in 66 AD.

And this war was a bloodbath that occurred for three and a half years until it actually ended with the siege and fall of Jerusalem. And even in Jerusalem, as we know, there were fightings among them. Fightings among the Jews that were like a civil war in the city.

And maybe James is aware of this. In fact, it's conceivable that that war was in its early stages. That it might, if he'd written this after 66 AD, but before 70 AD, it might be even at a time when Christians were wondering, you know, how are we to interpret what's going on here? Should we be involved? Should we fight for our country? Should we not fight for our country? Hard to say.

And even if it was before 66 AD that he wrote this, and the war had not begun, he might have had some premonitions about it. After all, he does, I think in several places, especially in chapter 5, suggest that he is aware that the judgment of Jerusalem is coming. And therefore, it is probably that very war that calls forth this teaching on the subject of war.

Christian Jews would be very much in a position to take a stand. Will we stand with our countrymen? Just like Christian Americans are. If America was invaded by Russians, and we Christians said, but you know, we're supposed to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us and stuff, and I already kind of feel right about fighting these people or killing them, because I don't think that's what Jesus would do, and I'm supposed to do what he would do, not what the world does, we'd be in trouble.

I mean, we'd be in serious trouble. Most of our country would think we're traitors. I mean, this happened in World War I, it happened in World War II.

Mennonite people who were, and even others. I knew a Baptist man who was a pacifist during World War I and World War II, and these people all went to jail during the war because they were considered to be guilty of treason. They weren't executed for the most part, although there are stories from the Anabaptist history that show that some of them were tortured and did die in prison.

A particular case came to my attention of four Mennonite men who were drafted in the army during World War I, and they refused to put on the uniform because they said they can't serve two masters, they're servants of God's army, and they can't kill, and so forth. And they wouldn't put on the uniform, and they were treated, the story is incredible, it's just like reading about Vanya, and how he was treated in Russia, or how people were treated in Nazi Germany or something like that. I mean, they were taken to Alcatraz, they were taken to Fort Leavenworth, and they were made to take cold showers and then stand out in the winter weather in their underwear for extended periods of time.

They were chased by soldiers on motorcycles until they fell down in exhaustion. They were hung by their wrists with shackles from the ceiling until their wrists swole up so much they couldn't put their jackets on. Two of the guys actually died from this treatment.

These were Mennonites who, the only reason that they suffered these things is because they wouldn't put on a uniform. They said it's against our religion to participate in war. And this was in America, this was not in Russia or Nazi Germany, this was in the United States of America in World War I. Two of these guys died, and the most outrageous thing of all is when their wives finally learned that their husbands had died and came to see their bodies, they were buried in uniform.

I mean, after they were dead, the authorities put the uniforms on them, and if they had died, refused to put them on. I mean, a final insult, you know, to the dead. This stuff happens here.

Now, one reason that during the Vietnam War there were people who were conscientious objectors and so forth that didn't get priesthood rebellion is because it wasn't on our soil. World War I wasn't on our soil either. World War II, you know, we did get bombed over at Pearl Harbor, but most of the fighting wasn't over here either.

But you can be sure, if the enemy was at our shores, and you were not bearing arms, and you were saying, well, I just want to minister, you know, I just want to, I'll pray and I'll go out there and I'll minister to the wounded, and I'll go out and witness and so forth, but I won't bear arms. You've got next-door neighbors who'd probably shoot you. You know, I mean, they're just people who just say, you're a traitor to your country.



And that's the exact position Christian Jews in the latter part of the Jewish era would have been in. You know, here they are, whether they're dispersed abroad or whatever, when it's a high-pitched battle for the life of the Jewish state between Rome and the Jews. And these Jews living in Roman provinces, you know, what are they going to do? Are they Christians? Should they take the stand of their people? Should they welcome the hostility of their people by not standing up for their nation? What should they do? They would need a word like this from James or from someone, you know, to tell them how they're going to respond in this time of crisis.

Yes, sir? My dad was in the Vietnam War. And he said that he knew some guys in like boot camp that had, they were conscientious objectors, and everything they had had CO on it. CO is like a brand, sort of like a red letter A, you know, on the adulteress or something like that.

Yeah, if you're a CO, a conscientious objector, you can, yeah, definitely you'd be the subject of scorn. And you can understand that. I mean, I can understand that from a worldly person who's got no inheritance other than this life.

I mean, this nation is all they've got. That you wouldn't defend a nation which benefits you so great. I mean, it's a great privilege to live in America, in my opinion.

I mean, we gain a great deal by the security that the military has seemingly provided here. And for us not to be willing to serve in the military seems like ingratitude. It seems like injustice.

It seems like, you know, anti-loyalty or something. It just looks very bad in the eyes of the world. Because we look at things not better seen than are unseen.

We realize that by evangelism, by prayer, and by doing good, we do more to preserve the nation than those who fight in its wars. Because righteousness exalts a nation. And if the church promotes righteousness among the people, then God won't want to judge the nation with war.

What a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies feel at peace with him. The Bible says. And if the church would do its spiritual work of turning the nation to God, then that would go further in securing the long-term life of the nation than going out and fighting against the judgment of God when it comes against us in the form of military aggression.

That is something that the worldly man cannot receive. They can't receive the things of the Spirit. They're spiritually discerned.

They see like foolishness to them. But the early Christians understood this. This is how they acted.

You know, for the first 300 years of Christian history, Christians would not join the military. Yeah, I dig it. I'm asking, would you go in? How far would you go? Or would you stay completely and just as a chaplain of that? But then you're still condoning almost the fighting.

Not necessarily. You're not necessarily condoning it by being a chaplain. I have nothing in principle, or no objection, to, say, serving as a chaplain or a medic in the military, or even conceivably as a cook or something like that, even though you are, in a sense, some would say you're promoting the war effort, and some Mennonites would stay even far from any kind of involvement like that.

In my opinion, if you're just serving people, whether they're your soldiers or the other side's soldiers, if you're just loving your enemy and loving your neighbor too, you're just doing what a Christian's supposed to do if you're feeding people, fixing them when they're wounded, you know, counseling and praying for them when they've got spiritual needs. These are the kinds of things you should do. But the problem with doing it in the military, and this is a serious problem in my opinion, is because anyone in the military who's a chaplain or a medic basically is an officer.

Well, at least a chaplain. I'm not sure if medics are officers. But a chaplain is an officer of the military.

And to get to that rank, there are certain oaths and so forth that many Christians cannot in good conscience take. You know, oaths of allegiance and so forth, which I would not mind, in a wartime situation, going out there as an independent civilian and doing what I could to help wounded people or needy people, even at the risk of life and so forth. Genuine Christian pacifism doesn't spring from fear of dying.

It's rather fear of sinning. Sometimes people who are conscientious objectors who didn't want to go to Vietnam or something are called cowards or whatever. And no doubt some of them were.

A lot of people were just hippies who didn't want to die, and they ran away. But a genuine conscientious objector who objects because he wants to obey Jesus, he's not afraid to die. He knows he's going to die somewhere or another anyway.

He'd just as soon die serving people. What he's not willing to do is not die, but kill. And there's a big difference between a person who refuses to kill and one who refuses to die.

And I don't refuse to die. I know I'm going to die anyway, so what? Who cares how or when? But the point is, I don't want to die without a good conscience toward God. I don't want to die serving God.

And in a sense, it seems to me it would take more courage. I've never been tested on this, so I don't know whether my courage is as much as I would hope it to be. But it

would take more courage when under attack, not to resist.

Because it seems like a person who fears death would hardly restrain himself from resisting. It takes tremendous self-control and faith in God to not resist when someone's attacking you and your life is in danger. Now, of course, there's a lot of correlated questions that have come up to people like, well, what about not defending yourself, but defending your family or defending your neighbors or whatever? I realize there are difficult issues here involved.

And I don't mean to be simplistic in my approach to the subject of war. Some people are. They just say, war is bad.

No harm in just making a minute of it. My concern is, see, some people oppose war because they almost idolize human life. They say, it's wrong to kill human beings.

No, it's not always wrong to kill human beings. Not always. Some people deserve to die.

The question is whether Christians ought to do it or whether someone else ought to do it. I mean, that's the state's job, not the church's job, to kill people. I mean, let God decide who should die and who should live.

And it's true that in God's opinion, some people are right to die. They're right for judgment. It's time for them to go, and they don't deserve to live.

But that's not for me to decide or to be the executioner, in my opinion. That's up for God to do through his sovereign use of government or whatever he wants to do. Or he can strike with lightning, as far as I'm concerned.

But he's not going to use my sword to do it. But the thing is, some people just oppose war, even as Christians, because there's some kind of idolatry of human life. You know, human life is sacred, and I just can't take any human life.

That's more sentimentality in humanism than it is in Christianity. And I know that I have a certain amount of that sentimentality, but I want to realize that that's what it is, and I don't want to object to war just on that basis. Because, in fact, if human life is sacred, and it's always wrong to take human life, then God commanded people to sin when he commanded Captain Pasha, he even commanded people to go to war in the Old Testament.

But in the Old Testament, when he sent people to war, it was an act of God's judgment on a nation that God knew was right for judgment, and it was time for them to go. And that's what war still is, I think, in the hand of God. He still uses it that way.

The trouble is, if I were to say, okay, well, I can participate in that, because it's God's judgment on so-and-so. The question is, how do I know it's not God's judgment on my

nation? How do I know I'm on God's side by being in my own military? Maybe God is on the other guy's side once us wiped out. I mean, let's face it, we deserve it, too.

I'd hate to be the one to have to make that call, you know, in a conflict, if it was between us and the Russians. I'd hate to make the call, well, God's on their side or God's on our side, and I'd have to make that decision if I was going to serve on one side or the other. And I'm not sure, you know, if I had a revelation from God, like the prophets gave, you know, Moses commanded Joshua to go out and kill these people, because God says they're history, then I'd know what God's will was in that.

But in a conflict that just erupts because of anger between two nations, I can say, well, God's sovereignly going to do something through this, but as I sit here in the middle of it, I'm not sure which side he's necessarily on, because either side might be ripe for judgment. Maybe both sides are ripe for judgment. But I don't want to fight against God, you know.

I kind of, I didn't agree with the person before. Now, I will say this. The reason I bring that up is because there is, it seems to me, there's a cause there, one country attacking a small country.

Well, see, that's the thing. That's the thing. In a sense, we were allies, coming to be allies just like in World War II.

You know, the reason we got involved in World War II was really because we were attacked in Pearl Harbor. We probably wouldn't have gotten involved otherwise. But our rationale was we got allies in Europe who were being threatened by Hitler, and we need to go help them out, and we did.

And we did a good job of it, too. And it was sort of the same, the spoken rationale for the Persian Gulf War was similar. You know, we got these, the Kuwaitis are, these people are our allies, and they're being oppressed by a guy who's analogous to Adolf Hitler.

And if we don't help them out, it's like Hitler's situation. He'll take Kuwait, he'll take Saudi Arabia, he'll take who knows everything, and then he'll go for Israel. And, you know, they're our allies, too.

We just, you know, if we let it snowball too far, we may not be able to stop it when it goes for Israel, you know. So we've got to stop it now, nip it in the bud. I can understand that rationale.

And, you know, there may be some degree of justice in that rationale, but, you know, I wonder, I really wonder, I don't claim to know this, but I really wonder if the true rationale was, we wanted to keep getting oil cheap, you know. We didn't want to pay the kind of prices that people in Europe have to pay for their gasoline, or the people in many parts of the country, or part of the world. We are accustomed to having easy access to

inexpensive gasoline, and it would make our lifestyle much more difficult to pay more for oil.

Let's face it, I want cheap gas. I'm as greedy as anyone else in that respect. But James says, where do wars come from? From dislusting after things.

And, really, I don't know that there's ever been a war yet where lust after either real estate, or oil, or something, gold, I mean, every war in history has usually been because somebody was lusting for what someone else had. Now, of course, we can often point to wars and say, somebody else's aggression is worse than somebody else's self-defense. I mean, what Saddam Hussein did was worse than what we did, because he coveted the oil and the property of Kuwait.

We didn't covet Kuwait. We don't want Kuwait for ourselves. We just want to liberate them.

But we did have something selfish in this thing there, too. I mean, let's face it. And no doubt the same is true of almost any war that we've been involved in, or anyone's been involved in.

You know, there's some aggressor who's being more greedy than most. The response, though, seldom is without selfish motives as well. You know what I mean? Turning the other cheek and giving the person what he wants to take from you is what Jesus said to do.

And let's face it. That's not an easy thing to do. That goes right against our nature.

I mean, we want our things as much as anybody does, you know? And, you know, so I guess I want to say I have mixed feelings about the Persian Gulf War. One thing I really, I guess I disapproved of, was Christians taking a strong patriotic support of that war when it was at best ambiguous as to what the motives were. I mean, it may be that we can rejoice in the fact that Kuwait is now liberated, though it may be we can rejoice in more of Saddam Hussein was actually killed in the war.

I'd be more likely to see the hand of God in what happened if that tyrant happened to get judged in the situation and actually died. I mean, like Hitler's death. I believe that was God's judgment on the guy.

And if Saddam had been killed, I think that would have been easily, I mean, we'd be easy to say, well, God put down that arrogant rebel, you know, and did him in real good, you know, but he didn't. And therefore, it makes you wonder, you know, how much was God in this? How much really was accomplished as far as God's kingdom is concerned? I really prefer not to make many pronouncements on individual cases of war. Some, I admit, America or some other nation may have more just cause in one war than in another war.

And as far as I'm concerned, in the wars that I'm familiar with, I should say the international wars that our country's gotten involved with, I think, and maybe it's because I'm American, but I'm not real patriotic, so I don't think I'm too biased in this way, but I really think America has been on the side of justice more than who we're fighting. I mean, whether it was Hitler, whether it was the Axis powers in World War I, whether it was Saddam Hussein, whether it was the North Vietnamese, you know, communists, you know, I don't know much about the Korean War. I don't know much about what was going on there.

But I think we were probably in the right there, too, more than the communists were or whatever. I mean, I tend to think well of America's motives for the most part in involvement in war. I'm not anti-American at all.

But I will say I don't want to glamorize or romanticize America as some kind of a real godly nation who only does benevolent and unselfish things. You know, I mean, we're a worldly nation like any other. We may have done fewer atrocities than some others, but we still have our share of selfishness and rebellion against God and so forth, and therefore we can't really say that America is always fully in the right.

And even in a war where we might have really just cause to get involved, in the course of conducting the battle, we often do things that aren't very nice. You know, like in World War II, in my opinion, dropping bombs on Hiroshima was not just because civilian populations were smeared and their lives were ruined. But we could have demonstrated that power by dropping the same bomb on an uninhabited island.

I mean, if we wanted to impress the Japanese, I mean, face it, dropping those bombs is what really put an end to the war. I mean, whoa, see what those guys can do? I think we want to surrender, you know? But we could have shown them the same thing in an uninhabited island somewhere or a less populated area. I'm not even sure that dropping the bomb was a good thing to do, but even if we say it was good and that it brought about a good result, to drop it on a populated area seems to me not as just and merciful as we could have conducted ourselves in that war.

And likewise, the firebombing of Dresden in Germany, you know, and that was just way overkill, you know, firebombing a whole city. So the flames were so hot, even people trying to run away were sucked into the vacuum of those flames sucking the air. You know, they couldn't even get away.

They just sucked their bodies back into the flames. I mean, it's not the same. It's just not about military installations when you do that kind of stuff.

So even though I would say in a war like World War II, America was more just than Hitler by a long shot, yet we didn't conduct ourselves honorably all the way through, and there are things that God, I'm sure, was opposed to in our conduct there. War is often called

the sin that involves all other sins, because in itself, war is usually, as James says, war has come from greed, wanting something, willing to kill for it. And if it isn't bad on an individual basis, why isn't that bad on a national basis, you know? It would be wrong for me to kill a man who was stealing my money out of my house.

You know, that would be wrong for me to do, I think. Now, it was permitted in the Old Testament to kill a man who was stealing your money out of your house if it was nighttime. If it was daytime, though, you weren't allowed to kill him.

That's the law. But the point is, if someone's stealing my property, I say, I don't want you to steal my property. I'm going to blow you away, and I blow him away.

That's kind of, that's not justified. Now, if he's trying to kill my wife, there may be another story there. But if he just wants my property, maybe I should take him to court or do something else.

But killing him is not the right thing to do. And if that's wrong on an individual basis, why wouldn't that be wrong on a national basis? Now, on the issue of, let's say, defending your children or your family or whatever, that, and we're getting into some ethical issues that go beyond what James is talking about here. But it happens.

It happens when you talk about war, because there are a lot of ethical issues around it. Like I said, I think objection to war for a Christian should not be based on the fact that we have some kind of sentimental feeling about the sanctity of life. Because human life, though it is made in the image of God, is also fallen and worthy of judgment.

If God decides people should be judged, then that's God's decision. He's certainly entitled to it. But no one has the right to live in the sense that if God says it, your number's up.

But also our objection to war should not be based on violence per se. In other words, it shouldn't be that we just think it's wrong to get upset. It's wrong to have anything but calm.

We should just be even-tempered and it's wrong to get upset and do any violent acts. Jesus got upset a few times. He did violent things.

He didn't kill anyone. And therefore, it's not right to take Jesus driving a night changer out of the temple and make it an analogy for it's okay to fight in war. Totally different kind of issues and different kind of conduct.

But nonetheless, a heated response, an angry response even, to sin, and maybe even physical violence in some cases, may have its uses in righteousness. But, lethal force is kind of irreversible. You know, when someone says, what if someone was attacking your wife or your children, what would you do? Well, I'm not opposed to violence per se.

The only thing I'm opposed to is being unloving. See, that's the whole law. The whole law of the cross is to love your neighbor.

Now, the whole reason that anyone should object to war at all is that if we find that conduct at war is an unloving way to respond to my neighbor, who happens to be my enemy. But it is possible, for instance, in a one-on-one situation, to stop your neighbor from doing something, possibly, in most cases, without killing him. Now, there may be a few cases, I can think of some real far-fetched scenarios that could conceivably happen, where the only way you could stop him would be to kill him.

But, in many cases, if someone tried to rape your wife or kill your children or something, if you were in a position to do anything to stop them, you could probably do something short of killing them. You know, even if you had a gun or something, you could do something short of killing the guy, it seems to me. With maybe very few exceptions.

But as far as I'm concerned, a Christian should be committed to defending any innocent victim, not just their wife and children, but anybody's wife or anybody's children or anybody who's a victim. I mean, if you're walking in Central Park, New York, and somebody's being mugged, you should be as willing to come to their aid as you would to your own children or something. Because, I mean, God says no partiality, you shouldn't either.

You shouldn't say, well, I'd do it for my kids, but I wouldn't do it for a stranger. And, likewise, there's a sense in which you should be able to do for other countries what you do for your own. And that's why, perhaps, if going to war for your own country would be right, it would probably be right to go for your allies, too, or any other victimized country.

Just because Christians shouldn't have a passion for justice. The problem here is, and I've brought this up before, the principal objection to war for the Christian is that a Christian cannot approve of anything that is not loving. And loving involves being just, merciful, and faithful.

Those are the weightier matters of the law. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness. This is what love breaks down into as individual components.

Justice, mercy, and faithfulness is what love is. Well, one reason I would object to war is, first of all, it's not very merciful to kill your enemy. But another thing is, war is not just.

And this is why I can take what seems a strange double standard. To some people, I can take a standard that favors, in principle, capital punishment, but does not favor, in principle, war. People say, well, war is just capital punishment on a grand scale.

And that is a stupid statement. It is not. All those very educated people have made that statement.



It's absolutely not. If a person does a deed worthy of death and he gets executed, that's justice. But war has never restricted itself to killing people who've done things worthy of the death penalty.

I mean, children, medics, Christians all die when there's wars. People who are non-combatants. And there hasn't been a war yet where that hasn't happened, to my knowledge.

And therefore, just out of a concern about justice and about not murdering those who've done nothing to deserve it. See, thou shalt not kill is not against all kinds of killing. But thou shalt not murder, which is a better translation of it, is against all murder.

And some of the killing done in war is murder, because people get killed by our weapons, who have done nothing that we could call a capital crime, a capital offense. I mean, everybody deserves to die as far as God is concerned. But that's not for us to go out and execute everybody because they happen to be a sinner.

There are some things, some crimes, which God has said are capital offenses. When people commit them, they deserve to die. And the government is supposed to take look to that, and to take care of that, and to exercise God's vengeance when appropriate.

But many of the people who die in any war, you name it, every war there has been, many people have died who have done nothing that the Bible would say was a capital offense for which they should be executed. And therefore, injustice is the shedding of innocent blood. Same thing that God said defiled any land in the Bible.

And it's the principal objection you have to Israel, why he destroyed their country, because their land was filled with innocent blood. Our own nation is not really white in this matter. But we may not be as guilty as some.

And I believe that America and Canada are peace-loving nations. We're switching on the two. Those are the nations represented here in this room.

But all those nations are peace-loving nations. But none of them is completely pure and godly and so forth. And therefore, we have to acknowledge that what James said, I think we have to acknowledge it's universally true.

Where do wars come from? They come from your desires for pleasure or your lusts that war in your members. In your flesh, in other words, you have desires, fleshly desires. You lust, or that means you desire, and you do not have.

You want something you don't have. That's called covetousness. The Ten Commandments say you should not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, your neighbor's oxen, your neighbor's anything.

You shouldn't covet anything that is your neighbor's. But when you lust or desire something you don't have, you're coveting. You're in violation of the law of God.

You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. So, I mean, you may murder on a small scale at first, but if you don't get what you want then, then you're willing to go to the full scale.

Fighting and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. Now, clearly this doesn't mean that the reason Saddam Hussein did not have coit was because he didn't bother to ask them for it.

He could have asked them for it and they would have said no. But he says you don't have because you don't ask. It doesn't mean you should ask the person that you're inclined to go fight with for what you want.

It means you're not asking God. You're not praying. The idea here is that if there's anything for which you must fight to obtain, you must have neglected praying for it.

And prayer is part of our spiritual warfare, according to Ephesians chapter 6. Praying is part of spiritual warfare. In other words, if you neglect your spiritual warfare... Let me put it another way. If you find yourself compelled to conduct physical warfare, it's because of the neglect of spiritual warfare.

If you had prayed, you would have it. Now, you might say, well, that's too simplistic. I mean, if we're under attack from the enemy, and we want to preserve our home soil, do you think that just praying is going to fix it? Well, it could be and it could not be.

And James continues that. Sometimes you ask and you don't receive. Sometimes your person and I ask you.

Why? Because you're asking selfishly. The same kind of lust that leads some people to go to war leads some people to pray. Some people pray as selfishly as they go out and fight selfishly.

The point is, Christians aren't supposed to be deluded by selfishness in general. Where there is envy and self-seeking among us, that's not the wisdom from above, it's said in chapter 3 verse 14. Self-seeking is not what the Christians are in it for.

There's one thing that should be our compelling desire. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All the other things we added to you that you need.

If we're seeking God's kingdom, that should be what our prayers are for. I do pray for our government. I pray for our prosperity of our nation.

I pray for the peace of our nation because Paul says pray for that. Because then we can live our lives as Christians in peace and in honesty and so forth without persecution.

That's acceptable to God.

So that's for the kingdom of God's sake. I pray for our peace. But also if I felt or had any reason to believe that maybe judgment on our nation would be good for the kingdom of God, I would not complain that God didn't answer my prayers to save the nation.

He said, like I told Jeremiah, don't pray for these people. Time's up for them. It was good to pray for them at one time, but it's not good to pray for them anymore.

Well, then to keep praying for peace and prosperity when it's not the will of God, be praying selfishness. Because I want my peace and I want my freedom and I don't want trouble. I don't want to lose anything of mine.

You see, this is comprehensive teaching about war. If you feel compelled to go and fight for your own defense or for aggressive purposes, either one, to obtain or to maintain what you have is an evidence that you have not effectively prayed in the will of God. If you prayed in the will of God, whatsoever we ask for in his will, he gives it to us by the sins.

If you prayed and didn't get what you wanted, it's because it wasn't his will. It was a selfish prayer. In other words, we can just pray and be at peace that God, after we pray, will do his will.

And that precludes the need for us to go out and try to do it ourselves when we want. We leave it in the hands of God. That's exactly what turning the other cheek is all about.

Instead of taking vengeance into our own hands, we leave it in God's hands. And we're vulnerable, of course, to maybe get beat up or even die when we do that. But at least we know whatever happens is what God has chosen.

Because we've left it in his hands instead of taking it in our own hands. That's why Paul says, don't avenge yourselves, but give place to God's wrath. Give him room.

Don't avenge yourselves. Let him avenge in his time and in his way if he wants. Leave it up to him.

It says in 1 Peter 4, verse 19, Let those who suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator. Instead of fighting for your own defense, you commit the keeping of your soul to God by doing the right thing and trusting him as a faithful one. This is radical discipleship at a level that few Christians I know really want to follow.

It's absolutely commanded. In 1 Peter 2, it says, Jesus suffered for us, setting us an example that we should follow in his steps. Who? When he was reviled, he did not revile again.

When he suffered, he didn't threaten. But he committed himself to him that judges righteously. This is the example that Jesus said, which Peter said we're supposed to follow in his steps.

Instead of when we're attacked, attacking back, we're supposed to follow his example of committing ourselves to God. Saying, God, okay, into your hands I commit my spirit. I'm under attack.

I know that, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, if you want to, you can deliver me supernaturally from this situation. If you don't want to, that's okay. I still won't compromise my principles.

I'll die. That's okay. I can die.

As a Christian, I'm one of the only people in the world who can afford to die. Any Christian can die, but no non-Christian can afford to. That's one of the distinctions about Christians, is that we're not living for this world.

Jesus said, he that seeks to save his life will lose it. But he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it. And, therefore, any Christian who's motivated by the fear of death or the fear of loss is not thinking in a distinctively Christian way.

I'm not saying they're not a Christian. Many times Christians think wrongly, and we need to be renewed, transformed by the renewal of our minds. But I'm not saying a person isn't a Christian who thinks differently than this, but they're not thinking in a distinctively Christian manner.

Because there is something distinctive about the Christian mind, different than the worldly mind. But many Christians are governing their thoughts, especially in an area like this, the way that they would do it before they were Christians. In other words, you can test whether you're thinking like a Christian by saying, would I do something different when under attack now than I would have done before I was a Christian? If I would have done just the same thing before I was a Christian as what I think I would do now, there's a good chance I need to examine myself to see whether my response is based on my worldly inclinations than I had even before I was a Christian, or whether I'm thinking distinctively, as a Christian should, about these matters.

So, he indicates that the problem here, where wars come up, is because people are not praying enough, and they're not praying selflessly enough. In other words, the warfare is breaking down in the spiritual realm, and that leads to physical warfare. And when Christians take up physical arms to fight, even though Paul said the weapons of our warfare are not physical, but are mighty for God, and pulling down his tarmac and so forth, when we take up physical weapons, we're simply admitting that we're failures in the area of spiritual warfare, or that we just are not willing to pay the price of spiritual

warfare.

Because spiritual warfare overcomes, but sometimes at the cost of life, just like real warfare does. Just like physical warfare does. It says in Revelation 12, 11, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of the Testament, and they loved not their lives unto the death.

You've got to be as willing to die for Jesus as you are to live for him. And taking a radical stance, doing what Jesus did, and what he taught, and what the epistles teach, like those in James 5, 6, they were condemned and killed, though they were righteous, and they did not resist. They did not resist.

Now, I need to bring up one other point, although we're now just about at the end of our session here, about resistance. I try to tell you what I think are not the reasons to object to war, and yet these are some of the reasons why some Christians do object to war. I think these are the wrong reasons.

I said, some people have almost idolized the sanctity of human life. That is not, I think, biblical to do. Some people are just revolted by violent behavior.

They think a calm and an unruffled attitude is necessary at all times, and just to do something violent is a wrong thing to do. And yet Jesus did some things that could be described as sort of, I don't know if the word violence is the right word, but, you know, they were definitely not calm. They were, you know, vehement responses to things, to evil.

And there's nothing wrong with a vehement response to evil. And another thing that people, I think, wrongly object to, object to war for wrong reasons about, is that they object to resisting evil in general. Because Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, do not resist the evil man.

They think that any kind of resistance of evil is wrong, but in fact there are certain ways to resist evil that are not wrong. The Bible says, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. But see, that's a spiritual warfare we're talking about there.

Physical resistance in the sense of, that war involves a person in it, goes beyond the kind of resistance that we're called on to make to evil. But there are times when we should resist. For instance, should you go to court? I mean, if you were a, you know, should you get politically active trying to stamp out abortion? That's resisting evil.

Now, as far as whether political action is the right way to go on it or not, I'm not sure, I'm kind of undecided on that matter. But I think Christians should resist abortion, that's an evil. Maybe we should accept it by preaching the gospel rather than doing social action, but I'm not sure, maybe even social and political action is called for.

All I'm saying is, there are some ways of resisting evil that may not be a violation of Christian principles, of the law of commandment. But war is not one of those things. It does violate the law of commandment.

And for that reason, though we can approve of resisting evil by some means, we should approve of it through spiritual means, because the weapons of our warfare are not physical. But they are mighty to accomplish the ends of casting down imaginations, and every high thing we exalt is something that's God. There is resistance of evil that we are involved in on a daily basis, that's resisting in the heavenly, that's resisting through prayer, through preaching righteousness, through loving God our lives to the death.

That's how we resist evil. And war is simply not the way of the Christian. At least it was not the way of the Christian for the first three centuries.

It was not the way of Jesus, it was not the way of the apostles. And believe it or not, throughout history there's always been some Christians who objected to war, although during the Dark Ages, warfare for the state was considered to be a godly thing, because the state was thought to be a godly state, the Holy Roman Empire and so forth. So, warring against the Muslims and their crusades was thought to be fighting spiritual battles, but of course it wasn't.

I mean, it was certainly a religious battle, but not spiritual. It was carnal. But ever since the Reformation, you know, the Reformation began in the year 1500 with Martin Luther.

In 1525, within 25 years of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, the Anabaptists arose up and said, wait a minute, if we're going to reform, let's go all the way back to the Sermon on the Mount. If we're going to get biblical, let's get radically biblical. And so from Reformation times to the present, there's always been a witnessing church saying, there is a better way.

Resolving conflicts is done better in the way of the cross, in the way of godliness, which is laying down your rights, even your right to your life, rather than laying down somebody else's life for you, you know. And so there have been a strong witnessing church against participation in war during most of the centuries of church history, with the exception of those dark ages when the Catholic Church was all there was. Except for some small distinctions here and there.

And of course, they based it on passages like this one here. Certainly, if war has come from lust, it doesn't sound like James of Coombs, of participation in that which is itself lustful and evil. We didn't talk about verses four and five, but we will have to bring that up as one.

Next time, we're going to have to really cover a lot of ground next time, because we're going to have one more session later today.